

Moss



Wood

Newsletter

No. 5

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The 1986 Cabernet & the 1983 Cabernet (Special Reserve)

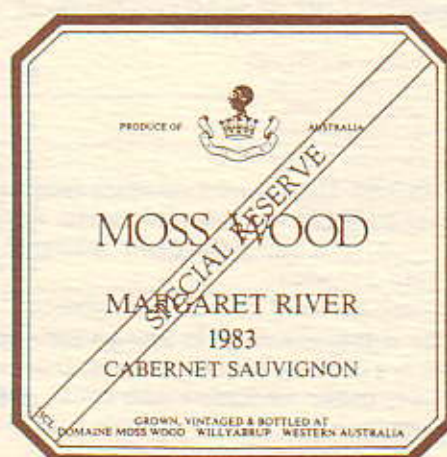
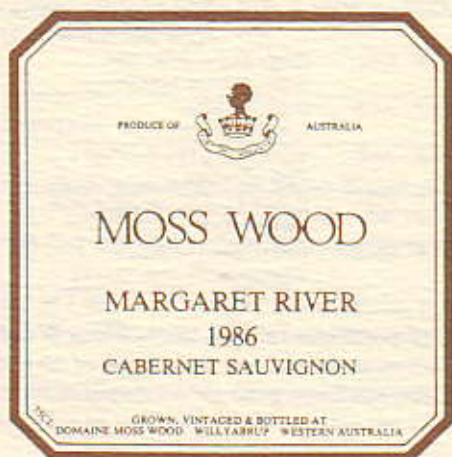
Excessive heat stress in summer 1985 appeared to affect the young buds at a time when the bunches for the new year were developing in the new buds and consequently fewer formed. This was complicated by indifferent weather during the flowering period and so yields of the cabernet fruit were down by about 25%. For the rest of the growing season the weather was mild and the cabernet was picked on schedule in March.

The resulting wine shows a degree of concentration not often seen in Moss Wood Cabernets. The colour is bright red and quite dense and the nose is rich with mulberry or blackcurrant fruit character.

In its early stages, this powerful, young wine was quite cumbersome and took some time to gradually reveal itself. However, once it did, it was obviously quite lush. Consequently, although it was only kept in oak for the normal twelve months, the percentage of new oak used was increased from 30% to 50%. Keith Mugford was confident that the wine had the depth of fruit to benefit from that kind of oak treatment and consequently produce a well-balanced cabernet. The new oak treatment is not a dominating feature of the wine.

The 1986 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon has a pronounced herbaceous nose with nuances of spicy oak. On the palate, the wine has good acidity, round, rich, ripe fruit and strong tannins which at present are quite dominant. It is well-structured and has a finish of considerable length. The 1986 Cabernet is an elegant wine which needs time for the excellent fruit to open out and the tannins to soften.

Keith and Clare see the tannins as reminiscent of the 1981 vintage while the rich fruit characters remind them of the 1977 Cabernet. Although it has more tannin than the 1985, they see the wine as a typical, well-balanced Moss Wood Cabernet. The 1986 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon does have considerable cellaring potential, in Keith's opinion, for ten years.



This is only the second reserve wine produced at Moss Wood in its sixteen year history. The other was the Montgomery Trophy winning 1980 Moss Wood Cabernet (Special Reserve) which some critics believe to be the best wine produced in Western Australia. In Keith Mugford's opinion, these are the two wines which Moss Wood have produced with the class to justify the extra oak treatment.

cont.

Although the 1982-3 growing season was not excessively hot, it was consistently warm, and so the fruit ripened consistently and quickly. This resulted in tremendous, rich, ripe fruit, with mulberry or chocolatey overtones, and a big, tannin structure.

A section of the 1983 Cabernet wine was placed in barrel for a further eighteen months - a total of two and a half years in old, French oak. These barrels were used so that the wine would pick up the lovely, developing characters of old oak without being excessively dominated by them.

The 1983 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon (Special Reserve) shows big, developed fruit characters on the nose with aromas of mulberries and chocolates (the latter from the bottle aging) as well as the spicy, smokey characters of old oak. On the palate, it is surprisingly soft, has very good acid, mouth-filling flavour, a rich, round structure and big tannins.

At present, the bouquet is outstanding and, although the wine is drinking quite well at the moment, it is a little closed on the palate. It will benefit from five years cellaring during which time the tannins will soften and the palate will open out to reveal all of the complex characters that the bouquet at present reveals.

Tasting Success

The American magazine *Condé Nast's Traveler* organised a tasting between the two countries which they saw as the most serious challengers to French wine supremacy; Australia and California. The results of the tasting are reported in the February 1988 issue of the magazine in an article by prominent British wine writer, Jancis Robinson entitled "High noon in the glass".

The tasting was held in neutral London following some dissatisfaction in the American camp that their wines for the Qantas Cup arrived only a day before the competition. Jancis Robinson and Maureen Ashley went to a great deal of trouble to see that the competition was run in perfect conditions and that each of the country's great wines were represented. The panel was absolutely formidable: **Jancis Robinson**, **Baron Patrick de Ladoucette** from Pouilly-Fumé, **Michael Broadbent**, wine writer and consultant for Christie's, **Alexis Lichine**, wine writer and owner of Prieuré-Lichine, **Hubrecht Duijker**, Dutch wine writer whose works are widely available in English, the Belgian editor of *Gault-Millau*, **Jo Gryn** and Italian winemaker, **Esio Rivella**.

Jancis Robinson comments:

This powerful panel reflected Europe's increased curiosity about parvenu wines. No wine industry is more like California's than Australia's. Each relies on traditions exported from Europe but practised in a warmer and more even climate. Over the last two decades, both have made a near-fanatical move towards refinement in the winery and quality in the vineyard...

After the usual twenty to twenty-five minutes tasting (the Cabernet Sauvignon's) and marking in slurred-punctuated silence, Michael Broadbent raised his aristocratic profile and said, sighing, "What a *marvellous* range of wines! Much more consistent than the Chardonnays, which I expected to enjoy more, actually." Superlatives also bubbled from Gryn and Duijker, two of Europe's best judges of Bordeaux.

But then, of course, we had just tasted the very best - and most highly priced - cabernet-based wines from each country...

THE RESULTS

1.	15.6	AUS	Penfolds Bin 707 1983 SOUTH AUSTRALIA	\$24.00	5.	13.9	CAL	Ridge Monte Bello 1984 SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS	\$40.00
2.	15.5	AUS	Moss Wood 1985 MARGARET RIVER ★	\$15.00	6.	13.7	AUS	Petersons 1985 HUNTER VALLEY	\$11.00*
3.	15.1	CAL	Duckhorn Vineyards 1983 NAPA VALLEY	\$17.00	7.	12.9	AUS	Yarra Yering Dry Red No. 1 1982 VICTORIA	\$15.00
3.	15.1	CAL	Opus One 1980 NAPA VALLEY	\$50.00- \$65.00*	8.	12.5	CAL	Robert Mondavi Reserve 1978 NAPA VALLEY	\$50.00- \$55.00
4.	14.9	AUS	Lindemans St. George Vineyard 1984 COONAWARRA	\$20.00	9.	11.6	CAL	Heitz Cellars Martha's Vineyard 1979 NAPA VALLEY	\$45.00

The results of the tasting were a great triumph for Australia and, of particular interest to us, Moss Wood wines. To win second place in a much lauded class from an extremely well-credentialed panel has been cause of no end of pleasure at Moss Wood. No doubt our readers with stocks of the 1985 Cabernet Sauvignon in their cellars will share in the glow of the success.

The star next to Moss Wood (printed in red in the original article) was to indicate Jancis Robinson's selection of the one wine in each category which represented a balance of value and quality.

Four of the five American wines - 1980 Opus One, 1984 Ridge Monte Bello, 1978 Robert Mondavi Reserve and the 1979 Heitz Martha's Vineyard are reserve wines, the premium blends of companies with significant holdings of cabernet fruit. Their retail prices in \$US are more than three or four times that of the Moss Wood wines.

Readers' Comments

We were delighted to read a generous comment on one of our wines in the *Mentelle Notes*, newsletter of our friends at nearby Cape Mentelle. Written with a clear Scottish accent, Guy Grant praised the Moss Wood Semillon saying that "apart from our own blend we heartily recommend the very classy unblended semillon being produced by Moss Wood."

If you aren't already familiar with the wines of Cape Mentelle or Cloudy Bay, we recommend that you make the opportunity to taste them. The elegant Cape Mentelle Cabernets are classic wines of the Margaret River area.

We were also pleased to see the comments of Bill Thompson, the Night Owl, writing in the Perth *Sunday Times* about a bottle of the 1978 Moss Wood Dry Red which he enjoyed recently. The 1978 is the only vintage of Cabernet to be de-classified at Moss Wood so far. At a vertical tasting of all of the Moss Wood Cabernets organised by the Bunbury Baccus Club, we tasted two bottles of this wine. One was drinking beautifully, but the other was disappointing.

We are happy to publish the following comments from readers of the newsletter.

Phil Bapty of Bentley in Western Australia has been buying Moss Wood wines since the first release. He has found the Cabernets and the unwooded Semillons most to his taste and these wines are the highlights of his dinner parties. In the last few months he has served the 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon, the 1976 Cabernet/Malbec, the 1981 Cabernet Sauvignon and several of the 1981 Semillons. All his reds were decanted and allowed to breathe for one to four hours.

Phil comments, "The '73 Cabernet was superb - at its very great best, mature and mellow but not old. I will be drinking the few remaining bottles over the next five years. The '76 Cabernet/Malbec is getting tired. What a shame. The last 3 or 4 will have to be drunk this year. The '81 Cabernet seemed young - tannin masking the fruit to some extent. Better in 3 years? I think so, and better still 3 years after that.

The '81 Semillon appears ageless. As young and fresh as the '86 and '87s. I have put the rest away for the 1990s."

Graeme Nimmo of Holland Park in Queensland writes, "Last year I opened a bottle of the 1980 Pinot Noir for a blind tasting in my home. The wine had a good depth of colour and a lovely floral bouquet. The palate was full and lively with a lingering finish. It was rated highly by all present and much younger than its true age.

I might add that I have recently tried several bottles of the 1985 Pinot which I greatly enjoyed and which I presume will have an even bigger future."

Peter Andrews of French's Forrest in New South Wales writes, "Although it hardly qualifies as old wine, I've enjoyed immensely a few bottles of '83 Pinot. My favourite Pinot (by any maker) to date. I particularly like the herbaceous qualities."

Tony Ryan of Floreat Park in Western Australia served the 1975 MossWood Cabernet Sauvignon at a long, leisurely Sunday lunch in company with a 1980 Pichon Lalande, a 1980 Hermitage from Robert Chauve and a 1966 Penfolds Grange. While the Hermitage was a trifle disappointing, perhaps lacking on its finish, the others were outstanding wines, all drinking superbly.

The 1975 Moss Wood Cabernet has incredible depth of rich fruit flavour, superb balance and wonderful length. Tony says that the group showed more than a little enthusiasm when he offered another of his 1975 Cabernets for a repeat luncheon in twelve months time.

Editor's Comment

In asking for readers' comments on Moss Wood wines you've drunk recently, we expected only wildly favourable comments. The temptation to quickly bin the two letters which offered less than the expected rave reviews was tempered by the fact that one of the writers works in the *Choice Magazine* Building*.

Carmel Chow of Cremorne in New South Wales comments, "Recently tried your '82 Cabernet Sauvignon. Opaque colour and very dry. The huge tannin probably outguns the fruits. Reminiscent of some '75 claret."

Brian Ray of City Beach in Western Australia writes, "Recently we have tried the 1981 Cabernet which appears to have lost quite a bit of its fruity freshness (It's the first time any of the Cabernets of ours have done this.)

I am pleased to say that last week Maureen and I took the children to a B.Y.O. * where we (the adults mostly) slowly consumed a 1983 Pinot - which was quite lovely."

*For our overseas readers: *Choice Magazine* is a consumer protection monthly and a B.Y.O. is a restaurant to which you can bring your own wines.

Cabernet Vintage Chart

1973 Drink up. There is now considerable variation with some bottles being stunning and others disappointing. The best bottles show sound fruit in good condition.

1974 These stylish wines are still sound and show no signs of decline at this stage. Although quite tannic, they are more approachable than previously, and the best bottles, show good balance.

1975 These are gentle aged wines showing considerable complexity. Certainly one of the best wines made by Moss Wood, drinking superbly at present, but can be cellared for three to four more years. The 1975s have ripe, rich fruit, are well-balanced and have an amazingly long finish.

1976 The rich, chocolatey wines from this vintage are still soft and ripe. They are classic aged wines which have well-rounded, developed characters. As two year old wines, it was thought they would not last but they've defied those predictions. Probably at their best now and should be drunk over the next few years.

1977 These are big wines which can be enjoyed over the next five or six years.

1979 These wines are still looking remarkably young. They have fresh fruit flavours, soft acid and are in good shape. Although drinking close to their peak, they are likely to last for the next five years.

1980 If these wines have been cellared in perfect conditions, their tannins may be still a little too aggressive and need more time. If cellared in good conditions, they should be drinking close to their peak.

1980 (Special Reserve) Complex wines with enormous depth of flavour. Drinking superbly but it will be five years before they reach their peak.

1981 This is a young wine with tight, fresh fruit and strong tannins. Will benefit from three or four years more cellaring and may need as many as seven to ten years to be at their best.

1982 This is a soft, round wine which shows delicate fruit and lovely oak. It will probably be at its best over the next three years but shows no signs of any immediate decline.

1983 A huge, tightly structured wine which is rich in mulberry fruit, and will need from seven to ten years cellaring to show its best.

1983 (Special Reserve) This wine is being released with two years aging in oak and three in bottle. It is likely to be drinking at its best in five year's time.

1984 A very fine, elegant wine that is developing beautifully. It has delicate fruit flavour, reminiscent of cherries, good structure and considerable length. Although it should be drinking quite well in about three years or so, it is likely to be at its best in seven to ten year's time.

1985 This generous vintage produced an appealing wine with a powerful bouquet, rich, berry fruit flavours and a tight structure. It will keep for many years and is likely to have similar cellaring potential to the 1979.

From the Winery

Hugh Johnson

Hugh Johnson's *Pocket Wine Book*, now in its eleventh edition with sales approaching three million is the most authoritative and best book of its kind. Moss Wood is one of only three wineries in Australia given a four star rating by Johnson. Another is ranked as two to four stars and a major producer is given one to four stars.

Johnson says: "Best Margaret River winery (with only 29 acres). Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay all with rich fruit flavours not unlike the best Californians."

Vintage 1988: Eloise Mugford

Any late replies to mail in the past few months can be blamed on Eloise Mugford (7lb 5oz) born to Clare (and Keith) on 19 May 1988.

The 1988 Moss Wood wines are bound to be superb.

The 1984 Cabernet: Fit for a Queen

When Queen Elizabeth II dined at Government House on her recent visit to Australia, she was served the 1984 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon.

The wine was chosen by the Governor, Professor Gordon Reid, from the stocks of Moss Wood wines kept in the Government House cellar.

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, 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, are welcome. Contact Keith or Clare beforehand to make arrangements if you wish to visit.

Moss Wood Wines In the UK

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 living in Australia who wishes to have Moss Wood wines delivered in the United Kingdom should contact Keith or Clare at the vineyard for details.