



**MOSS WOOD**  
MARGARET RIVER  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# SPRING NEWS

ISSUE 67 OCTOBER 2008

## Moss Wood 2006 Pinot Noir

In 2006, the Margaret River region experienced a very cool growing season. According to the temperature record it was the coolest in the district's short history although curiously, it is not the slowest on record for the Pinot Noir. That title goes to the 1982, so an analysis of the dates is interesting. The long term average harvest date for Pinot Noir is 23rd of February (Keith's Mum's birthday) and the 2006 was picked 9 days later on 4th of March while the 1982 was picked 18 days later on 13th March. Certainly 1982 was a cool season but it is interesting to consider the difference in yields, where the older vintage cropped at 9.84 t/ha but the younger vintage was less than half that at 3.52 t/ha. This puts the cool conditions of 2006 in better perspective. Although it had a much smaller crop and much-improved fruit exposure, the temperatures were so low it took nearly as long to ripen.

In any cool, damp season there are two main problems to contend with. Inclement weather significantly disrupts the flowering and in 2005 led to very poor fruit set and therefore the very low yield in the 2006 harvest. At 3.52

tonnes per hectare it is the third lowest on record. The smallest crop was the 1980 where, in the days when Moss Wood had few neighbours and even fewer nets, the birds took virtually all the crop (literally) and left us with 2.95 tonnes per hectare. A better comparison is the 1981 vintage where bad weather reduced the yield to 3.48 tonnes per hectare.

Interestingly, the '81 and '06 vintages both share the same harvest date and virtually the same ripeness.

Poor weather also increases the pressure of fungal disease and therefore the number of treatments the vineyard may need. Importantly, we spent more time spraying the vineyard but we also prevented any crop damage, so what little was there at least arrived in the winery in good condition.

The fruit was hand picked and destemmed into small, open fermenters and 3% of whole bunches were added. The tanks were then cooled to 10°C and the juice and skins were allowed to macerate for 48 hours. After this, fermentation was initiated by the addition of pure yeast culture, temperatures were

controlled to a maximum of 32°C and each tank was hand plunged up to four times per day to extract colour and flavour. On average, the batches spent 13 days on skins and were then pressed, racked to stainless steel tank and all pressings were included. After settling, the wine was racked off gross lees to barrels, where it underwent full malolactic fermentation. All barrels were French oak and consisted of the typical Moss Wood Pinot Noir blend of 33% new oak, 67% two and three year old oak. After 19 months in wood, it was racked and prepared for bottling with sterile filtration and then bottled on 5th November 2007.

### Tasting Notes

**Colour and condition:** Medium ruby hue, in bright condition.

**Nose:** Lively red fruits aromas of strawberry and plum, combined with liqueur cherries and rose petals. The complex background includes a variety of lifted fragrances like soft charry oak, furniture polish, cinnamon and clove spices and interesting earthy notes like malt, leather and humus.



**Palate:** An immediate impact of bright dark fruit flavours like plum, cherry and red fruits like crushed strawberries. It has medium to full body, with good weight and length and then finishes with well balanced spicy oak and strawberry seed astringency.

Having so much in common with the great 1981 vintage, we are enthusiastic about the cellaring prospects of the 2006. Its fruit depth and concentration make the wine very enjoyable now but it will develop well in the bottle and should reach full complexity at around 10 to 15 years of age. After this, the wines characters will not change greatly but it will continue to live in the bottle for at least another 10 years.

## Moss Wood 2008 Semillon

The 2007/2008 season was difficult initially with significant wind and hail through flowering. This is reflected in low yields, with the Old Block, our main planting, most affected. Its yield was 5.71 tonnes per hectare, well down from the long term average of 11.44 tonnes per hectare. Things were better in the School Fees Block where the sheltered location reduces the impact of the inclement weather. The positive impact of the adjacent trees is quite marked because it produced 15 tonnes per hectare, well up on its long term average of 12.62 tonnes per hectare.

Our overall low crop level was further exacerbated by losses to the birds. The voracious Silvereyes began their attack on the vineyards while the grapes were still green and it was a spectacular sight to see them dive-bombing the nets over the School Fees Semillon, in a desperate attempt to get to the fruit. By slamming hard into the nets the birds can force themselves through, despite the holes being only 1 cm square. It's not the first time we've seen this happen but it's the first time we have had so many get through and do harm.

After the early difficulties, the season improved with consistent warm conditions through summer and which lasted until early February. At this point the ripening slowed, as the air took on a distinct autumnal feel. During the warm conditions we anticipated an early

picking, the same as or possibly earlier than 2007, but the cool weather changed all that. The actual number of days from flowering to ripeness finished at 103, 9 days faster than the long term average of 112 but in the end it was 5 days slower than 2007.

Looking at comparable vintages from the past, there are shades of the ripe fruit aromas we saw in the warm years of 2007 and 1988 combined with the concentration of the lower cropping years of 1981 and 1986 vintages.

The production process for Moss Wood 2008 Semillon was very much in our traditional mould. After hand harvesting, the fruit was destemmed, drained and pressed and cold settled in stainless steel tanks. The pressing fraction was kept separate and fined for excess tannin. After settling the clear juice was racked to stainless steel, seeded with pure yeast culture and fermentation took place at 18°C.

After fermentation, all batches, including pressings, were racked off gross lees and blended. The wine was then fined with bentonite for protein stability, cold stabilised, sterile filtered and then bottled on 28th May 2008.

### Tasting Notes

**Colour and Condition:** Medium to deep straw hue, in bright condition.

**Nose:** A complex and intense nose with a broad array of fruit aromas including apricot, fresh lemon, lime, preserved lemon, cumquat, fig, jasmine, leaf and malt.

**Palate:** A full bodied white wine with very fresh acid combined with intense lemon zest, cumquat and loquat flavours. It is also complex with herbal and malt biscuit notes and has a clean finish with balanced phenolics.

Given the low crop in the Old Block and the similarities with 1986, we anticipate the 2008 vintage will cellar for at least the same time. In our vertical tasting of November 2006 the former had aged into a fine old wine so we expect the younger sibling to age for at least 20 years.



In the shorter term, the new wine should retain lifted primary fruit characters for the next 3 to 5 years, after which it may become more restrained on the nose until it reaches 10 years old. At that point the complexity will increase as the wine develops its full bottle bouquet and should display caramel, lanolin and toasty notes.

### Vintage Rating Charts

Currently we produce Vintage Charts for Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon, Moss Wood Chardonnay, Moss Wood Pinot Noir, Moss Wood Semillon, Moss Wood Ribbon Vale Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot and Moss Wood Ribbon Vale Vineyard Merlot. We update these at the release of each Vintage, when we give the new Vintage a rating and reassess the others.

We don't produce a Vintage Chart for Amy's or Moss Wood Ribbon Vale Vineyard Semillon Sauvignon Blanc as with these wine styles we are not looking for Vintage variation so much as attempting to keep them consistent each year. This information can be gleaned from the individual notes for these wines.

For those interested in the Vintage Rating Charts for the Moss Wood Pinot Noir and Moss Wood Semillon, they can be found in the Explore section of our website under the Vintage Charts heading.

[www.mosswood.com.au](http://www.mosswood.com.au)

## Moss Wood

### 2008 Ribbon Vale Vineyard Semillon Sauvignon Blanc

The 2007/2008 growing season provided an interesting contrast between the two varieties, where Sauvignon Blanc appeared to have the best of the conditions. Inclement weather during flowering reduced the Semillon yield to its lowest in 10 years. Its long term average is 11.19 tonnes per hectare but in 2008 it could only manage 7.23 tonnes per hectare, which is still a reasonable crop but quite small by Semillon standards.

On the other hand, the Sauvignon Blanc coped better with the conditions and produced 10.89 tonnes per hectare, which compares favourably with the long term average of 11.19. The timing of the wet and windy conditions obviously didn't suit the Semillon!

All other aspects of the season went well and both varieties remained free of pest and disease. The bird pressure that was so extreme at the Moss Wood vineyard did not eventuate at Ribbon Vale. The East Block, in particular, is isolated enough that in some years the birds don't find it but the West Block is often not so lucky. However, the application of nets prevented any problems.

With consistent warm conditions both varieties ripened quickly and evenly and were harvested earlier than average. Sauvignon Blanc came off on the 15th February, some 15 days ahead of average, while the

small crop saw the Semillon sail through very quickly. It was picked on the 26th February, well ahead of its average date of the 20th March.

We have now accrued significant experience with Sauvignon Blanc and our understanding of the blended wine style has led us to quite specific harvest requirements. This variety gives the most lifted aromas when picked at a relatively low ripeness, usually around 11.5° Baume and where it retains most of the gooseberry, green characters. At this level, the palate retains very crisp acidity and light to medium body and can lack concentration. It is primarily for this reason that we harvest the Semillon much riper, usually at least 13° Baume. It adds concentration to the palate by improving the mouthfeel and introducing ripe fruit flavours. We proudly note that the 2008 result is about as good as we have been able to achieve so far - the Sauvignon Blanc came in at 11.8° Baume and the Semillon at 13.2° Baume.

All fruit was picked by hand and then de-stemmed, drained and pressed, with free run and pressings kept separate. The juices were cold settled then racked and seeded with pure yeast culture for fermentation, which was carried out in stainless steel. We do not use barrels for fermentation or aging because like the Moss Wood Semillon, we want the

wine to be a pure expression of fruit. Temperatures were controlled at 15°C for Sauvignon Blanc and 17°C for Semillon.

At the completion of ferment each batch was racked off gross lees and the two varieties were blended. The finished wine was then fined for tannins and protein stability and then sterile filtered and bottled on the 28th May, 2008. For wines in this style we believe fresh, bright aromas are essential and so we bottle the Semillon Sauvignon Blanc as quickly as possible after vintage.

#### Tasting Notes

##### Colour and Condition:

Medium straw hue, in bright condition.

**Nose:** A very fresh and zesty combination of gooseberry, leaf, lemon sherbet and grass.

**Palate:** Lemon, grassy and juicy gooseberry fruit flavours, with medium body and zesty acid, with a long, clean, grapefruit finish, with no phenolics.

Since most consumers of this style enjoy it for its vibrant fruit characters, a very large percentage of the Semillon Sauvignon Blanc is drunk within a year of its release. At the same time, the style should not be written off as one that will not reward cellaring and we note that Semillon Sauvignon Blanc blends from the Bordeaux region in France have a proud history of long term cellaring.



Customers who prefer to see this style with some bottle development can cellar it with confidence. It will retain strong primary fruit aromas until 2 years old, after which there will be a gradual loss of freshness. Over a further 3 to 5 years the wine will develop its bottle bouquet consisting of toast and marmalade notes and should drink best as a complex wine at around 10 years of age.

## Moss Wood 2007 Amy's

Since it was first introduced with the 2002 vintage, the Amy's has always been a blended wine and the various vintages have been made up of the following components:

### 2002

Cabernet Sauvignon - 92%  
Merlot - 8%

### 2005

Cabernet Sauvignon - 85%  
Malbec - 7%  
Petit Verdot - 5%  
Merlot - 3%

### 2003

Cabernet Sauvignon - 96%  
Petit Verdot - 2%  
Merlot - 2%

### 2006

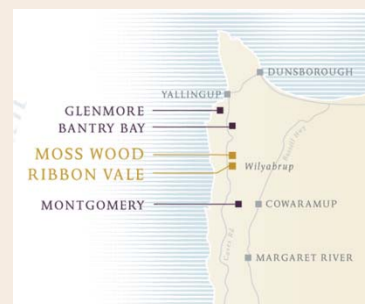
Cabernet Sauvignon - 86%  
Petit Verdot - 5%  
Merlot - 5%  
Malbec - 4%

### 2004

Cabernet Sauvignon - 91%  
Petit Verdot - 4%  
Merlot - 3%  
Malbec - 2%

### 2007

Cabernet Sauvignon - 66%  
Petit Verdot - 18%  
Malbec - 14%  
Merlot - 2%



As the vineyards that supply these grapes have matured, the yields of the different varieties have varied and so the percentages in the finished wines have also changed. When the Glenmore, Montgomery Brothers and Bantry Bay vineyards were established, considerable thought was given to the appropriate mix of grape varieties. The makeup of the vineyard is important in resolving two key issues – seasonal variations, dictated by Mother Nature and wine style, controlled by winemakers.

In considering the former, it is important to note that these vineyards were planted in the 1990's, roughly 20 years after the original plantings in Margaret River. By this time the wine industry had accumulated valuable experience which showed for the production of Bordeaux-style table wines, Cabernet Sauvignon is pre-eminent. When fully ripened, it produces the best wines and therefore is the dominant variety on each property. However, we have also learnt that the other Bordeaux varieties can play an

important role in maximising quality.

It goes without saying that no two vintages are exactly the same, so how does the choice of varieties help compensate for seasonal differences? The answers are many and varied but in summary, in cooler years when Cabernet Sauvignon is slow to ripen, the earlier varieties, Merlot and Malbec, can enhance quality because they contribute riper fruit characters and tannins. On the other hand, in seasons when Cabernet Sauvignon ripens easily and the tendency is for the wines to be more broad, the later ripening Petit Verdot provides the necessary acid and tannin to bring the wine back into balance.

The final makeup of the vineyard depends on its individual location. In general, warmer sites need less of the early ripening varieties and of course, the opposite is true of cooler sites.

Since each variety produces distinct fruit characters, winemakers can use the choice of variety to make an artistic contribution to the

wine style and vary the blend to suit personal taste. For example, a producer may prefer the ripe dark fruits and ripe tannins of Malbec compared to the complexity of earth and blackberry and firm tannins found in Merlot. If so, their vineyard will contain a predominance of the former. In any of these choices there is no right or wrong, merely differences in style.

A good illustration of how the winemaker can influence style by choice of varieties is in fact the Amy's wine. At Moss Wood we enjoy the impact of Petit Verdot because amongst other things, it enhances the nose with its lifted berry perfumes, something quite important in a wine that relies on youthful appeal. We felt the amount available to us from Glenmore and Montgomery Brothers was not quite sufficient and so have now introduced Bantry Bay as a further source of this material.

For the Amy's wine, our preferred blend has a base of around 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, combined with 10-15% each of Petit Verdot and Malbec and up to 5%

Merlot. There are fluctuations from year to year but we believe that this combination gives us the best fruit characters and structure. Our other two red wines are slightly different. Ribbon Vale Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot is usually around 70% and 30% respectively and Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon is usually around 92% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Petit Verdot and 4% Cabernet Franc.

This evolution of the Amy's wine style has led us to change the label. Under Australian regulations, a wine cannot be labelled as a single variety unless that variety consists of 85% or more of a blend. As noted previously, the wine has always been a blend but for simplicity's sake it was always labelled as Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2007 is at 66%, so the wine can no longer be labelled as a varietal.

We do not see this as a significant change because we believe the blend offers the best wine and virtually everybody, from Moss Wood to our many customers, refers to the wine simply as the "Amy's".

Mother Nature has her ways of amusing us and there is no better example than seasonal variations. After the extended, cool season of 2006, she served up almost the complete opposite in 2007. The latter year was consistently warm all the way through and led to one of the earliest harvests on record. These sorts of years are a dream for vineyard managers because the vines produce consistent growth, are rarely damaged by storms and always look healthy. Indeed they generally are healthier because disease pressure is much lower. So it was in 2007.

We coped with the warmth of 2007 but it produced some interesting outcomes with the harvest ripeness of the different varieties. The two earliest, Malbec and Merlot were picked slightly early for fear that they would ripen too quickly. Normally they would be harvested at a minimum of 13° Baume as a precaution against slightly green Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. On the other hand, the excellent conditions meant that the two later varieties could be left to safely ripen as much as necessary and both averaged well over 13° Baume. The net result was excellent ripeness and fruit depth across the range.

Here is the summary of all batches of each variety. The fruit came from the Montgomery Brothers Vineyard at Ellensbrook, the Glenmore Vineyard at Yallingup and Bantry Bay Vineyard, also at Yallingup.

## Malbec

Montgomery Brothers -  
Median harvest date 28th Feb 2007; ripeness 12.1° Baume

Glenmore - Median harvest date 1st Mar 2007; ripeness 13.4° Baume

Total quantity - 9.79 tonnes

Combined ripeness - 12.5° Baume

## Cabernet Sauvignon

Montgomery Brothers -  
Median harvest date 14th Mar 2007; ripeness 14.2° Baume

Glenmore - Median harvest date 13th Mar 2007; ripeness 13.6° Baume

Total quantity - 41.98 tonnes

Combined ripeness - 14.0° Baume

## Petit Verdot

Montgomery Brothers -  
Median harvest date 15th Mar 2007; ripeness 13.3° Baume

Glenmore - Median harvest date 17th Mar 2007; ripeness 13.7° Baume

Bantry Bay - Median harvest date 22nd Mar 2007; ripeness 14.2° Baume

Total quantity - 11.19 tonnes

Combined ripeness - 13.7° Baume

## Merlot

Glenmore - Harvest date 1st Mar 2007; 2.21 tonnes; ripeness 11.9° Baume

All fruit was hand picked and then de-stemmed into a combination of open and static fermenters. Open fermentations were hand plunged three times per day while static fermentations were gently pumped over twice daily and then hand plunged twice daily towards the end of fermentation.

Maximum temperatures were set at 32°C. Batches were left on skins for a range of times - Cabernet Sauvignon for 12 days, Petit Verdot for 17 days, Malbec for 8 days and Merlot for 7 days. With all batches, pressing times were based on tasting and the emphasis was on the preservation of good fruit characters.

After pressing, all batches were racked to French oak barriques, 25% of which were new and continuing our limited use of new oak, so as not to dominate the fruit aromas. The wine stayed in wood until 8th July 2008, when all barrels were racked and blended in stainless steel. In preparation for bottling, fining trials were carried out but no improvement was found so the wine was not fined. It was then sterile filtered and bottled on 31st July 2008.

## Tasting Notes

**Colour and Condition:** Youthful, deep Blood Plum red, in bright condition.

**Nose:** Perfumed and lifted nose showing mulberry, raspberry, red currant and complex notes of cedar and pouch tobacco. The pretty fruit aromas are further complemented by spicy,



perfumed chalky oak characters.

**Palate:** Full body and sweet round flavours of cherry and other dark fruits, as well as melted chocolate, make the wine instantly appealing and easy to drink and is further complemented by well balanced tannins. The texture is luscious and then malt biscuit and spicy oak flavours on the finish complete a palate of great balance and length.

It is our intention with this wine that it be enjoyed when young and our production technique is designed to preserve the best possible fruit characters on the nose and palate. For those who are keen to see how it ages, the composition and concentration are such that the wine will soften and develop in the bottle over the medium term.

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