

# MOSS WOOD



## Newsletter

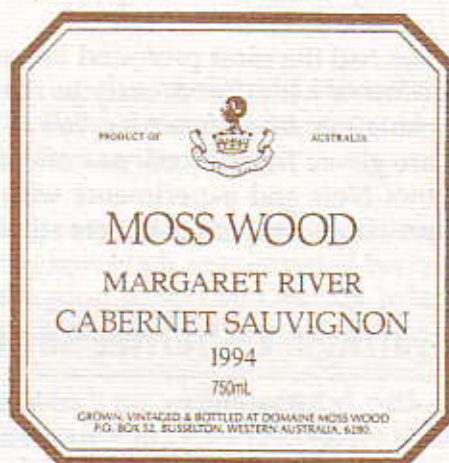
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### The 1994 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon

The 1994 vintage at Moss Wood produced a crop that was ever so slightly larger than average. The growing season had been particularly good with consistently mild weather in the months before February which was quite warm and ripened the Cabernet nicely. Picking of this variety started on time on 18th March (at 12.7° beaume) and finished on 14th April (at 13.7° beaume) giving the wine an alcoholic content of 13.8%. Picking can be a juggling act at Moss Wood between the competing demands of finding space in the winery and beating the marauding birds. Prior to 1994, the *old block* had been the last area pruned each year and, because of its south-east aspect, it had been the slowest to ripen. An experiment to prune this Cabernet block first during the preceding winter enabled the grapes to ripen earlier than usual, before the birds did any damage. The later pruned sections, more isolated from the birds, ripening later and with less damage, allowed us to make more of the precious Cabernet. It is such a pleasure not to waste it on birds. This same action produced similar results for 1995 and 1996.

The 1994 has maintained good colour since early in the fermentation process. The wine was left in contact with its skins for nine days during which time it was hand plunged three or four times a day. All pressings were included in the blend which was aged in 55% new French oak for a year. After this it was given a light, egg-white fining, then filtered and bottled.



Keith likes the wine very much and is particularly taken by its ripe, generous characters and the way the oak sits softly under the powerful fruit. In an unguarded moment, he might be heard comparing it to a V8. The 1994 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon has lifted ripe, mulberry, blackcurrant and cedary oak aromas while on the palate it is initially soft and generous with impressive weight, intense cassis flavours with lightly earthy overtones, big but supple and well-balanced tannins on a long, lingering aftertaste. It is surprisingly approachable at present and can be enjoyed for its intense fruitiness and power. Like all Moss Wood Cabernets, it will improve over the next seven years and can be cellared for between ten and fifteen years. Keith believes it will eventually be ranked with the 1991, 1990, 1985, 1983, 1980, 1976 and 1975 wines.



## Experimentation at Moss Wood

While we pride ourselves on consistency we do not wish to give the impression that we rest on our laurels. During the past decade, there have been many changes at Moss Wood as we have explored all avenues which might lead to an improvement in the current and future quality of the wines. All the techniques we use for viticulture and winemaking have been subjected to close scrutiny. There have been significant developments in that time which have resulted in the vineyard and winery being run better than ever, although the basic principles which influence what we do are unchanged.

All the techniques we use have been improved by keeping an open mind and by experimentation. The key question that we ask ourselves is 'Does this fit in with the history of our style?' If the answer is 'yes', we include it. For example, we felt that we had to find a better way to manage vigorous vines and yet sustain yields and maintain wine quality. This has led to a great deal of experimentation with trellising. The results of this research in the vineyard have been so positive that they could not be ignored. A tank of Cabernet from vines grown on Scott Henry trellising spoke louder than any words of the need to change to the new trellising system.

At present, about half of the nine acres of Cabernet have been converted: the trial blocks in three different sections of the vineyard and the most vigorous growing section, the *short rows*. The *long rows* will be converted in 1997 and the *old block* shortly after that. This latter section of the vineyard produces wine of a distinctive character and makes an important contribution to the Moss Wood style. Its present canopy (the Sunraysia Narrow T) allows for partial separation of the canopy so the changeover to Scott Henry will not be as dramatic as it is in other parts of the vineyard.

All the Chardonnay is planted with Scott Henry trellising, except a quarter acre of trial clones which are on the Te Kewata 2 tier system, similar to the Scott Henry trellis. The Cabernet Franc and Merlot also use this system. The droopy clone of Pinot Noir is trained to Scott Henry while the upright clone, which has an aggressively upright habit, is on vertical shoot positioning. Experiments have found that it can be trained to the Scott Henry so all the Pinot eventually will be changed. The Semillon, Petit Verdot and all the *School Fees block* use Scott Henry trellising.

Alongside these improvements in the vineyard, there have been changes to soil management at Moss Wood which have resulted in a reduction in the amount of spraying required. We live in an era where consumers demand minimal inputs in all food production so we ensure we meet their expectations.

In the winery, the new press has had the most profound impact. It has given increased yields of finer wine. In the past decade, experiments with Chardonnay in the winery have included trials with differing amounts of malolactic fermentation, lees contact as well as the types of barrels used and the amount of oak treatment the wines are given. Moss Wood was one of the first wineries in Australia to use Burgundian techniques with Pinot Noir and experiments with this variety have included stalk inclusion, length of skin contact, fermentation temperatures, lees stirring, oak types and time in barrel.

## Vintage ratings: Cabernet Sauvignon

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Vintage Rating (out of 10)
1983	7 March	13.0	9.0	9
1984	12 March	12.3	9.0	8+
1985	13 March	12.5	7.5	9
1986	14 March	12.8	5.8	9
1987	26 March	12.7	8.5	9
1988	10 March	13.0	7.1	7
1989	30 March	13.2	7.9	7+
1990	2 April	12.8	8.5	10
1991	3 April	13.3	9.8	10
1992	26 March	12.8	10.0	8+
1993	22 March	13.2	8.5	8+
1994	25 March	12.8	8.89	9+
1995	14 March	13.6	9.75	9+



## Moss Wood Cabernet Vintage Chart

- 1980 (Special Reserve) Has amazing intensity, great depth of flavour and an excellent, long lingering finish. This rich, powerful wine is drinking superbly and appears in a class above the earlier wines from the vineyard because of the liveliness of its fruit. A monumental red which shows the essence of Moss Wood. The only Special Reserve which is ready to drink: save the 1983, 1987, 1990 and 1991s.
- 1984 Although the tannins and acid have softened, the wine is still youthful. It has a scented nose of cherries, tobacco and charry oak, a delicate palate with good cherry flavour and cigar box overtones. Has good weight, balance, length and pleasing complexity.
- 1985 An appealing wine which shows excellent integration of rich, ripe, spicy berry fruit and hints of chocolate, leather, camphor and charry oak characters. This powerful wine is supple, round and beautifully textured, has good weight, excellent balance, a tight structure and soft fine-grained tannins. Although attractive drinking now, it is still developing.
- 1986 A powerful, rich wine with huge tannins that is showing some signs of bottle age. It has rich, redcurrant and earthy characters with hints of cigar box, camphor and tobacco against a tarry background. While the palate shows developing flavours, it is still a very closed wine with tight structure and firm acid and tannin. Keep for a few more years.
- 1987 A classy youthful cabernet with a lifted bouquet showing hints of eucalypt, peppermint, violets and mulberries against a backdrop of cedary, smokey oak. It remains quite closed at present and needs decanting and a few hours breathing before it is drunk. Better to continue cellaring for a few more years when the wine's intense, richness and concentration, excellent weight and structure will reward your patience.
- 1988 Not yet ready to drink but showing signs of softening. There are ripe mulberries with hints of violets and scented, cedary oak, generous, ripe, rich, berry fruit flavours and a pleasant finish of moderate length.
- 1989 Quite closed but with underlying ripe berries and hints of violets and tobacco. On the palate, the wine has good weight, is well-balanced, soft and round and quite long. Given time it should open out to reveal a pleasing complexity.
- 1990 Deep, bright, brick red colour, very complex, perfumed nose with ripe berries, spices, violets and tobacco while the palate shows rich, concentrated berry fruit, is round, full flavoured and quite powerful. The wine has good weight and texture, balanced acidity and strong tannins which do not dominate. Excellent potential but still needs time.
- 1991 Shows ripe berry characters which are well integrated with charry oak on the nose and palate. It is a supple, round and generous wine with impressive richness and concentration and a tight structure which will enable it to improve for several years and to keep for much longer.
- 1992 Has lifted, redcurrant and spicy oak characters with a hint of cinnamon, long rich, mulberry flavours, some earthiness and well-integrated, soft tannins. Needs eight years or more to be at its best.
- 1993 Has redcurrant, black cherry and cedary oak aromas with hints of chocolate while the palate is lively with vibrant, redcurrant flavours and an underlying earthiness. The wine is supple, has medium depth and the structure, acidity and tannins to be long lived. At present, it is quite closed and would be better left for a few years.

Should any readers need further vintage details  
please don't hesitate to contact the winery for up to date information.



## Classifying Australian wine

Langton's have conducted the first update of their Classification of Distinguished Australian wine. The classification is primarily based on auction performance over the past few years and only wineries that have been established for more than ten years are included. While no classification system is likely to gain uniform approval, general reaction to the Langton's move has been strongly supportive of the position they have taken.

The top three wines are placed in the category Outstanding (A). These are:

Penfolds Grange, Henschke's Hill of Grace and Mount Mary Cabernets.

Twelve wines are placed in the next category, Outstanding. These include:

Moss Wood Cabernet,  
Henschke's Cyril Henschke,  
Penfolds Bin 707,  
Petaluma Coonawarra,  
Wynn's John Riddoch and  
Yarra Yering Dry Red No 1.

The Langton's Classification, therefore, rates Moss Wood Cabernet among the best seven examples of the variety in Australia and among the top fifteen wines in the country.

Cabernet gets the nod as the most sought-after varietal with seven of the top fifteen wines followed by Shiraz (four), Chardonnay (three) and Pinot Noir (one).

According to the classification, Moss Wood is rated as Margaret River's best red alongside Leeuwin Estate Chardonnay which shares the Outstanding ranking, is considered best white in Margaret River and one of the three best Chardonnays (with Petaluma and Tyrells Vat 47) in the country.

Other Margaret River rankings are:

Cape Mentelle Cabernet and Cullen Cabernet Merlot in the Excellent (A) category and Pierro Chardonnay (Excellent).

## Judgement from a Peer

Jeni Port's recent article 'Australian wine makers toast their own' saw the Melbourne wine writer questioning some of the country's best vigneron to find out who they thought was Australia's best wine maker. She says... 'A wine maker of great passion and talent is Adam Wynn of Mountadam, who admires colleagues who resist the sometimes pernicious path of following every twist and turn of fashion. His vote for Australia's best wine maker goes to Keith Mugford of Moss Wood in Margaret River, a man who has created a definite style, particularly with his seductively rich cabernet sauvignon, and kept to it.'

*I think the most interesting wines, the most consistently well-made and balanced wines being made today are Moss Wood wines. They are devoid of fashion. Keith has stuck to his guns and said, "This is the way I want to make wine." He's terrific.*

A great tribute.

## Eloise misses Daryl Somers!

Great wine enthusiast, Daryl Somers, visited Moss Wood during May and expressed pleasure at being shown over the winery and tasting samples from the barrel room. He has some land on the Mornington Peninsula and is contemplating growing grapes. Eloise Mugford (8) who was bundled out of the way with the younger members of the family expressed keen disappointment at not meeting the television celebrity.

## New staff

Changes to the staff at Moss Wood include Piers Fitzgerald, who commenced working in the vineyard and the winery at vintage and has remained since, and Amy Sobol who has joined the busy team in the office.

## A Medal

The Moss Wood 1993 Cabernet Sauvignon won a gold medal in the Pac Rim Wine Exhibition held at the Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong.