



# MOSS WOOD



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## Moss Wood 2004 Chardonnay

The latest vintage of Moss Wood Chardonnay is best understood in the light of developments at the winery since the 2000 vintage. With the 2000 and 2001 Moss Wood Chardonnays, the prime focus (apart from making good wine) was on resolving random oxidation problems which have afflicted many white wine producers and some Moss Wood Chardonnays from 1992 onwards. To do this, we revisited the composition of the Chardonnay in an attempt to find ways of promoting flavour ripeness at lower sugar levels. We are seeking to achieve lower levels of alcohol and higher levels of natural acidity in an attempt to further preserve the freshness of the wine. From 2002 onwards, experimentation has been carried out in the vineyard to aggressively increase the levels of fruit exposure. This is done by hand after flowering and before veraison and is possible because of the Scott Henry trellising. Every second row now has its bunches fully exposed, enabling us to pick the grapes slightly earlier than usual (at lower sugar levels) without any signs of greenness in the fruit.

The impact of this work is seen in both the 2003 and 2004 Chardonnays, where the levels of alcohol are between 13.5

and 14%, rather than the 14.5% seen in previous vintages. The style has changed slightly: acidity levels are a little higher and pH a touch lower. In flavour terms, what used to be ripe melon and peach has become white peach and nectarine, with hints of grapefruit and lime. The aim is to make more tightly structured, steelier whites that have more savouriness and minerality, and are less supple than before - wines that may age much better in the way of the best whites of Burgundy.

Because the wines have lower alcohol levels than before, we have found that they go through malolactic fermentation

much more easily and so about half the batches go right through - a big step forward. Importantly, they do this without getting overt, or dominant, malo characters which are further ameliorated by the time spent on lees in barrel.

The 2004 Chardonnay yields were slightly above average. The vintage was a good one, especially for the early ripening varieties such as chardonnay. For the first time, there was no destemming and the grapes were whole bunch pressed. The juice was settled after pressing for 48 hours, pumped into stainless steel tanks with 2% solids, then seeded for fermentation. After fermentation, it was transferred into 100% new French oak barrels with daily battonage (stirring) until dryness.

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Trials were conducted into the effects of different levels of fruit exposure, with the trial batches fermented separately. The batches were tasted and the results taken into account during preparation of the vineyard for the 2005 vintage.

After nine months in barrel, the wine was racked into a blending tank where it was cold stabilised, fined and filtered before being bottled at the end of February 2005. 71% were sealed with screw cap and 29% with cork, under the assumption that most of the cork stock will be used for export.

The **Moss Wood 2004 Chardonnay** has a complex nose showing lime and grapefruit citrus aromas, hints of roast cashew, some caramel from the malolactic fermentation and light spicy oak. It's flavoursome and lively, deep and long, with white peach and nectarine characters adding flesh to the mid-palate. It's tighter, leaner and more restrained at this stage but clearly focused with underlying power, persistence and a clear, bright finish that refreshes. It will fill out and appear even more approachable with cellaring and should be at its best after ten years.

## RATINGS: Moss Wood Chardonnay

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Vintage Rating (out of 10)
2004	23 Feb	12.7	7.7	9+
2003	25 Feb	13.3	6.12	9
2002	04 Mar	13.7	2.45	9+
2001	15 Feb	13.4	7.51	10
2000	1 Mar	13.4	10.0	8
1999	3 Mar	13.4	6.89	10
1998	5 Mar	14.1	4.08	8
1997	7 Mar	13.6	2.58	8
1996	20 Feb	13.2	9.0	7
1995	17 Feb	13.7	7.0	9
1994	28 Feb	13.6	9.0	8
1993	4 Mar	13.6	6.36	9
1992	27 Feb	13.5	7.3	7
1991	25 Mar	12.8	10.29	9
1990	6 Mar	12.9	6.85	10
1989	20 Feb	12.9	7.82	7+
1988	12 Feb	12.5	11.2	7
1987	24 Feb	12.9	10.13	8
1986	26 Feb	12.9	9.1	7
1985	22 Feb	12.5	8.44	7
1984	18 Feb	13.1	7.73	8
1983	18 Feb	12.6	8.7	7



# Moss Wood Ribbon Vale Vineyard Reds

When we acquired the Ribbon Vale property in 2000 we realised it would take some time before the vineyard could be adapted to suit the Moss Wood way of doing things. Most commentators expect the revitalisation of a vineyard to take five years. While the 2002 Moss Wood Ribbon Vale Vineyard reds showed a great deal of promise, the 2003 wines suggest that the vineyard has taken a significant leap forward in less time than some expected.

The major changes involved re-trellising the vines to improve shoot positioning and fruit exposure - to manage yields and to reduce the powerful tannins that the vineyard naturally produces.

This vintage, nothing new was done to the vineyard. It has been revamped, we have established procedures and so the vineyard should be delivering fruit of the quality we expect to see. We're at the no excuses stage, excluding vintage variation.

The 2003 vintage is well regarded in Wilyabrup. It was a consistently warm year with some hot weather, though no extreme spikes as occurred in 2004. As a result, it was an early season in which yields were lower than usual. It was a great year for cabernet, with ripe redcurrant and cassis flavours, rich texture and ripe concentrated tannins. The merlot has lovely toffee, aniseed and mulberry flavours.



## Moss Wood 2003 Ribbon Vale Vineyard Cabernet Merlot

The cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and merlot were all vinified separately, according to established practice at Moss Wood. The grapes were destemmed and allowed to ferment at warm temperatures of up to 32°C. The must was plunged four times a day during fermentation and the juice left on skins until tasting confirmed we were happy with the tannin balance. The wine was pressed into barrel (one-third new French oak), where it completed malolactic fermentation. Blind tastings were conducted to determine the proportions of each variety that would go into the final blend. Interestingly, results of the tastings for the 2003 wine were consistent with results in previous years. So the blend remained relatively constant: 53% cabernet sauvignon; 32% merlot; 10% cabernet franc and 5% petit verdot. The different barrels of cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and merlot were blended in tank. The blended wine was returned to barrels for 22 months and then filtered and bottled. For the 2003 vintage, there were 1,200 dozen of this wine.

The **Moss Wood 2003 Ribbon Vale Vineyard Cabernet Merlot** has a restrained nose with savoury, dark plum and cassis aromas, ripe but savoury rather than sweet fruit, smooth texture, impressive depth of flavour and restrained power. The fruit, oak and tannins have integrated admirably and the finish is firm though approachable. It will improve in the short term and can be consumed with confidence, if well cellared, for at least the next ten years. In our view, this is the best yet under this label.



# Moss Wood 2003 Ribbon Vale Vineyard Merlot



While some of the merlot was used in the cabernet blend, the remainder was returned to barrel, where it stayed from March 2003 until January 2005. After fining trials determined that fining was not required, it was filtered and bottled. We consider this to be a serious merlot, albeit one of very small production (370 cases in 2003).

The **Moss Wood 2003 Ribbon Vale Vineyard Merlot** is fragrant, supple and smooth with rich, concentrated cassis and plum flavours and a firm finish featuring ripe, approachable tannins. It has more obvious sweet fruit than the Cabernet Merlot, a velvety texture, power and balance. Like the Cabernet Merlot, it will improve in the short term and can be consumed with confidence for at least the next ten years, if well cellared.



## The 2005 Vintage at Moss Wood

Although the total rainfall during 2004 was below average in Margaret River, there was substantial rainfall during spring. While the overall impact of this was positive, the rain during the growing season did adversely affect berry set. One unwanted side effect of the rain was the need to renew sprays more frequently.

As an aside, the weather station at Moss Wood sends raw data to a main computer, which then updates predictive disease models four times a day to inform us of optimum spraying times.

Because of the inclement spring weather, bunch weights were down slightly and yields were average, without disease problems. Temperatures were consistently warm without any high peaks, ensuring even ripening of all varieties. This allowed the gradual accumulation of sugar and hence flavour development. Early indicators of aromas and fruit flavours are all positive, creating excitement at Moss Wood about the potential of the vintage.

We were lucky enough to have the assistance of Jane Forma and Dominic Allen for vintage. Jane is currently studying at Adelaide University and returns for her final year. Dominic is studying at the University of Western Australia and will also be completing his final year.

# The Netting Story

Even though the entire vineyard is netted at vintage, it is always a relief when the marri gums flower early and their blossoms distract the birds. This happened in 2005 and resulted in only mild bird pressure.

The introduction of netting at Moss Wood was influenced by our Senior Winemaker Ian Bell's experience at his Glenmore Vineyard, where netting was vital to the survival of his crop. First used on our clonal block of chardonnay (planted 1983) because of its proximity to the trees where the marauding birds meet. Netting protects the grapes so that they can be left on the vine until optimum ripeness.

The difficulty of putting nets over vines and removing them each year meant that we were initially reluctant to adopt the practice on any major scale. Bird damaged fruit was sorted out during picking and losses accepted as part of the viticultural process. However, conversations with the company which made net applicators

resulted in the development of equipment which made the process much easier. And so, since 1998, it's been normal practice for us to net all of our vines as vintage approaches.

We have Keith's MBA studies to thank for encouraging us to look more thoroughly at the economic advantages of netting. All the data had been collected since netting was introduced but not analysed until this year. The results are dramatic. For example, since netting began in 1998, the average increase in the cabernet sauvignon yield across the vineyard was 1.67 tonnes per hectare. This amounts to 5.5 tonnes per year or an extra 400 cases of Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon. In addition to improvements in quality as a result of being able to determine picking dates based on ripeness instead of rescuing undamaged fruit, netting brings some pretty impressive economic advantages to the winery.



## Farewell Mick

Mick Middleton, who filled the position of Horticulturist at Moss Wood for the last 21 months, has moved on to do offshore work in the north of Western Australia. We wish him every success in his new career.

## ... however, Horticulture and Farm Development continues ...

Moss Wood continues to retain the consultancy services of Horticulturist Michelle Croft and her partner Mike Rossi. Michelle has been responsible for much of the beautification of the Moss Wood ornamental gardens and re-vegetation throughout our properties.

## Olives

We have our first crop of olives this year and expect to move straight from vintage to pickling and pressing. This is very much a cottage industry for us and we look forward to tasting the produce.



## Farewell Luana

Luana has left us to go on the young persons voyage of discovery and has begun her odyssey in London. We have already had one joyful email from her in which she seemed to manage to see almost every tourist attraction in London in two days. She is now tackling the task of finding a job and a more permanent residence. We wish her well in her travels.

## Welcome Rebecca

Rebecca Downie has worked locally for the last 5 years. She hails from Donnybrook, Western Australia's orchard country, and is eager to gain wine industry knowledge. She assists with accounts, general office work and hosting visitors. Like all Moss Wood employees, she is experiencing the joys of multi-skilling, having already had the opportunity to assist with labelling as well as grape harvest.

# Josh discovers Burgundy ...

Nicolas Potel (of the Potel family who owned Domaine Pousse D'Or, Volnay in Burgundy) worked with Keith, Clare and Ian at Moss Wood in 1987 and again in 1991. The strong connection between the two parties created the opportunity for our winemaker, Josh Bahen, to work with Nicolas in Nuits Saint George. Being a negociant, over 70 parcels of fruit passed the triage tables including robust Pinot Noir from Clos Vougeut, Echezeaux, Pommard and Volnay. Chardonnay parcels from villages such as Pernard Vergeles, Corton Charlemagne and Chassagne Montrachet were highlights for Josh.

A diverse team in the cellar comprising of American, South African, Australian and French nationals ensured competitiveness was always at a high, especially during pigeage (hand plunging of tanks). Josh's responsibility in the cellar was primarily Chardonnay fermentation. Activities included barrel selection, racking, density measurement, temperature control and plenty of tasting. An in-house traditional Burgundian chef combined with Nicolas' cellar ensured the team was exceptionally well catered for. An entire cow was purchased, then butchered on the kitchen table during the vintage. The Burgundians are certainly passionate about their food and wine!

After vintage, Josh toured through Loire Valley, Cognac, Bordeaux, Southwest and Languedoc-Roussillon with Guillaume Maugeais, visiting French cellar-hand at Moss Wood in 2004. An old Peugeot, wine, cheese and plenty of French culture ensured a good time. Josh commented that it was: "A fantastic trip, glad to be A-L-I-V-E and back at Moss Wood for the 2005 vintage."



# ... Burgundy discovers Moss Wood

We were extremely privileged to have the assistance of Bertrand Straebler, from Laboure' Roi in Meursault for the first half of the 2005 vintage. His knowledge, skill and experience certainly benefited the team. Bertrand showed interest especially in our winemaking techniques, with plenty of discussions taking place over the differences between Moss Wood and Laboure's Roi methods. Espionage was certainly a common talking point by both parties.

Being a Burgundian, fine food and wine were high on his priority list. Fresh abalone, kangaroo and Western Australian dhufish, combined with local wines, were some of his highlights. The Margaret River beaches also provided Bertrand with some relief after a long day in the winery.

Bertrand's input was certainly appreciated by the team, in both vineyard and winery. If possible, we are all very keen to see his return for Vintage 2006.