



# MOSS WOOD



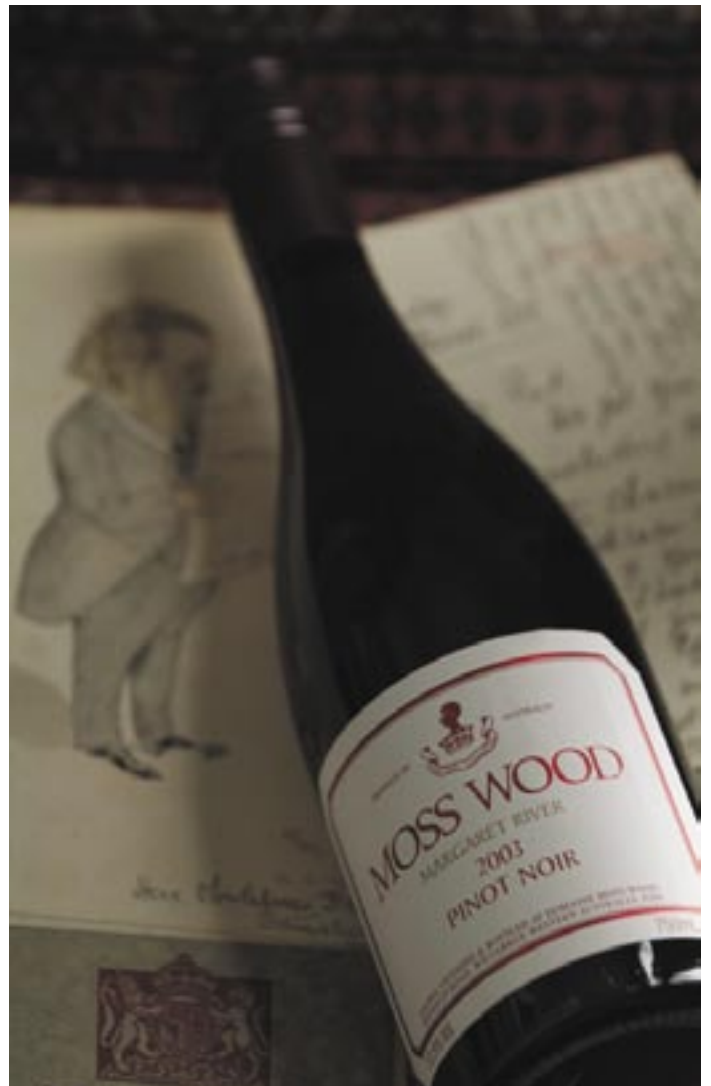
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## *Moss Wood 2003 Pinot Noir*

This was a great vintage for pinot noir at Moss Wood; the relatively small crop followed a consistently warm season in which vine development and fruit maturation progressed at an even pace. There were no problems with rain and so there were none of the diseases associated with wet conditions and, because of netting, there were no problems with birds. Keith believes that the Moss Wood team could not have handled vineyard management better. Crop thinning was carried out pre-veraison and leaf thinning took place to ensure a high level of fruit exposure as the grapes ripened. Sampling of the vineyard was spot on and all the pinot was harvested, fully ripe, between 12.8 to 13° beaume.

Winemaking was routine after that with the grapes cold soaked in chilled tanks for 48 hours before seeding took place to start the fermentation. The vats were hand-plunged four times a day until after fermentation, when this was reduced to once a day. The juice was tasted regularly until the right tannin balance was achieved at which time the grapes were pressed, the wine transferred to barrel to undergo malolactic fermentation, then adjusted and racked back into barrels (one-third new French barriques). There it remained for 18 months before being bottled in November 2004.

The **Moss Wood 2003 Pinot Noir** has bright, fragrant cherry and plum aromas, spicy oak and good concentration of dark berry flavours, complexity, finesse and smoothness of texture and a long, satisfying finish with well-integrated tannins. At present the wine is typically Pinot Noir and very enjoyable. However, the quality of the vintage and comparison with those listed overleaf suggests that it could be cellared with confidence for twenty years.



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## Tasting the changes

For the first time, Keith and Clare chose to taste the new release (2003) Pinot Noir with wines produced from similar low-cropping vintages. The results of the tasting provoked the following synopsis of the changes made to pinot production over the past 20 years.

### The wines:

#### 1983 Pinot Noir

Straight-forward, ripe plum and strawberry flavours with mellow, earthy, tarry notes. Matured beyond its peak except for occasional bottles.

#### 1988 Pinot Noir

Clear stalky, spicy notes on the nose, generous dark fruit flavours, velvety texture. Stalky, even vegetative, and spicy with bigger tannin structure.

#### 1995 Pinot Noir

Deep to medium ruby colour, dark fruits, earthy, spicy, fruit cake flavours, complex, rich and full-bodied with relatively firm tannin.

#### 1998 Pinot Noir

This proved to be a younger fresher version of the 1995 with a plump, ripe sweet-fruited palate and some complex white pepper flavours. It looked youthful, ripe, plump and more alcoholic - in fact, almost porty.

Keith commented that 1983 and 2003 were similar vintages. Although the 1983 showed some signs of the primitive techniques and technology of the times, the wine had lasted well. He felt that there had been substantial refinements in the intervening years which had led to a change in wine quality although perhaps it was a 5% rather than 50% improvement. So even though science has moved on, the 1983 wasn't disgraced in any way.

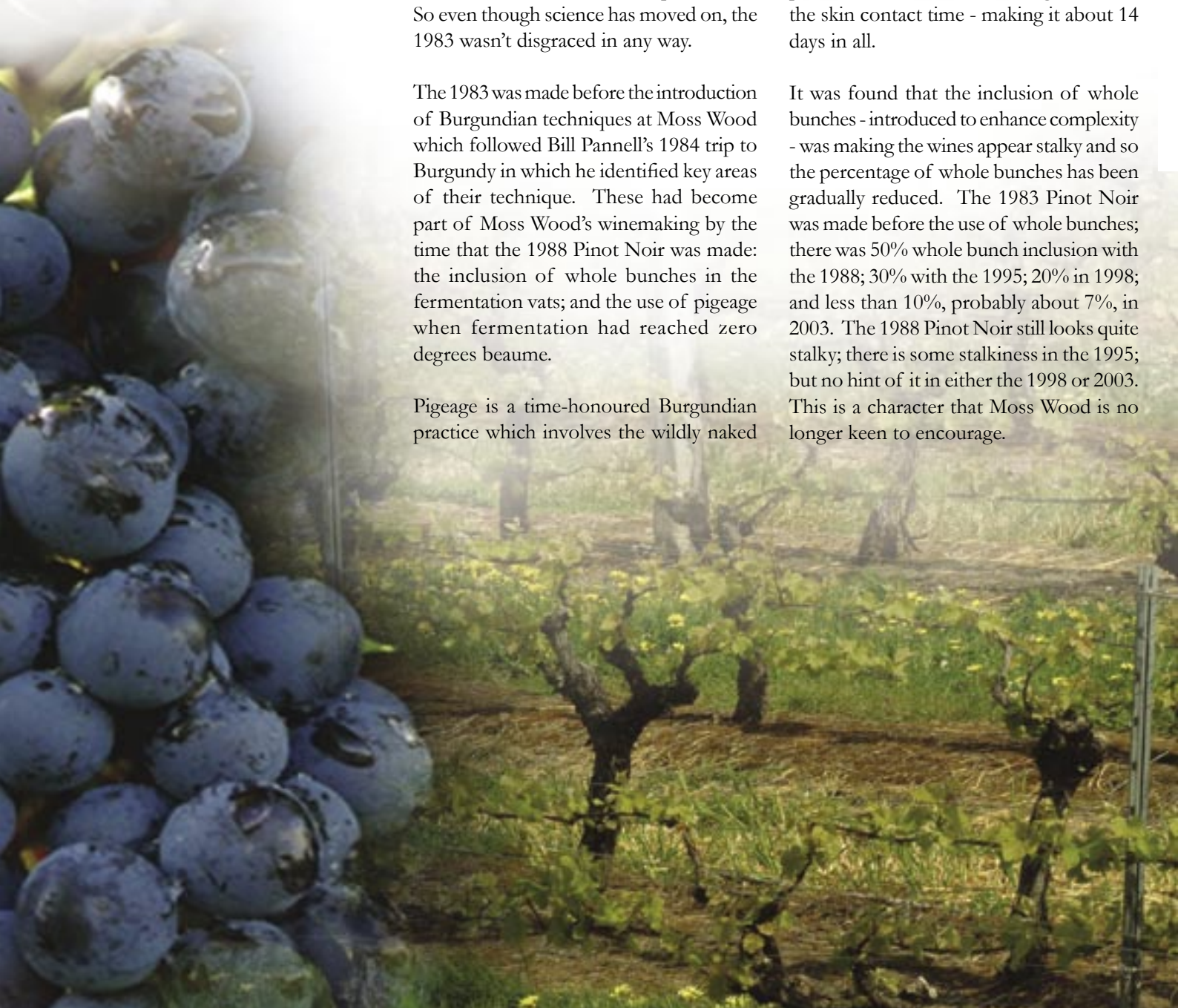
The 1983 was made before the introduction of Burgundian techniques at Moss Wood which followed Bill Pannell's 1984 trip to Burgundy in which he identified key areas of their technique. These had become part of Moss Wood's winemaking by the time that the 1988 Pinot Noir was made: the inclusion of whole bunches in the fermentation vats; and the use of pigeage when fermentation had reached zero degrees beaume.

Pigeage is a time-honoured Burgundian practice which involves the wildly naked

winemaking staff stomping on grapes to squeeze out more juice - at 0° beaume - and so extend fermentation and skin contact time for about three days (taking the time for fermentation from 7 to 10 days). Keith expressed mild disappointment that too few of the female staff took advantage of the fact that Moss Wood is an equal opportunity employer and saw fit to help out in this crucial vintage task. Worse still, it has been found that hand plunging does the job as well as foot stomping and pigeage has all but disappeared from work practice at the winery.

Pre-fermentation cold soaking was introduced in 1991 to encourage better colour and flavour with less extraction and less aggressive tannins. The grapes were soaked in chilled vats for two days before the temperature was allowed to rise to 18°C so that fermentation could begin. This pre-fermentation cold-soaking extended the skin contact time - making it about 14 days in all.

It was found that the inclusion of whole bunches - introduced to enhance complexity - was making the wines appear stalky and so the percentage of whole bunches has been gradually reduced. The 1983 Pinot Noir was made before the use of whole bunches; there was 50% whole bunch inclusion with the 1988; 30% with the 1995; 20% in 1998; and less than 10%, probably about 7%, in 2003. The 1988 Pinot Noir still looks quite stalky; there is some stalkiness in the 1995; but no hint of it in either the 1998 or 2003. This is a character that Moss Wood is no longer keen to encourage.



## *RATINGS: Moss Wood Pinot Noir*

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Rating (out of 10)
2005	08 Feb	12.8	6.13	9+
2004	14 Feb	13.0	6.4	9
2003	11 Feb	12.7	4.8	10
2002	07 Feb	13.0	4.3	10
2001	16 Feb	13.7	10.0	9+
2000	28 Feb	14.0	11.4	8
1999	22 Feb	13.6	8.0	9
1998	13 Feb	13.6	8.1	9
1997	02 Mar	14.3	6.0	8+
1996	15 Feb	13.4	9.0	9
1995	14 Feb	13.6	9.2	9+
1994	01 Mar	13.5	11.0	9
1993	03 Mar	13.3	8.2	8
1992	28 Feb	13.5	8.8	8
1991	10 Mar	13.3	10.0	9
1990	16 Mar	13.4	8.5	9
1989	15 Mar	12.9	6.5	6
1988	10 Feb	13.1	6.0	8
1987	24 Feb	12.9	5.8	8
1986	24 Feb	13.3	5.8	10
1985	25 Feb	13.3	6.4	10
1984	16 Feb	12.9	5.7	6
1983	19 Feb	12.85	6.0	6

## *Changes in the Vineyard*

At the time of the 1983 vintage, the pinot noir vines were shoot thinned and trimmed but fruit exposure was limited because there was little shoot positioning. The trellising system used at the time didn't provide ideal fruit exposure and so ripening lacked consistency, resulting in some leafy characters in the wines. The introduction of Scott Henry trellising from 1990 meant that the vines were manipulated from early in the growing season with the shoots being positioned vertically. This gave much better fruit exposure and therefore more consistent ripening, with the flavour profile of the wine more even under Scott Henry. It also meant that the Moss Wood team could see differences between the ripe and green fruit, as well as being able to detect more easily changes as the grapes ripened.

By 1995, machine leaf removal was introduced to optimise fruit exposure and by 2001 this was supplemented by follow-up hand plucking of leaves so that the vineyard operated in a more focused way. These days, vertical shoot positioning commences at the start of the growing season, continues until the shoots stop growing - just after flowering - and all the leaves around the bunches are removed by machine with a tidy-up done by hand.

We now have a much better understanding of the ripening process than 20 years ago and so it's been possible to maximise flavours earlier. This has meant earlier picking and much lower alcohols in the finished wines. We felt that the ripe, plump, more alcoholic Moss Wood Pinot Noir from the 1998 vintage was not true to the style of the wines from Burgundy. The improvements in the vineyard have enabled us to pick earlier and produce better balanced pinot noir where the alcohols are kept to between 12.5 to 13%.



# Moss Wood 2005 Semillon

What a great vintage 2005 was for Moss Wood Semillon! In the lead up to harvest, temperatures were consistently warm, without any savage heat spikes and with good rainfall coming at exactly the right time so it peaked (as Keith puts it) 'to a comfortable close'. It did rain during vintage 2005 but not until two weeks after this variety was picked. Semillon in Margaret River can be prolific and, even with all the care that is taken at Moss Wood with crop estimates and bunch thinning, it can still crop far more heavily than expected. This happened in 2004 in the School Fees Block (planted in 1996) which is now a productive vineyard and an important contributor to the Semillon. The Moss Wood team were determined that this wouldn't be repeated in 2005 and so, although the cropping was not heavy, thanks to the consistency of the weather in the build up to vintage, the vines were crop thinned. As a result, the grapes showed better ripeness and flavour than the previous vintage. The harvest compares favourably to the best years for semillon at Moss Wood: 2001, 1999 and 1996.

Some slight changes were made to the winemaking process to improve the quality of juice. Instead of picking into 10 kilogram buckets which were stacked and transported to the winery for processing, the grapes are now picked into buckets which are emptied into 500 kilogram field bins and then refrigerated to 10°C. This makes for faster, more efficient and safer transfer to the winery and reduces the processing time between picking and the grapes going into the press.

Instead of destemming first and then feeding the grapes into the press, semillon is now fed into the press as whole bunches. This improves the quality of pressing because the presence of whole bunches allows the juice to run out of the press more easily and therefore makes it less likely to oxidise. The problem with sending individual berries through has been the size of the semillon grape and its slipperiness, making them hard to press. Their skins also clog the press, slowing the flow of draining juice.

Of course, the presence of stems can

mean that the wine will pick up more phenolics, or tannin, and lose its fruit purity. The Moss Wood team monitors the build up of tannins in the wine, can stop pressing and, if necessary, dump the skins and stems. They are also able to fine the juice to reduce the phenolic content. Keith makes the point that this whole bunch pressing is the traditional French approach used on whites in Burgundy and Champagne. After the juice has settled, it is fermented in stainless steel tanks at 18°C and is lees stirred once a day until after fermentation. Lees stirring then continues once a week for six weeks to improve mouthfeel and add complexity. The wine is then fined, filtered and bottled.

The **Moss Wood 2005 Semillon** is a medium-straw colour, fresh, lively, even vibrant, with aromas of grapefruit citrus, lemon sherbet, figs and some bready notes, clean and crisp on the palate with ripe lemon, grapefruit and melon flavours and a refreshing, dry finish. It is a fine, tightly structured, multi-layered white with generosity of flavour and refreshing taut acidity. The bright fruit characters



of young Moss Wood Semillons can be enjoyed now but they will cellar for up to twenty years to provide the ultimate reward of luscious toast and honey that only old Semillon can deliver.

## RATINGS: Moss Wood Semillon

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Rating (out of 10)
2005	03 Mar	13.1	9.36	9
2004	16 Mar	13.4	13.0	8+
2003	12 Mar	12.9	9.2	9
2002	15 Mar	13.7	8.3	10
2001	03 Mar	12.9	12.8	9
2000	06 Mar	13.5	10.3	9
1999	16 Mar	13.1	11.2	9
1998	08 Mar	13.7	12.7	9
1997	12 Mar	13.9	9.6	9
1996	07 Mar	12.9	14.9	9
1995	23 Feb	13.2	10.8	8+
1994	10 Mar	12.9	11.0	9
1993	05 Mar	12.7	9.0	10
1992	03 Mar	12.5	13.9	8
1991	26 Mar	11.9	19.0	6
1990	21 Mar	12.4	13.0	8
1989	15 Mar	12.3	12.5	7
1988	18 Feb	12.1	9.6	7
1987	09 Mar	12.0	13.5	8
1986	28 Feb	12.4	9.1	7
1985	28 Feb	12.0	10.0	9
1984	05 Mar	12.2	12.4	7
1983	05 Mar	12.3	13.6	9

## *A brief history of Semillon at Moss Wood*

From the first vintage in 1976 to 1978, semillon was processed with a basket press and then from 1979 to 1994 the mechanical Howard press was used. In 1995, the Willmes membrane press was introduced. This has a similar action to the basket press, however, the modern screen allows for more juice flow and so there is a higher level of finer extraction from the grapes. With every improvement in equipment quality, Moss Wood has been able to extract more and better quality juice.

Moss Wood has always included all the pressing in the final wine because of the belief that these give slightly richer texture and a fuller mouthfeel. Lees stirring was introduced for the first time in 1991. Keith was concerned that, with the surprisingly large crop, the wine might taste dilute and so lees stirring, a technique that is generally associated with chardonnay, was introduced to improve palate weight and complexity. He was so pleased with the result that since then it has become part of normal practice with Moss Wood Semillon.

The short-lived experiment with wild yeast fermentation in 1999 and 2000 produced some of the best-ever Moss Wood Semillons. However, Keith was

pleased to abandon the use of the technique because quality improvements were only marginal and these were outweighed by the potential problems that arose from having less control over the fermentation process.

In the early days at Moss Wood, there was no shoot positioning of the semillon but the vines were hedged. From the mid 1980s, vertical shoot positioning was trialled and used from 1985 until 1988. A Scott Henry trial was set up in 1989 which meant that more extensive vertical shoot positioning was possible. Following the success of the trial, the whole semillon block was retrellised in 1993. The School Fees Block was planted in 1996 using Scott Henry trellising and fruit from this source became part of the Semillon from the 2000 vintage. In 2005, it was considered necessary to bunch thin after véraison in order to cut back yields as this block is beginning to crop more heavily as it matures. This bunch thinning is likely to continue.

There has been a gradual tendency to pick the semillon riper over the years - from 12° beaume to 12.5° and now it's up to 13°.

A wood matured Moss Wood Semillon was made in 1976 but never released



commercially. In 1977, Bill Pannell preferred the unwooded version. A trial batch of wooded semillon was made in 1982 and a 1983 Wood-Matured Semillon appeared on the market. Both wooded and unwooded styles were made for ten vintages and the last of the Wood-Matured wines was the 1992. It was felt at the time that consumer tastes had changed and people were looking for fresher, more-fruit driven wines.

## *Moss Wood 2004 "Amy's" Cabernet Sauvignon*

This wine is the youngest sibling of the Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon and the Moss Wood "Ribbon Vale Vineyard" Cabernet Merlot. It is made from cabernet sauvignon from the Montgomery Brothers vineyard (about ten kilometres south of Moss Wood near Ellensbrook Road) and the Glenmore vineyard at Yallingup, about ten kilometres north of Moss Wood.

In 2003, Max and Rita Montgomery's vineyard contributed about one-third of the volume produced and this year makes up sixty per cent while Moss Wood senior winemaker, Ian Bell's vineyard contributes a smaller percentage as the total volume of this wine has increased.

The wine is a direct descendant in style from the Moss Wood "Glenmore Vineyard" Cabernet, but as Ian Bell has chosen to market his own wine under the Glenmore label, the name had to change.

It has been called "Amy's" as a tribute to his redoubtable 85 year old grandmother, Amy Beers, who still lives on the Glenmore property where she was raised. As we foreshadowed in last year's Spring newsletter, the name has been changed from "The Amy's Blend" because of the confusion arising from the use of the term 'blend'. It was intended to signify that it was from more



than one vineyard. Around the winery we simply call it "Amy's" and most customers seem to as well. So, "Amy's" it is and long may it continue.

Keith sees the Glenmore vineyard contributing the ripe blueberry and redcurrant notes, generosity of fruit and firm tannins while the Montgomery adds the pretty aromatics, raspberries, violets and darker berry flavours and softer tannins.

The wine is given less oak treatment (spending 12 months in barrel, 25% new French oak) and less time on skins than the other Moss Wood reds. Certainly, the tannins of the 2004 are quite firm at present but Keith believes that this is just because it is a young wine and that they will soften in the short term.

The **Moss Wood 2004 "Amy's" Cabernet Sauvignon** has lively dark berry aromas with some cedary oak, rich, powerful cassis and blueberry flavours and firm but fine, ripe tannins. It is generous with vibrant fresh fruit lift, softness in the mid-palate, smooth texture and a pleasing grip to finish.

At present, "Amy's" will be hard to resist with the Sunday roast or a perfect sirloin with a robust sauce or even the very best of sausages at a casual barbecue. However, it can be cellared with confidence for a good five years.

# *Moss Wood 2005 "Ribbon Vale Vineyard" Semillon Sauvignon Blanc*

This wine has the benefit of coming from an excellent vintage in Margaret River for this classic blend. The team at Moss Wood are also becoming more confident of what the vineyard can do and are trying to extend the quality parameters even further.

They are trying to push the sauvignon blanc to the max to get vibrant primary fruit. Part of this means making the sauvignon less complex and so there is less lees stirring of the variety in tank. It is then blended back with the riper semillon (picked between 13.5 and 14° beaume) which has had full lees stirring and therefore, good weight and length. The two make a good combination with the zestiness of sauvignon blanc and full flavour and complexity of semillon.

While Keith is happy to tolerate some phenolics in the Moss Wood Semillon, the Semillon Sauvignon Blanc must have a pristine, fresh finish - so phenolics are minimised. The preferred blend is 50:50 but in 2005 it finished at 60% semillon: 40% sauvignon because Mother Nature has the final say on vineyard yields, not the vineyard manager!

More sauvignon blanc has been planted at Ribbon Vale and so it's expected that the blend will eventually be consistently 50:50.



The **Moss Wood 2005 "Ribbon Vale Vineyard" Semillon Sauvignon Blanc** is fresh and vibrant, deeply concentrated and powerfully flavoured with intense grassy, green bean characters with some lychee and guava notes and a hint of minerality. It has finesse, lively juiciness and taut zesty acidity.

## *Langton's Great Wine Estates of Western Australia Auction V*



The Langton's Great Wine Estates of Western Australia Auction V will be held at Voyager Estate on Saturday, 12 November 2005. For fine wine enthusiasts and investors, the sale represents the opportunity to taste and acquire wines from 12 of Western Australia's benchmark producers.

The 2005 collection comprises Cape Mentelle, Cullen, Devil's Lair, Houghton's, Leeuwin Estate, Howard Park, Moss Wood, Pierro, Plantagenet, Vasse Felix, Voyager Estate, and Xanadu. The live auction sale of 36 lots will include special, (must-have museum wines and a pre-release barrel of chardonnay, cabernet or shiraz from each producer). From Moss Wood, a barrel of the 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon will be available.

There is also a charitable component to the auction with each producer offering an imperial (6 litre) bottle individually labelled with original artworks by noted Western Australian artists. Moss Wood's 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon imperial has been beautifully rendered with an artistic label by Karin Luciano. All proceeds from the sale of the imperials, including buyer's premium, go to the Busselton Population Medical Research Foundation founded by Dr Kevin Cullen, who co-founded Cullen Wines with his wife, Diana.

For further information and bookings, please visit [www.langtons.com.au](http://www.langtons.com.au).