

MOSS WOOD



Newsletter

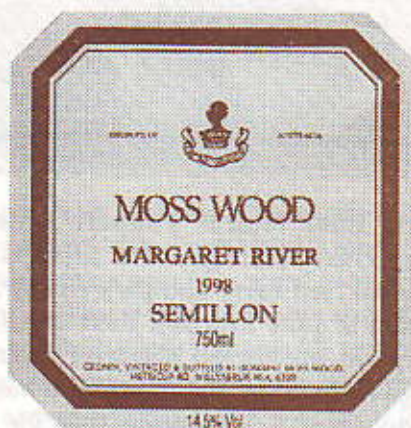
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The 1998 Moss Wood Semillon

Although Keith Mugford is happy with the quality of the 1998 Moss Wood Semillon, the harvest did present more than its fair share of difficulties at Willyabrup. There was nothing untoward during the growing season with no wind or hail damage; average temperatures; no sustained heat spells; and good spring rains. After flowering, Keith had expected the crop to be of average quantity or higher but then the tiny "silver eyes" appeared, to present the vineyard with its worst problem from bird damage since 1985. Atypically, the silver eyes started eating the chardonnay while the grapes were still very green. A new net applicator was purchased and sections of the vineyard were netted for the first time. This reduced potential damage and the final result was that yields fell from being slightly above average to average.

The weather which had been kindly, turned and rain fell after the first day of picking. As soon as the rain stopped, however, the hearty Moss Wood team returned to the vineyard and picked the remainder of the semillon. The winery was able to ride out any potential problem as there was no damage from the grapes splitting and only a slight dilution in the juice from the second batch. Keith believes that the grapes taken off before the rains had better fruit intensity but was happy with the overall quality and felt that there was no need to keep the batches separate.



The 1998 Semillon was made according to standard practice at Moss Wood. It was crushed and drained immediately allowing no skin contact. With all pressings included, the clear juice was allowed to settle for 48 hours. It was then fermented with a pure yeast culture in stainless steel tanks at 18°C until dryness was achieved and was stirred once a day. For an eight week period post fermentation the wine remained in contact with its lees and was stirred once a week. It was protein stabilised, cold stabilised and then bottled.

The 1998 Moss Wood Semillon shows aromas of ripe fig with some grassy notes, is soft, generous and mouthfilling and has ripe fig and honey flavours with light citrus undertones and some apple and grapefruit characters. It is a big, rich white with impressive intensity, good weight, excellent balance and a crisp, fresh finish. Keith rates the wine as a cross between the 1994 and the 1995. It is in the mould of the 1994 with its rich, ripe structure while having the generosity and depth of flavour of the 1995. He sees it as big and ripe without the pretty, perfumed aromatics of the 1990, 1993, 1996 and 1997 semillons from the vineyard. Keith regards it as similar to the very good 1983 Semillons at the same stage of its development and believes that the current vintage will age well despite its early generosity. Given good cellaring, he believes it will improve over the next ten years.

The 1996 Moss Wood 'Margaret River' Pinot Noir

Both 1995 and 1996 were outstanding vintages in Margaret River. The growing season for the latter saw slightly above average spring rainfall up to Christmas; no wind or hail damage during that time; and consistent summer temperatures. There was no heat stress during summer, no interference from rain and as a result the fruit achieved excellent early ripeness. With no pressure from the birds, Moss Wood was able to enjoy an early harvest of undamaged fruit. Keith Mugford was delighted that the pinot noir showed lovely varietal statement both in the grapes at vintage time and as a young wine.

Once again, the pinot was made following the established approach. The juice fermented for ten days on skins with 20% whole bunch inclusion; was hand plunged four times a day; then underwent the malolactic fermentation in stainless steel. After completion, the wine was racked to barrel (one-third new oak) where it remained for 20 months, from May 1996 until January 1998. (Keith wondered if that made it the longest barrel aged pinot in Australia.) At the end of that time, it was decided that it needed no fining, so it was racked, lightly filtered and then bottled. This was the first year that the vineyard had undergone significant leaf plucking - to improve fruit exposure - and this innovation in the vineyard has contributed to the quality and intensity of the fruit character in the finished wine.



The 1996 Moss Wood Margaret River Pinot Noir is a superb wine. It has powerful perfumes of ripe strawberries and plum with light briary, cherry aromatics. The palate is soft, generous and quite silky and the wine rich and concentrated with spicy oak, red berry and dark cherry flavours and some underlying gamey, earthy notes. At this stage, the structure is quite firm and there is a supple, sappy, earthy character on the finish. Of the 1996 vintage, Keith Mugford prefers the Margaret River Pinot Noir to that of the Pemberton Pinot Noir, whereas in the 1997 vintage he believes that Pemberton has produced the better wine. Keith sees the 1996 Moss Wood Margaret River Pinot Noir as more fruity than the 1995 with nearly the same complexity. He sees similarities between the 1995 and 1996 and the 1985 and 1986 but in reverse. For him, the 1985 is like the 1996. Keith believes that the current vintage is a finer version of the 1994, and like the 1991 but with more flesh. He feels it is more generous than all but the best pinots produced from the vineyard and ranks it alongside those wines.

Newsletter 'on-line'

A reminder: Customers can now receive the Moss Wood Newsletter and order form via e-mail. If you wish to have them sent to your e-mail address instead of your postal address, please complete your details on the order form, being careful to use upper and lower case letters as necessary, or contact the Moss Wood office on-line at our e-mail address below.

Please note that our electronic newsletter is in PDF format which can be opened and read using 'Adobe Acrobat Reader'. This is a readily available programme found on a number of Microsoft installation discs or can be downloaded from the Internet at no cost.

The 1997 Moss Wood 'Pemberton' Pinot Noir

This is the second time the Moss Wood Pemberton Pinot has come from Pat and Barbara Holt's Lefroy Brook vineyard: a two hectare block of pinot noir and chardonnay surrounded by national forest near the Cascades, a few kilometres from Pemberton off the highway to Northcliffe. The picturesque vineyard is laid out in the classic Burgundian manner with the vines one metre by one metre apart with vertical shoot positioning.

The Pemberton Pinot is made using the same techniques as those used in making the Moss Wood Margaret River Pinot Noir. Fermentation takes place over ten days at 30°C with hand plunging four times a day. All the pressings are included in the wine. A malolactic fermentation occurs in stainless steel tanks and then the pinot is transferred into barrels, a third of which are new French oak. In order to capture its fruit intensity and up-front characters, the wine from Pemberton is bottled sooner than its Margaret River counterpart. It does not benefit from long term (eighteen to twenty months) ageing in oak as the wine from the Moss Wood vineyard does, so Keith allows it only twelve months in barrel. After that time, it is fined with egg whites, given a light filtration and bottled.

As an aside, Keith comments that there is some (albeit remote) possibility of physical contamination if the wine is bottled without filtration. He has found that a light filtration can avoid any risks with negligible influence on flavour. With the previous vintage, Keith preferred the Margaret River Pinot to that from Pemberton but, with the 1997 vintage, he believes that the wine from Pemberton is the better of the two.



The 1997 Moss Wood Pemberton Pinot Noir is strongly aromatic but with savoury rather than sweet fruit notes: spicy, dark cherries and slightly smoky oak. Keith detects more than a hint of Lapsang Souchong on the nose. The palate is initially soft but with a chewy texture; some gamey, earthy flavours: five spice, beetroot and charry oak; a firm structure with stern backbone acid and quite strong tannins. This is a wine with significant depth of flavour, good richness and concentration: a powerful rather than a pretty pinot. Although lack of experience makes it difficult to predict cellaring potential with any precision, there is every indication that the wine will improve over the next year or two and will drink well for at least five years.

Wine Industry Technical Conference

The Moss Wood contingent (Keith and Clare Mugford, Ian 'Tinker' Bell and Matthew Bowden) packed a great deal into their trip to Sydney for the Wine Industry Technical Conference at Darling Harbour. Keith was particularly interested in industry predictions that Australia can produce 5% of the world's supply of wine by 2025; reports of ground breaking viticultural and winemaking practices; packaging issues, especially the thorny questions of cork taint and synthetic closures. He was especially fascinated by reports on the sequential inoculation of yeast during fermentation. (While neither you nor I may consider this likely to be a riveting topic, we are, no doubt, comforted that Moss Wood is in the safe hands of someone who is focused on questions of pith and moment.) There were equally serious moments during the networking sessions over which the Moss Wood team slaved at some of Sydney's best restaurants: Chris Manfield and Margie Harris's *Paramount*; Greg Doyle's *The Pier*; and the hottest new place in town, Janni Kyritsis's *MG Garage*. After the hard work, the team returned to Margaret River minus one member: Tinker Bell was spotted at the airport headed for a liaison in the snow.

Moss Wood Semillon Vintage Chart

Vintage	Harvest Date	Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Vintage 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
1998	8 March	13.7	12.7	9

Moss Wood Pinot Noir Vintage Chart

Vintage	Harvest Date	Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Vintage 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	13.4°	9.0	9
1997	2 March	14.3°	6.0	8+
1998	13 February	13.6°	8.1	9

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