

# Moss



# Wood

## Newsletter

No. 4

Autumn, 1988.

### The 1987 Moss Wood Chardonnay

The 1987 vintage produced above average yields of excellent quality wine. The winter of 1986 was extremely wet, with rainfall until the end of October. Fortunately for yields, there was little bird damage during the season. The dry spell from November caused no problems as the weather, though dry, was not particularly hot and the vines coped with the conditions really well. Vintage occurred right on schedule with the wines showing intense fruit characters and distinctive fruit flavours.

The Chardonnay was fermented half in stainless steel and half in oak and then left on its yeast lees for nine months in oak during which time it underwent its malolactic fermentation. It was bottled in December and, at present, is quite closed. You will need to let it breathe for an hour or two to get an idea of its full potential.



The 1987 Moss Wood Chardonnay has a range of complex aromas on the nose with lovely toasty oak characters, a touch of butterscotch or nuttiness from the malolactic fermentation and yeasty characters from the lees. These complexities follow through on the palate where the Chardonnay has a lovely mouth feel, soft acid and considerable length. Above all, it has rich, fruit flavours, reminiscent of peaches, which are in balance with the oak.

Although it is closed at present, Keith Mugford believes that the wine is more forthcoming than the previous three vintages and has the immediate freshness of the 1983 vintage. In his opinion, this is Moss Wood's best vintage for chardonnay with the possible exception of 1980.

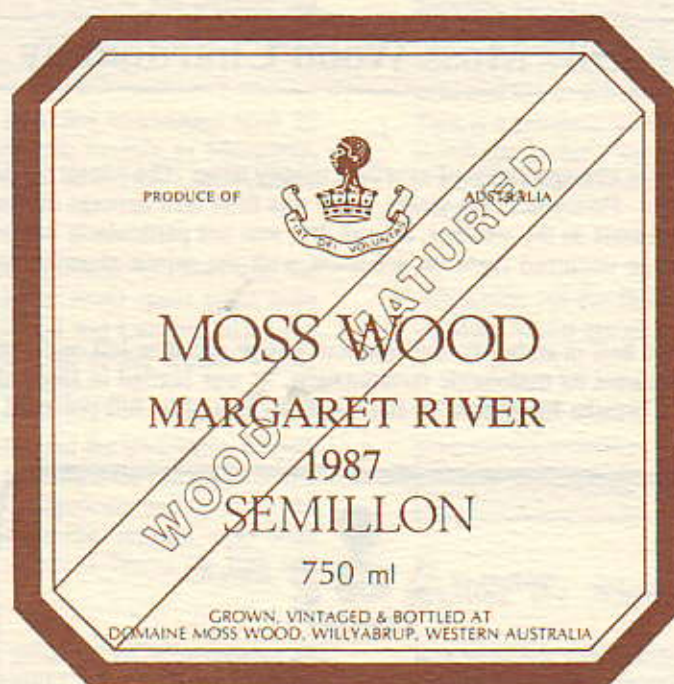


## 1987 Moss Wood wood matured Semillon

This is the same wine as the 1987 Semillon released last spring, except that it has been given three months maturation in cask.

The wood matured Semillon has a pungent bouquet with overtones of figs, honey and freshly-cut grass, well-integrated with the spicy oak aromas. On the palate, it has soft acid and a depth of herbaceous fruit flavours which, because of the wine's excellent structure, are in perfect balance with the oak. It has a pleasing aftertaste and considerable length.

Keith Mugford believes that this wine is more ready for immediate drinking than any Moss Wood wood matured Semillon, except for the 1985, and sees the quality of the fruit as the wine's most positive feature. He regards it as more herbaceous than the 1986 but less so than the 1985. As a consequence, he sees it as a better wine. It is richer than the 1985 wood matured Semillon, has better length than that wine and is better able to handle its oak treatment.



## The 1988 Vintage at Moss Wood

The winter of 1987 produced consistently mild weather with good spring rains which kept sufficient moisture on the vines to ensure good growing conditions. January 15, 1988 saw Moss Wood hit by its worst-ever hail storm. No substantial damage was done with, at worst, about 1 to 2% of the Cabernet Sauvignon crop being affected.

A warm spell during the last third of the season, fortunately not as hot as a similar spell in 1985, resulted in no stress for the vines and left them in good condition. Keith commented that the leaves looked good and the composition of the grapes on the vines allowed them to ripen without difficulty.

There has been an enormous flowering of the yellow and white blossoms of Marri gums which distracted the Silver Eye and, consequently, the grapes have suffered no damage from birds this year.

At harvest, acidity had reached high levels, fruit was in excellent condition and prospects for a good vintage were encouraging. The quantities are slightly down on 1987 but that was a bumper crop.

The 1988 Semillon reminds Keith Mugford of the 1987, the Chardonnay resembles the 1984 at a similar stage and the Pinot is similar to, but better than, the 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987. The colour is great, the fruit excellent and it has produced the best smelling fermentation ever. Keith expects the wine to have a big structure and to be high in tannins.



## A Growing Reputation

Moss Wood, which is already well-known throughout Australia for producing wines of the highest quality, is gradually building up a reputation overseas for making wines of great flavour and considerable complexity.

While Keith and Clare Mugford believe that it is important to develop the winery's international profile, they are committed to maintaining the supply of Moss Wood's wines on the domestic market. To this end, they will continue to restrict exports to 10% of production.

It's worth quoting some of the comments published overseas to put the Moss Wood achievements into an international perspective.

*Decanter Magazine's Guide to Australia and New Zealand* gave detailed reviews of four of the Moss Wood range in a "Directory of Western Australian vineyards" compiled by Tony Lord. These were his comments on the wooded whites.

**Wood Matured Semillon:** Marvellous uplifted herbaceous and aromatic aroma, the multiplicity of scents that come from an English hedgerow. Backed up by lovely oak. Beautiful ripe fruit flavours, complex, an almost fig-like character, and enhancement from the oak. Developing a sweetness, and a stunning, must buy wine.

**Chardonnay:** Beautifully structured aroma, sweet almost to the point of being honeyed with excellently integrated oak. Similar characteristics come through on the palate, with ripe, almost creamy sweet fruit, wood, good acidity, and complexity. Again very fine.

The British journal *Wine* in March, 1988 featured an article by Anthony Rose called "Drinking it Dry" which discussed the semillon grape and gave an overview of the way it adapts to different parts of the world. The article preceeded a tasting review of twenty New World (a wonderfully quaint expression perhaps not quite in the class of "Down Under" but close, close...) semillon or semillon blends.

Five of the wines were given the top, three star rating. These included two Moss Wood wines, the 1985 and 1986 wood matured Semillons.

### **Moss Wood Margaret River 1986 Semillon**

Both vintages of this lovely wine did well here (we've liked their unwooded version in the past, too) Of the two, the 1986 had the upper hand, just. The ten hectare estate, started back in 1969 by Bill and Sandra Pannell, is planted with Cabernet, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay as well as this Semillon. "Vanilla nose. Fat, buttery, oaky-real oak" approved Jo (Joanna Simon), speaking for many. "Fruit lasts all through to a nice finish with lovely acidity" agreed Maggie (McNie). "Touch of coconut oak" thought Anthony Rose while for Charles (Metcalfe) the flavours were a "fascinating blend of creamy, almost Cheddar sauce and soft asparagus".

### **Moss Wood Margaret River 1985 Semillon**

More than one wine taster used "rice pudding" as a description of the wine's scent: all used it to indicate they liked it. "Rich, soft, rather opulent" wrote Charles, while for Chris Brunck it had "cherry" along with the rice pudding. "A palpable hit" wrote Harry Eyres decisively.

All agreed that the oak balanced the fruit without overpowering it, as can sometimes be the case. "Fleshy" was Robert Joseph's description; "enough peach to match the oak". One evening panel member thought the oak too much, but Carol, BJ, Jerry and Paul were all enthusiastic supporters: "yes again" wrote Jerry succinctly.

In his latest book, *The Wine Buyer's Guide* (Dorling Kindersley, 1987), Robert Parker prophesises the emergence of Spain, Chile and Australia into "stardom and popularity in the next decade." He says, "Spain and Chile's strong points are their red wines; in Australia, they can do everything well and they are."

Parker ranks Moss Wood in the top dozen producers of chardonnay in the country, giving it four stars, with only one winery given five star status.

The *Sunday Telegraph*, in association with *Wine*, produces a *Good Wine Guide*, edited by Robert Joseph, in Britain each year. This lists 500 best value wines available in the United Kingdom. Three Moss Wood wines are included; a remarkable performance which surpassed all but one (much larger) Australian producer.

The section on Australia urges the reader to try "the remarkable Moss Wood wines". The 1986 Moss Wood wood matured Semillon is described as "A very oaky wine from a cool vineyard in Western Australia. It has attractive flavours of lemon, vanilla and honey and is rich in style." The 1985 Moss Wood Chardonnay is listed as "a good, fat, buttery wine with attractive tangy acidity." Both wines are recommended as going well with smoked meats and smoked fish, white meat and fish and white meat and fish with a creamy sauce.



## The French Connection

Important visitors to Moss Wood in March were Burgundian winemakers Gerard Potel, from Domine de la Pousse D'Or, and Michel Juillot, from Domaine Michel Juillot. Gerard, accompanied by his wife Françoise, and Michel and Jacqueline Juillot spent a month visiting Australia. They caught up with friends in the Hunter Valley and visited vineyards in the Yarra Valley. Here they caused a sensation at the primary school attended by John Middleton's granddaughter by arriving at Mount Mary by helicopter. They travelled from Melbourne to Adelaide by car visiting Coonawarra on the way, before spending a week in the West.

Since 1964, Gerard has been winemaker at Pousse d'Or in Volnay. This high quality producer has premier cru vineyards in Volnay, Pommard and Satenay. Its part owners include Bill and Sandra Pannell.

Michel Juillot is a highly regarded winemaker with 23 hectares of vineyards. These are mainly in Mercurey, although he does have holdings in Corton-Charlemagne and Aloxe-Corton.

There are other links between Margaret River and the two French families. Nicholas Potel spent some time last year pruning at Moss Wood and Laurent Juillot did the 1988 vintage at Brokenwood in the Hunter Valley and Vasse Felix in Margaret River.

Keith and Clare Mugford enjoyed the hospitality of both families during their visit to Burgundy last June. They relished the opportunity to reciprocate and to show the range of Moss Wood wines to the visitors, who were accompanied on the trip to Moss Wood by Bill and Sandra Pannell.

It is both a tribute to the progress of winemaking in Australia and to the foresight of these innovative vigneronns, that visits such as that of Gerard and Françoise Potel and Michel and Jacqueline Juillot are becoming less rare. Let's hope it won't be too long before they're back at Moss Wood.

### Moss Wood Wines In the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, Moss Wood wines and the Moss Wood Newsletter are available from:

Peter Diplock Limited  
William Blake House  
Marshall Street  
LONDON W1

Phone: (01) 734 2099

Anyone in Australia wishing to have Moss Wood wines delivered in the United Kingdom should contact the vineyard for details.

## The Great Pinot Mystery

The mystery of exactly what clones of pinot are planted at Moss Wood has been solved. These clones were sent to the CSIRO from the University of California at Davis and are a leading selection of clones which originated from France in the 1950s - and are therefore from the stock which is now planted on the Cote d'Or.

The CSIRO has confirmed that two different clones of pinot were supplied to Moss Wood by the Agriculture Department; pinot noir and pinot droit.

Unlike pinot noir which produces small, cylindrical bunches which grow close to the ground, pinot droit has conical shaped bunches with a deep blackish blue colour and grows straight up without drooping. It has higher acid and lower pH than pinot noir and is slower to ripen. This is a problem in France and consequently pinot droit is not particularly successful in Burgundy. In Western Australia's sunnier climes, pinot droit ripens in time for vintage.

We know for the first time that half of the pinot vines at Moss Wood are pinot noir and half are pinot droit.

## Moss Wood Winery

### Visiting the Winery

Because of the relatively small volume of wine produced, there is no cellar door facility provided for the general public and visits to the winery are by appointment only.

However, we are happy to welcome people on the mailing list or those interested in wine who wish to see over the winery and/or to taste the current Moss Wood releases.

Contact us beforehand to make arrangements if you wish to visit.

### Your comments

We are always interested in receiving feedback about our wines and would be especially interested in hearing about any older bottles of Moss Wood wines that you have tried recently.

Keith and Clare Mugford