

# MOSS WOOD



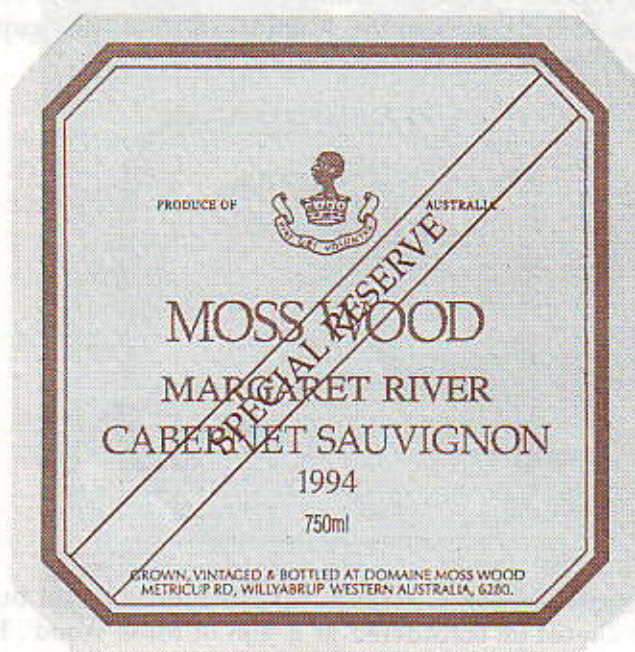
## Newsletter

Nº 36

July, 1998

### The 1994 Moss Wood Special Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

The 1994 harvest was much better for reds than whites at Moss Wood. The warmth of the period leading up to vintage produced whites which were ripe, strong and tannic and lacking in the delicate aromatics that are associated with great white wine years like 1996 and 1993. In the reds, however, this warm growing season encouraged ripe fruit flavours, plenty of alcohol, great texture and ripe tannins. It is scarcely surprising that 1994 was chosen as a reserve year. As always, the decision to make a Reserve was not made until assemblage, the time when the final cabernet blend is made. The 1994 Moss Wood Cabernet was aged in new (55%), one and two year old oak for twelve months. At the end of that time, the wine was pumped from barrels into stainless steel blending tanks. Having seen the finished product, Keith confirmed that it was suitable for producing a Reserve and so the ten best three-year-old barrels were set aside and filled with the 1994 Cabernet for extended oak ageing. These barrels were chosen so that they would give barrel aged complexity rather than oak character to the wine. The 1994 Special Reserve was given an extra 14 months in barrel, was bottled in January 1997 and allowed another 18 months to settle before release.

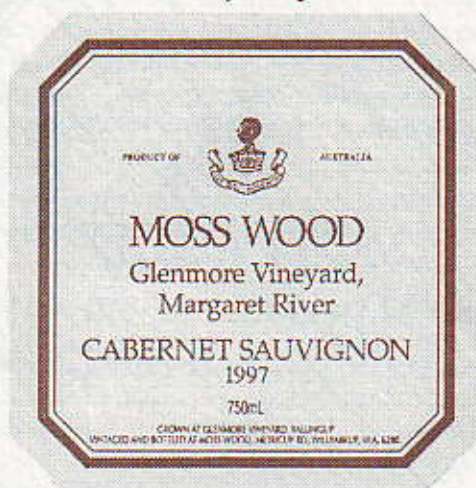


The 1994 Moss Wood Special Reserve has a deep, brick red colour and is relatively undeveloped at present. The nose is quite closed and so the wine needs at least three hours breathing time prior to consumption. It has subtle perfumed aromas of redcurrant, raspberry and violets with hints of cedary oak and cigar box aromas. The palate is initially soft with generous red berry sweet fruits, some chocolatey flavours and substantial, ripe tannins. This is a complex cabernet with an attractive silky texture, a tight structure and seamless integration of fruit and toasty oak. Keith believes that it is similar in style to the 1983, one of the long term favourites from the vineyard. He doesn't believe that it will eclipse the 1995 or 1996 but it will be highly thought of. It needs seven to ten years to be seen at its best but in excellent conditions can be cellared for longer than this. Because of its minuscule volume and the huge demand on the mailing list, supply will be restricted to a maximum of three bottles per customer.

## The 1997 Moss Wood 'Glenmore Vineyard' Cabernet Sauvignon

The Glenmore vineyard, on Ian Bell's family property at Yallingup, presently has a hectare of cabernet in full bearing with an additional one and a half hectares of young vines which will bear their first crop next year. It should be reported that this planting has taken place in spite of mild opposition from family matriarch, 77 years old Amy Beers, still a dedicated and active beef farmer who believes that planting vines is a good way to ruin excellent grazing land. The older vines are on the Te Kauwhata Two Tier trellising system and the newer vines on Scott Henry. The vineyard shows the meticulous attention to detail that readers of this newsletter have come to expect from Moss Wood vineyard manager, Ian 'Tinker' Bell: Willyabrup's best loved bachelor. The fastidious care that the vines receive is the major reason that Keith looked to Glenmore to source grapes.

The original motivation for the wine was that the Glenmore Cabernet would provide Moss Wood with a small amount of wine to help them get through the shortfall during the hold-over period for the 1996 Cabernet. The difficult 1997 vintage resulted in a drop in the amount of cabernet produced at Moss Wood. As this is the wine due for release in the year of the Olympics, Keith felt it was necessary to continue to bolster stocks of red wine. Consequently, he is committed to buying Glenmore until at least 1999, and probably 2000, to service the need for extra grapes. The 1997 vintage for Glenmore was a low yielding one as the vineyard was buffeted by heavy winds and hail. Although Ian Bell was hoping for six tonnes from the property, the despairing viticulturist got less than five. In a normal year, Yallingup (where the Glenmore vineyard is situated, on the corner of Caves and Injidup Roads) is expected to ripen between 10 and 14 days ahead of Willyabrup. In 1997, Glenmore ripened two weeks after Moss Wood because of localised heavy rain. The vineyard is planted on a north facing slope, about 1.5 km from sea. The soil is gravelly, red brown loam over clay, slightly lighter than is found on the Moss Wood site. Keith believes that Yallingup makes finer textured cabernets than Willyabrup and wanted to get at least 13.5% of alcohol (he got 13.7%) so that the wine would develop sufficient richness to make it an attractive drink. Similarly, he wanted to get the tannins as ripe as possible so that they wouldn't be too assertive. The maritime climate and closeness to the ocean means that Yallingup shows slightly cooler fruit aromas and less of the chocolatey characters than Willyabrup.



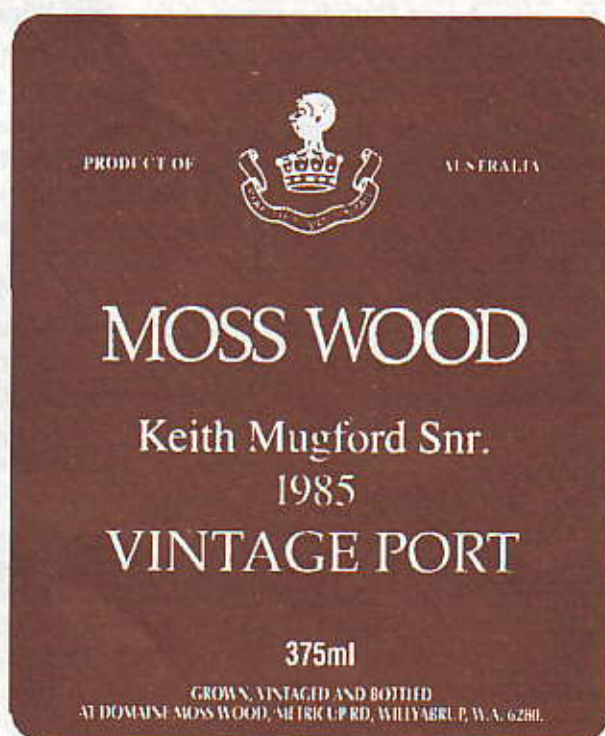
Keith believes that the Glenmore Cabernet doesn't taste like Moss Wood but, as identical production techniques are used, it could almost be considered as a 'son of Moss Wood'. He sees it as attractive and interesting without having the overall complexity of Moss Wood; as having a great nose but needing just a touch more breadth. Keith strongly recommends cellaring for up to ten years although warns that it is likely to suffer in its adolescence (it could get a bit tight especially around years six to eight). In looking at the wine analytically, Keith feels that the straight Glenmore is almost complete. He feels that to achieve greater complexity, it will need to be blended with about 15% merlot and 10% malbec. Ian Bell is looking to include those varieties in future plantings. Given the difficulties of the 1997 vintage, Keith is happy with the wine. He sees the 1998 Glenmore Cabernet as a seriously good wine: watch for it.

The 1997 Glenmore Vineyard Cabernet has an attractive floral nose with raspberries, violets and some chappy oak aromas. The palate has red berry characters with some earthiness and ripe tannins on a finish of moderate length. This is a medium to full bodied red which is soft and round yet with the structure and weight to age well, nicely balanced with good depth and length – a well-made, flavoursome Margaret River Cabernet.

## The 1985 Moss Wood 'Keith Mugford Snr' Vintage Port

With characteristic modesty, Keith proclaims, 'This represents the pinnacle of my career as a fortified winemaker.' As the last release of a Moss Wood vintage port was in 1980, you could be forgiven for not knowing or not remembering that the winery had produced a vintage port. As a mark of sympathy to a homesick McLaren Vale boy, Bill Pannell decided to experiment with a vintage port in 1979 for a bit of fun. He liked the result and so tried again in 1980. The project stalled largely because the crops in 1981 and 1982 were small and in 1983 the quality was such that it was felt that they 'weren't justified in wasting good cabernet on fortified wine.' Complicated customs regulations for purchasing and storing fortified spirit made the pursuit of this style of wine more difficult. However, the feedback from the 1979 and 1980 vintage ports encouraged Keith to have another go in his first solo vintage, 1985. He made three hogsheads of a vintage port but considered that it was not a roaring success. Not because the wine didn't have good character but because the spirit was too fiery.

Following the normal Australian routine of early bottling of vintage port, it was thought that it would have taken the wine several decades to become drinkable. Instead, Keith decided to let the wine age in barrel to bring forward its maturity and allow it to soften. By half-way through last year, after a mere twelve years in barrel, the wine finally reached an acceptable balance. Rather than continue to pursue his brilliant career as a fortified winemaker, Keith says 'That's it folks!'



Two thousand half bottles are now being released (\$30 for 375ml). The 1985 Moss Wood Vintage Port has been named after Keith Mugford Senior who has had a long term relationship with McLaren Vale and a similar long term love affair with fortified wines. Keith Senior who (like his son) had despaired of ever seeing the 1985 in bottle, often mentioned, with some chagrin that he had not been given the opportunity of monitoring this wine's progress.

The 1985 Moss Wood Keith Mugford Senior Vintage Port has a medium ruby colour with a slightly tawny edge. It doesn't have that fresh fruit character (mulberry, blackberry) that vintage ports get from early bottling, its style is rather that of a liqueur port. On the nose, it shows toasty cashews, plum and caramel aromas. The palate is sound, soft and lush with rich caramel and toffee flavours with some tails character from the fortifying spirit evident on the finish. It has a whopping 19% of alcohol but is very drinkable.

## Speaking of Burgundy

Keith enjoyed an educational three weeks at Domaine de la Pousse D'Or and has returned home a little wiser for the experience. The weather for the 1997 vintage was very Australian – hot and dry, so he felt very much at home. Given the conditions, the vintage has turned out very much as could be expected, with most producers very happy with the quality of their crop, which was almost always fully ripe and free of disease. If one were to be absolutely honest, there were some vineyards that were a little too hot and dry, with some natural alcohols of 14% and more. Indeed, as an outsider it was interesting to watch the French winemakers deal with conditions that they were not particularly familiar with. Some were not sure how the wines would turn out. In general though, it was a year of good quality and some great wines have been made, probably in the style of the 1976. This continues their good run of vintages since 1995. The locals were feeling very proud of themselves! As far as techniques are concerned, there were none that Keith came across that are not already in use at Moss Wood or have been considered and thought to be unsuitable for our conditions. However, it was very useful to see the state of the vines and grapes at the time of harvest and to see the fermentation and ageing conditions. As a result, there has been a bit more fine tuning at Moss Wood for pinot noir and chardonnay and hopefully it will allow us to lift the quality of those wines. The trip finished with great sadness when Domaine de la Pousse D'Or owner and winemaker Gerard Potel died. As a friend and mentor we will miss him very much.

## James Halliday on Moss Wood

In the April issue of *The Wine Magazine*, James Halliday wrote of the Great Wine Estates of Western Australia tasting held in conjunction with the Langton's auction at Cape Mentelle. Here's what he had to say about the Moss Wood Cabernets.

"Which takes me to Moss Wood, and to Keith and Clare Mugford's extraordinary generosity in parting with their next-to-last bottles of 1975 and 1976 Moss Wood, partnered by 1990 and 1995. There were 32 wines in this morning tasting, the first event of a long and action-packed weekend-long festival, and old dogs like myself have long learnt to spit - religiously and reflexively - in tastings. But when it came to the fragrantly sweet and warm vanilla and berry 1975 Moss Wood, there was no hesitation: I swallowed it. Having broken the ice with the 1975, what could I do with the hedonistically ripe plum and dark chocolate 1976? Follow suit, of course. To do less would have been extremely ungracious to Clare Mugford who, quite reasonably, thought she and Keith might have enjoyed those last few bottles more than a rapacious pack of journalists.

The eloquent earth, olive and cedar 1990 came next followed by yet another stunning Margaret River 1995 loaded with cassis, plum and blackberry fruit, and with gloriously silky and supple mouthfeel - the essence of the Moss Wood style, and of Margaret River at its best."

## Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon Vintage Ratings

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	Yield Vintage (tonnes/ha)	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	10
1996	14 March	13.7	10.0	10
1997	19 March	13.6	7.0	9
1998	30 March	13.5	10.0	8+

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