



MOSS WOOD

Newsletter

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The 1997 Moss Wood Semillon

The 1997 vintage will not go down on record as one of the easiest at Moss Wood. The pinot noir crop was decimated by a hail storm on December 11th, the worst at the vineyard in Keith's experience. The chardonnay crop was severely reduced by strong winds which swept Willyabrup during the period that the vines were flowering. Unusually gusty winds in late September and during most of October further reduced the chardonnay yield and had a significant influence on the production of semillon from the vineyard in 1997.

The Margaret River weather was much less reliable than usual during the growing season. December was cool and mild and January had two warm spells including the hottest day in more than ten years. Unseasonal rains in February and March turned a harvest that Keith had believed would be exceptional into one that produced good wines in significantly lower volume than anticipated. Cooler than usual temperatures during February and early March slowed down vintage and the rains during that time led to concerns about disease and the grapes splitting. It then warmed up quickly, ripening the grapes so picking had to take place in a greater rush than usual. Keith comments wryly that this wasn't much of a problem as there wasn't much to pick. The semillon crop was down by fifty five per cent thanks to the unfavourable weather.

Although Keith believes that the flavours before the rain looked better than afterwards, the wine does show the benefit of low yields in its greater than usual concentration. Certainly, he was heartened by the reaction of consumers at the Tucker Seabrook Trade Day in Brisbane.

The 1997 Semillon is made according to the usual procedure at Moss Wood. It is crushed, drained and pressed. The free-run juice and the pressings are combined in sealed stainless steel tanks, settled for seventy two hours and then racked. At this time, it was left longer than usual, with one per cent solids included, in order to compensate for the probable loss of flavour after the rain. Keith believes that this had a positive impact on mouthfeel and complexity. The semillon was fermented at 18°C over a fourteen day period. Then the tanks were closed, sulphur dioxide was added, and the lees were stirred three times a week. After a much longer than usual ten weeks, the wine was protein stabilised, cold stabilised, fined, lightly filtered and bottled.



The 1997 Moss Wood Semillon is a surprise packet given the vintage. It shows attractive perfumes of tropical fruit with some fig and passionfruit aromas. The palate shows pristine fruit flavours reminiscent of figs, quinces, granny smith apples and passionfruit made more complex by some lees character. This is a fresh, vibrant, young white which has impressive weight, great mid-palate intensity and lively, crisp acidity on a finish which lingers. Although delicious now, Keith believes it will age, if cellared well, for ten years or more.

Unfortunately, due to such small volumes we need to restrict the Semillon to half a dozen per customer. Hopefully, this will allow all our customers who would like some of the wine to obtain their share.

The 1995 Moss Wood Pinot Noir

As with the Cabernet, conditions for pinot noir at Moss Wood during the 1995 vintage were very good. The grapes ripened consistently and were not affected by rain damage. There was some pressure on the vineyard from birds towards the end of harvest and the crop was slightly lighter than usual. Overall, however, 1995 was a very good year for the reds at Moss Wood.

The Pinot Noir was made according to the technique which has become standard, even traditional, at the winery. The grapes were crushed with twenty per cent whole bunches included and moved to stainless steel tanks. There, the must was cooled to 10°C for forty eight hours and pumped over twice without yeast inoculation. It was then allowed to warm to 15°C and seeded with yeast to encourage fermentation. This took place at temperatures of up to 30°C. The wine remained in contact with its skins for twelve days during which time it was hand plunged four times a day.

Once the wine reached 0° beaume, each fermenter received half an hour of pigeage (the action of using the feet to punch down the skins and other solids to encourage the extraction of colour and tannins and to encourage aeration of the wine). In the process, some uncrushed grapes were treated and so the period of fermentation was extended for a few days.

At this point, the wine is drained from the fermenters and transferred into stainless steel tanks with all the pressings included. After it has undergone the malolactic fermentation, it was racked into barrels thirty three per cent of which were new, 225 l Allier barriques. Sixteen months later, it is lightly filtered and bottled.



The 1995 Moss Wood Pinot Noir is medium to deep red, relatively dark for this variety from the Willyabrup vineyard. It has perfumed aromas of dark fruits, cherries and plums while the palate shows cherry, raspberry, primary fruit characters with complex earthy undertones, a hint of mushrooms, and a meaty, spicy background. The oak influence is subtle with a subdued tannin structure that will enable up to ten years cellaring.

In style and structure, Keith believes it is one of the best Moss Wood Pinots: more intense than the 1991, and similar to the 1992 but with more flesh, greater ripeness and more intense fruit flavours. In his view, its strengths are its intensity and complexity. Keith describes it as a powerful, interesting and complex red rather than a pretty, perfumed wine. He says that if you're looking for a wine with fragrant characters wait for the 1996.

Vintage Mugford

Fans of great French wines should be warned that Burgundy is about to experience its best ever vintage. At least that is Keith's confident prediction as he heads off to do vintage at Domaine de la Pousse d'Or in Volnay. It's the first time in eighteen years that Keith has done vintage at somewhere other than at Moss Wood so he felt that the time was right. He will be making a guest appearance for two days at vintage somewhere in Switzerland before heading to the United Kingdom for some promotional work with Stones of Belgravia in London. Thanks to the marvels of the electronic age (especially e-mail) he will be in daily contact with the family and Moss Wood. Keith has not commented on how he feels Clare will cope with looking after four youngsters.

Moss Wood Pinot Noir Vintage Chart

Vintage	Harvest Date	Beaume	Yield Vintage (tonnes/ha)	Rating (out of 10)
1979	17 February	12.3°	6.6	4
1980	29 February	14.2°	3.5	4
1981	4 March	13.1°	3.8	10
1982	13 March	12.95°	8.2	5
1983	19 February	12.85°	6.0	6
1984	16 February	12.9°	5.7	6
1985	25 February	13.3°	6.4	10
1986	24 February	13.3°	5.8	10
1987	24 February	12.9°	5.8	8
1988	10 February	13.1°	6.0	8
1989	15 March	12.9°	6.5	6
1990	16 March	13.4°	8.5	9
1991	10 March	13.3°	10.0	9
1992	28 February	13.5°	8.8	8
1993	3 March	13.3°	8.2	8
1994	1 March	13.5°	11.0	9
1995	14 February	13.6°	9.2	9+
1996	15 February	13.3°	9.0	9
1997	2 March	14.3°	6.0	8+

The 1996 Moss Wood Pemberton Pinot Noir

For the first time, the 1996 Pemberton Pinot has been sourced from the Lefroy Brook vineyard which is situated near the Cascades, a popular tourist attraction near Pemberton just off the highway to Northcliffe. The vineyard has a hectare of pinot noir and one of chardonnay laid out in the classic Burgundian manner with the vines one metre by one metre apart with vertical shoot positioning. Surrounded by national park, it has a stunningly picturesque setting: within an apparently natural amphitheatre with a small dam and a background of dense, karri forest.

The owners, Perth couple Pat and Barbara Holt, are devotees of the wines of Burgundy. They have released previous vintages from the vineyard under their own label, Lefroy Brook, but the pressures of Dr Pat Holt's professional life have made the continuation of this approach impossible. As the Holts are perfectionists and great enthusiasts, Moss Wood has been delighted to be given the opportunity to buy grapes from the vineyard.

In 1996, Moss Wood was able to take 2.4 tonnes of nicely ripened pinot from the vineyard. The fruit was in excellent condition and has made an interesting wine that Keith describes as having typical Pemberton regional characters: lifted fruit aromas of dark cherries, beetroot and some Lapsang Souchong overtones. In the case of the latter, Keith sees some spicy barbecue and smoky, rather than earthy, characters. It has lively fruit flavours and a firm palate structure with the acid and tannins being more obvious than in the Margaret River pinot.

Whereas the pinot noir from the home vineyard tends to produce sweeter fruit flavours, that from Pemberton tends towards the savoury. Keith has wanted the two styles of pinot that he makes to be quite distinct and so he is pleased to note the obvious difference between the wines from the two regions.

The pinot from the Lefroy Brook vineyard goes into the bottle sooner than that from Willyabrup in order to capture its fruit intensity and up-front pinot characters. Keith has felt that the Pemberton wine does not show much benefit from long barrel aging: ten to twelve months seems to be quite adequate. The Margaret River pinot, on the other hand, gains complexity and some earthy characters from eighteen months in oak. This has enabled Moss Wood to bring forward the release time of the Pemberton Pinot.

At this stage, Pemberton has little history and so it is difficult to speculate on the cellaring potential of the wines from this region. However, the chemistry is good and the wine is sound so it seems reasonable to suggest that the wine will benefit from three to five years cellaring.

As we still only produce a very small quantity of Pemberton Pinot Noir, we need to restrict sales of this wine to half a dozen per customer.

Unprecedented demand for Moss Wood Pinot Noir

The sad news for readers of the newsletter who have not secured their supplies of this vintage of Moss Wood Pinot by placing a Standing Order, is that there is no wine available for purchase from the winery. When Keith and Clare made the allocation for the mail order they put aside the same amount of wine as last year. However, the customers who reserved their Pinot by placing a Standing Order and paying a deposit for the wine earlier in the year, have taken the entire allocation. This problem was made worse by the lighter than usual crop. By the time it was realised that the Standing Order customers had taken the entire allocation, the Moss Wood team had distributed supplies of the wine to the wholesalers. The problem, once again, is the unprecedented demand for Moss Wood wines. For information, Moss Wood Wholesalers are listed below for your contact, should you wish to inquire with them for retail outlet details.

W.A.	Tucker Seabrook (WA) Pty Ltd	(08) 9227 1100
S.A.	Porter and Co.	(08) 8373 3010
Vic.	Tucker Seabrook (Aust) Pty Ltd	(03) 9388 0400
N.S.W.	Fesq, Dorado and Co.	(02) 9662 3111
Qld.	Barrique Fine Wines	(07) 3395 3355

Standing Orders for wines

We strongly recommend that our customers consider our new Standing Order system. Information about this has been reprinted below from our April Newsletter. This system is working very well for those of our customers who have already taken it up.

"Keith and Clare Mugford have been astounded at the dramatic increase in sales through mail order since they

took over at Moss Wood in 1984. At that time, about 100 dozen cases of Cabernet Sauvignon were sold to the mailing list. Although they haven't canvassed any support during that time, mail order demand for the Moss Wood Cabernet has risen to more than 450 cases per year. This dramatic increase perhaps mirrors the changing perception of premium wines in Australia but, in association with staggering leaps in demand from one year to the next, it has meant that the allocation we have put aside for our mail order customers has sometimes been unable to satisfy all of their needs. This is particularly disappointing for us as many from the mailing list have been among our best and longest serving supporters.

We have introduced a Standing Order system for customers who simply do not want to miss out on particular wines. Moss Wood undertakes to inform its Standing Order list of the prices of the wines which will be available during the year. It will also provide information (including tasting notes) which will enable customers to make judgements about the quality of those wines. All wines will be available for tasting at the winery, by appointment.

In essence, the system requires those wishing to reserve stock of the Moss Wood wines to place an order (accompanied by a deposit of 30% of the value of the wine) by the 30th of March each year. Apart from the stock needed for marketing and museum purposes, Standing Orders will be filled first. If there is insufficient wine produced to fill Standing Orders, wine will be allocated on a pro rata basis. Customers who do not proceed with the order will be entitled to a refund of 50% of the deposit.

The mail order will operate as usual. Customers will be able to order their wines on receipt of their newsletter being as prompt as possible to ensure supply. The Standing Order provides those who may be away for a particular release or who simply do not want to risk missing out on the wine a guarantee (barring natural disasters) of obtaining their wines. Keith and Clare will continue to work hard to satisfy all orders from their most valued supporters, the mail order customers. For more information about Standing Orders please contact Aileen Dickhart at the vineyard."

Moss Wood Semillon Vintage Chart

Vintage	Harvest Date	Beaume	Yield Vintage (tonnes/ha)	Rating (out of 10)
1983	5 March	12.3°	13.6	9
1984	5 March	12.2°	12.4	7
1985	28 February	12.0°	10.0	9
1986	28 February	12.4°	9.1	7
1987	9 March	12.0°	13.5	8
1988	18 February	12.1°	9.6	7
1989	15 March	12.3°	12.5	7
1990	21 March	12.4°	13.0	8
1991	26 March	11.9°	19.0	6
1992	3 March	12.5°	13.9	8
1993	5 March	12.7°	9.0	10
1994	10 March	12.9°	11.0	9
1995	23 February	13.2°	10.8	8+
1996	7 March	12.9°	14.9	9
1997	12 March	13.9°	9.6	9