

MOSS WOOD



Newsletter

Nº 43

November, 2000

The 2000 Moss Wood Semillon

The 2000 season saw the first harvest of fruit from the new semillon block, which produced a total of two tonnes. It is always exciting when a new vineyard finally comes into production. When this is coupled with the joy surrounding the last vintage of the century, it is scarcely surprising that such a propitious occasion would bring forth a terrific vintage! There had been concerns with the high temperatures of December, though the possibility of a hot harvest did not eventuate. January's rain was early enough not to split the semillon grapes which is a common worry in Margaret River: two weeks later and it might have been a problem. As it was, this rain freshened the vines and the sugar levels rose to ripeness with ease. The vines were in balance as the fruit ripened and for once, the numbers were spot on when picking commenced at 13.5° beaume. Yield was down slightly on normal – 10.3 tonnes/hectare (4.1 tons/acre) and so the wine has a touch more concentration of flavour than usual.



In the past, the semillon has been picked at different levels of ripeness. The policy now is to wait until it is fully ripe and then pick. So this year, it was taken off in four batches between the 6th and 9th of March. Keith Mugford was pleased with the quality and condition of the fruit and believes that this year's Moss Wood Semillon has been quite similar to the 1980 in the cellar. It showed suppleness, generosity, drinkability and appealing fruit. There was a creamy lusciousness that Keith believes is the feel of the vintage.

Winemaking followed normal practice at Moss Wood except for changes due to the better equipment which has come into use with the new winery building. Juice preparation occurred as per normal. The grapes were destemmed but not crushed, and were placed into the must chiller to cool to eight degrees. The gentler handling enabled the wine to retain better fruit characters and the lower temperature in the must chiller reduced oxidation and enhanced the depth of primary fruit. The fact that the grapes were not crushed means that there was less skin damage and so the tannin structure is much less harsh. It was settled for 48 hours and then the clear juice was pumped into the fermentation tank along with 2% of solids. Fermentation began spontaneously, triggered by wild yeast, though once the juice had dropped from 13.4° to 11° beaume, a pure yeast culture was introduced and the process continued until it was completed at 0°. The temperature was maintained at 18°C and the lees were hand plunged every day. Once fermentation had been completed, this stirring was reduced to once every seven days for the eight weeks of lees contact that the wine was allowed. After that time, it was stabilised, filtered and bottled.

The 2000 Moss Wood Semillon [cont.]

Keith believes that the wild fermentation yeast may have changed the fruit profile on the nose of the 2000 Moss Wood Semillon. Although the wine has complexity, great mouthfeel and good length, he wonders if customers might feel that this Semillon is not as overtly fruity as they have come to expect. He is particularly happy with this approach and its impact on the 1999 Moss Wood Chardonnay but has some concerns about the 2000 Semillon. Your feedback would obviously be welcome. Keith does, however, make the point that the process of sequential inoculation (allowing spontaneous fermentation by wild yeast and the introduction of pure yeast during the fermentation process) has made a wine which is complex and interesting in its youth and likely to be even more attractive and fascinating at about ten years of age. He would encourage the keeping of one or two bottles for long term cellaring.

The 2000 Moss Wood Semillon has some fig, melon and grapefruit citrus aromas, delicate, lemon sherbet and mineral characters made more complex by some restrained grassiness and a crisp, dry and quite firm finish. It is fresh, clean and lively on the palate, has impressive weight, a generous, fleshy texture and good depth of flavour. While recognisably Moss Wood Semillon, it is more savoury and less overtly fruity than usual: perfect with food.

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
1999	16 March	13.1°	11.2	9
2000	16 March	13.5°	10.3	9

The 1999 Moss Wood 'Glenmore Vineyard' Cabernet Sauvignon

For recreation, Moss Wood's long term vineyard manager, Ian 'Tinker' Bell, looks after his own Glenmore Vineyard at Yallingup, ten kilometres to the north of Moss Wood's Willyabrup location. Keith Mugford believes that it is important to achieve fruit ripeness and get alcohol levels to 13.5% for the Glenmore Cabernet because of its fine texture and delicate fruit flavours.

As we have reported before, kangaroo numbers in the Margaret River region are increasing dramatically and vineyards in the area now need to be protected from them. Because it had no kangaroo proof fence, the Glenmore vineyard had significant problems as the time drew closer to pick the 1999 harvest. Kangaroos not only plundered the fruit but damaged the nets and allowed marauding birds to get at the grapes.

There was some concern that picking might have taken place too early but it was considered necessary to take the fruit off before the damage from kangaroos and birds became too costly. However, it was picked close to what Keith wanted with fruit ripeness, at 13.3° beaume. Interestingly, the alcohol level in the resulting Cabernet came in higher than expected at 13.8%. The wine was made in the same way as the Moss Wood Cabernet, with Keith using some of the Burgundian techniques described in the article on the Moss Wood Pinot Noir. In particular, tasting was used post fermentation to determine the point at which the tannins were no longer

The 1999 Moss Wood 'Glenmore Vineyard' Cabernet Sauvignon [cont.]

continuing to soften with time on skins. For the first time, full spontaneous wild yeast fermentation was used and this was repeated for the 2000 vintage. The Glenmore Cabernet was given 12 months in oak, 25% of which were new French barriques. It was egg white fined, put through a coarse filtration and bottled in July 2000.



The 1999 Moss Wood Glenmore Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon has quite perfumed aromas showing elegant cedary oak, red skinned fruits and some herbal notes. This is a classy, full bodied, fresh, young red with some brambly oak, spicy, blueberry and redcurrant flavours and some overtones of mint and herb. It has power, a supple, chewy texture, significant weight and fine, firm tannins. Expect it to improve with short term cellaring and to age well over at least the next five years.

The 1998 Moss Wood 'Margaret River' Pinot Noir

Those who dabble in vintage charts would have you believe that 1998 was a difficult vintage for red wines in Margaret River. While that is true of Cabernet Sauvignon which had to wait until after the impact of the heavy rains of early (50mm on the weekend of the 7th and 8th) and mid March (78mm on the 21st and 22nd), the earlier ripening pinot noir had been picked well before these conditions were to trouble the vigneron. The spring of 1997 had been reasonably good to Moss Wood in spite of some hail which reduced the pinot crop a little. The winds had been less troublesome than the previous year and spring rains were plentiful. A mid-January dose of rain gave the vines a pre-harvest boost which, combined with ideal ripening weather, made for a very good pinot noir vintage. Although the Redgums failed to flower and the Silvereyes attacked the early ripening varieties with more than usual vigour, the use of netting at Moss Wood reduced the loss of crop to a minimum. The pinot was picked a touch over the desired ripeness at 13.6° beaume.



This was Keith's first vintage following his most recent trip to Burgundy where he worked with Gerard Potel at Domaine de la Pousse d'Or in Volnay. Since 1991 he had been adapting Burgundian technique to the situation at Moss Wood and the time in Burgundy gave him renewed confidence in that approach.

The 1998 Moss Wood 'Margaret River' Pinot Noir [cont.]

Keith uses sulphur dioxide and low temperatures to arrest fermentation so that the grapes can be given a cold soak for 48 hours. This maceration of grapes encourages contact between the must and the skins and enhances extraction of colour and fruit flavour. As no alcohol is involved at this stage of the process, this is able to occur without extraction of tannins. Post Burgundy, Keith was even more rigorous in keeping temperatures low to allow this pre-fermentation maceration. It has been usual to leave the wine on skins for 48 hours after fermentation: that is, after 0° beaume has been reached. The Burgundian approach had been to taste the wine regularly to monitor the changes in tannin structure. With time on skins, the tannin structure softens. As soon as there ceases to be a continued improvement in the softening of the tannins, the wine is taken off skins. The result, Keith believes, is a better balance of fruit and tannins.

The Burgundians are fussy about getting wine into barrel quickly and make sure that it goes through the malolactic in barrel. In the past, Keith has been happy to allow the Pinot to remain on its gross lees in stainless steel, especially as it is easier to control the onset of the malolactic fermentation in a large tank. However, with the 1998 vintage he allowed the wine to settle for five days on its gross lees before transferring it to barrel where it underwent the malolactic.

As usual, the Pinot Noir was given 22 months in oak, one-third of which was new. As always it was given light filtration through a silk stocking before being bottled. While it is difficult to make specific comments about the influence of the new techniques, Keith believes that they have made a difference. He has the confidence to continue to implement them as part of the standard winemaking procedure at Moss Wood.

In commenting on the wine, Keith indicated that he believed that the Cabernet, which ripened after the rains finished was softer and friendlier with sweet, soft, spicy fruit flavours and a gentle tannin structure. On the other hand, the reasonably small crop of Pinot was ripe with greater concentration and a taut structure. He saw it as less savoury than the 1995 and the 1991.

The 1998 Moss Wood Pinot Noir is beautifully fragrant with ripe, raspberry, dark cherry and spicy oak aromas; soft, velvety, fleshy texture; dark cherry and plum flavours and quite firm, dry tannins. There are some complex tobacco leaf, spicy, gamey notes which are likely to develop as secondary characters with age. It is a vibrant, rich and concentrated pinot with good varietal definition, a degree of finesse and substantial weight. Like most of the Moss Wood Pinots, it has the structure, power, depth of flavour and acidity to ensure a medium term cellaring future.

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
1999	22 February	13.8°	8.0	9

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Order form

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2000 Moss Wood Semillon \$25.30 per bottle – \$303.60 per doz.

1999 Moss Wood 'Glenmore Vineyard' Cabernet Sauvignon \$31.90 per bottle – \$382.80 per doz.

1998 Moss Wood 'Margaret River' Pinot Noir \$37.40 per bottle – \$448.80 per doz.

Mixed orders as requested to add up to six or twelve bottle cases only.

ALL PRICES ARE GST INCLUSIVE

Please supply

Qty

\$

2000 Moss Wood Semillon		@ \$25.30 per bottle/\$303.60 per doz	
1999 'Glenmore Vineyard' Cabernet Sauvignon		@ \$31.90 per bottle/\$382.80 per doz	
1998 Moss Wood Pinot Noir		@ \$37.40 per bottle/\$448.80 per doz	

Please add freight as outlined overleaf:

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Additional case/s		@ \$		rate per case	
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MOSS WOOD

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Freight charges

ALL PRICES ARE GST INCLUSIVE

Please allow three weeks for processing and a further two weeks for delivery of your order.

CAPITAL CITIES:

	Perth	Melbourne	Sydney	Adelaide	Canberra	Brisbane	Darwin
1st case	\$11.00	\$14.70	\$14.70	\$13.60	\$15.80	\$18.80	\$18.80
Additional case each	\$6.75	\$9.25	\$9.25	\$8.70	\$10.35	\$12.00	\$12.00
Hobart and Launceston			\$29.95 \$21.70				1st case each additional case

COUNTRY AREAS:

Margaret River, Busselton & Bunbury WA		\$4.90	each case
Other WA country areas		\$22.85 \$16.35	1st case each additional case
Victoria, South Australia and NSW country areas		\$23.40 \$19.60	1st case each additional case
ACT country areas		\$15.80 \$10.35	1st case each additional case
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