



MOSS WOOD
MARGARET RIVER
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Moss Wood 2007 Ribbon Vale Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot *and* Moss Wood 2007 Ribbon Vale Merlot

Vintage Notes

The 2006–2007 growing season was one where things happened quickly. Conditions during Spring were relatively warm and dry, quite atypical for Margaret River, so flowering was over for most varieties in little more than a week. This theme of good vintage conditions continued throughout and we anticipated a slightly earlier-than-average harvest. However, conditions warmed through January and reached a peak by the Australia Day Holiday when the temperature reached 40 degrees. This, along with two additional, though slightly less savage, heat spikes brought all the grapes rapidly through to full ripeness and produced our earliest vintage on record.

The impact on the different varieties was varied. Cabernet Sauvignon has an average harvest date of 31st March but in 2007 was picked on 12th March, 19 days early. The actual length of the season

from flowering to harvest was 113 days, compared to an average of 123 days. Merlot, with an average harvest date of 19th March was picked 7 days earlier on 12th March. Its actual season length was 112 days, compared to the average of 116 days. Cabernet Franc, with an average harvest date of 19th March, in 2007, was picked on 25th February, 22 days early. The actual season length was 110 days, compared to an average of 121 days.

Grape condition was excellent, with no disease and no damage from bird attack, although without nets the losses from this would have been quite high. The silveways were hungry enough to try dive bombing the nets in an effort to get to the grapes.

Yields were slightly below average, across all varieties. Cabernet Sauvignon has a long term yield of 7.95 tonnes per hectare (t/ha) but in

2007 it was 7.36 t/ha (7% loss). Merlot was somewhat more dramatic, declining from its long term average of 9.21 t/ha to 7.34 t/ha (20%) and likewise Cabernet Franc, which produced 7.33 t/ha, compared to 10.35 t/ha (29%).

At Moss Wood and this is probably true for most companies, yield forecasts and their accuracy are seen as a personal and professional challenge. Perhaps this is a sad reflection of the small things that amuse small viticultural minds but in the context of wine quality, it is worthy of further discussion. In essence, the process is simple. As the season nears flowering the vineyard is sampled to get an estimate of the number of bunches per vine. Once it's completed, an estimate

of the bunch weight is made based on the conditions that prevailed – good conditions mean heavier bunches. The two are combined to give a likely yield figure. Readers will note this uses some science and lots of art and hence the challenge. However, it is important for planning, like ordering new barrels and it's also valuable in influencing final quality in some varieties where we set a maximum yield.



In 2007, Cabernet Sauvignon bunches weighed 138 grams compared with the average of 139 grams and Cabernet Franc was close to the mean of 143 grams with its 2007 weight of 145.

Our two blocks of Merlot give quite different results. The West Block has always produced higher yields and in 2007 its bunch weights were close to average – 166 grams compared with 161. The East Block, which has more difficult flowering conditions because of its more exposed southerly aspect, produced a bunch weight of 150 grams, well above its average of 120. For those interested in the smaller details of viticulture, we have been experimenting with

controlled additions of the trace element Molybdenum, deficiencies of which are responsible for poor flowering. Perhaps the treatment may be working. It should be noted that our intent is not to increase the Merlot yield but rather make it more consistent by minimising the dramatic reductions when bunchweights fall to as low as 100 grams. When this occurs, we can also have problems with inconsistent ripening, so both quantity and quality can be compromised.

However, Merlot is a contrary beast. Regardless of its flowering difficulties, in good seasons it can give prodigious yields, as it did in 2000, at 14.6 t/ha. Unfortunately, and this is a characteristic

shared in common with Pinot Noir, above a certain yield wine quality diminishes, with dilution of colour and flavour, regardless of how well the vineyard is maintained. We have decided that 9 t/ha is the Merlot ceiling to aim for and if our estimates exceed this, the bunches are thinned once the berries have reached maximum size.

Hence the contrariness of Merlot – we need to increase yield in some instances and then reduce it in others. Let's say it's the Goldilocks of grapes and the porridge has to be just right!

Returning to the original point of the yields, although the bunch weights were all close to average, the likely cause of the low crops was reduced bunch numbers. In turn, this is probably a reflection of the very low temperatures during the 2005–06 growing season which caused fewer bunches to form in the buds.

Regardless of these discussions about influences on grape quality and quantity, the summary is 2007 was a good growing season. Although slightly warmer than usual, it produced near-perfect grapes, with fruit flavours and tannins fully ripened and provided the basis for a very fine vintage. It was up to the winemaking team to turn these into good wine, with no excuses if they weren't successful!

Production Notes

Median Harvest Dates and Ripeness:

Merlot –
27th February 2007, 12.9 Be

Cabernet Franc –
25th February 2007, 13.1 Be

Cabernet Sauvignon –
5th March 2007, 13.7 Be

Looking back over the vineyard's history, the best red wines from Ribbon Vale have been blends and in our planning for each vintage, we work on the assumption that this will continue to be the case. However, the winemaking plan for each variety does not involve making each one with an eye to how it will blend with the others. Rather, the intent is to make the best possible individual wines from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Once each is finished, the tasting trials are carried out to determine the best blends for that vintage.

One of the very interesting parts of a winemaker's job is to go through this process and decide on the best combinations. It is more art than science because the chemistry and microbiology are all but finished by this point and so it all comes down to taste. Of course, this can add uncertainty, some would say interest or intrigue, to the wine style because there will be small variations in the blend from one year to the next, depending on how each variety performed.



In the initial stages, the production techniques were the same for each variety. The fruit was hand picked and then de-stemmed into small, open fermenters. Fermentation was then induced with a pure yeast culture and each batch was hand plunged up to four times per day to ensure good extraction of colour and flavour. Temperature was controlled to a maximum of 30C and each batch is tested and tasted at least once per day.

As fermentation finishes, the treatment of the varieties begins to vary. The daily tasting is used to monitor for the best balance of flavour and tannin. When an individual batch achieves the right combination it is drained and pressed. Since this is done according to taste, the length of time on skins can be different. In 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon spent 21 days on skins, Merlot 9 days and Cabernet Franc 8 days. In general, the Ribbon Vale vineyard produces wines with quite dominant tannins in all the red varieties and we work hard in both the vineyard and the winery to keep these in balance. Good sunlight exposure for the grapes and then gentle extraction during fermentation seem to be the keys.

After pressing each variety was settled and then racked to barrel. Merlot went into oak on 16th March 2007, Cabernet Franc on 17th March and Cabernet Sauvignon on 13th April. The barrels were all French barriques and 35% were new.

On 26th November each variety was racked to stainless steel and the blending trials were carried out. The final combinations were:

Cabernet Merlot –
59% Cabernet Sauvignon
36% Merlot
5% Cabernet Franc

Merlot –
95% Merlot
5% Cabernet Franc

The completed blends were then racked back to oak where they stayed until 19th January 2009. The Merlot blend accumulated 22 months in oak and the Cabernet Merlot blend approximately 21 months. They were then racked to stainless steel and fining trials were carried out although in the end, we chose not to fine either wine. Both wines were then sterile filtered and Merlot was bottled on 2nd February 2009 and the Cabernet Merlot was bottled on 3rd February.

Moss Wood 2007 Ribbon Vale Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot

Tasting Notes

Colour and condition: Very deep brick red, in bright condition.

Nose: a good example of the generous ripe fruits of the 2007 vintage, with a powerful and lifted combination of dark fruits like mulberry, red currant and blueberry. There are also the typical Ribbon Vale leather and earth notes, plus additional complexity from sealing wax and camphor. Oak characters are very restrained and give a light tarry background.

Palate: full bodied with ripe fruit flavours of mulberry and black currant, giving a generous front and mid palate. There are long flavours which fit neatly with firm but ripened tannins, giving smooth texture and then finishing with spicy and charry oak flavours.

Cellaring Notes

When vintage conditions are so good, we expect to make wine with good fruit intensity and chemistry and 2007 is no exception. Over the next five years, the wine should display the benefit of these conditions with a predominance of ripe fruit characters and should provide reasonable drinking as a youngster. However, we believe that its best years will be beyond that and it should begin to show complex bottle bouquet once it passes 10 years of age, reaching a peak between 15 and 20 years old.

Moss Wood 2007 Ribbon Vale Vineyard Merlot

Tasting Notes

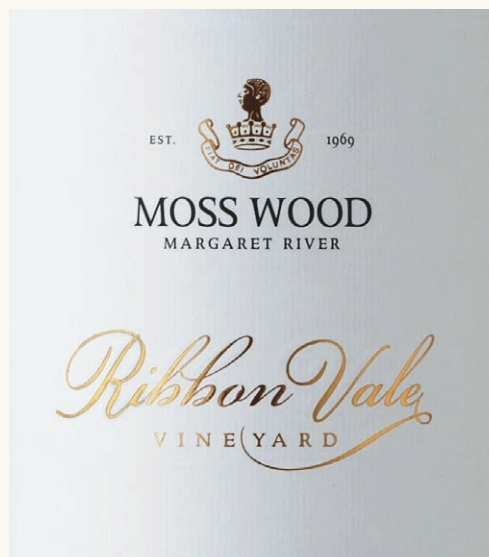
Colour and condition: Very deep brick red, in bright condition

Nose: a lifted combination of red and dark fruits; reminiscent of ripe red currants and blackberries. This is supported by Merlot's

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Label Change

The update of the Moss Wood labels is now almost complete. The 2007 Ribbon Vale Vineyard Cabernet Merlot and Merlot now carry the new livery, with the Semillon Sauvignon Blanc to complete the process when the 2009 vintage is released later this year. We trust you like the changes and hope that each wine in our portfolio is clearly identified and the information is easily understood. Please give us your opinions on the changes.



typical complex earthy background, with mushrooms, dried herbs, talcum powder and wax. The oak treatment is restrained and sits as a slightly smoky finish.

Palate: the initial impression is a wine of medium to full body, with bright red currant fruit flavours. These overlay a firm tannin structure that runs through the middle and back palate but is balanced but good fruit weight and body, leaving a smooth texture. The oak flavours give a slightly spicy and tarry finish.

Cellaring Notes

As our understanding of the Merlot wine style improves, we are gaining confidence about its cellaring prospects. Part of our confidence is derived from the fact that the great Merlot-based wines from the Bordeaux region of France show that the variety can produce wines that will cellar for decades. However,

Merlot wines made in our region have yet to establish such a distinguished pedigree and we continue to monitor both the wines that were made under John James ownership and those we have made ourselves since 2000. Thus far, we can say with confidence that 10 years is certainly achievable and that wines like the monumental 1996 are showing no signs of tiring.

With that as background and taking into account the quality of the 2007 vintage, we have high expectations of this new Merlot. There is plenty of ripe fruit in the young wine, so it is quite plump and enjoyable now. However, its good composition and complexity of flavour suggest it will be a good candidate for the long term and based on the progress of its older siblings we recommend cellaring for at least 10 years.



Jeremy Britton



Sam Mugford

2009 Vintage Crew

After a near all-Aussie team last year, this year's Vintage Crew is something of a United Nations.

Tristan Mugford wasn't deterred by his taste of Vintage last year and is back again. The family connection is even greater this year with Tristan's cousin, Sam Mugford, coming from Adelaide, fresh from completing Year 12.

Jeremy Britton who is originally from Tasmania and has most recently been living and working in Queensland is helping in the vineyard with all our existing vineyard crew. He is a hard working fellow with a heavy vehicle licence and therefore plays an important role in helping transport grapes from Ribbon Vale vineyard for processing at Moss Wood.

They are joined by two French visitors, known as the "Fromages" by Vineyard Manager Steve Clarke.

Thomas Michon, a Viticulture and Winemaking graduate from the Lysee Viticole de Beaune in Burgundy, has been working for three years at the highly esteemed producer, Meo Camuzet. He is from the village of Cluny near Dijon. Thomas's father and sister have taken the opportunity to visit Australia for a holiday while he is here.

His compatriot, Audrey Tremeau hails from Mareau Aux Tres, a small village near Orleans. Audrey brings a background slightly apart from our usual collection of winemakers. She holds a Bachelor of Science (Traditional French Products of the Terrior) from the Technology Institute of Aurillac and is travelling Australia accumulating culinary production experience in preparation for returning to France to complete her Masters in world food production and business. We are not sure that her exposure to the cooking styles



Audrey Tremeau



The 2009 Vintage Crew - Thomas, Japo, Richard, Steven, Josh, Amanda, Jarrod, Sam, Tristan, Audrey

of the Moss Wood Staff, who are particularly adept at Mee Goreng from plastic packets, will be a positive experience to assist in her future studies. Her mother and father are apiarists and bee keeping is the family business. Audrey worked for three months on Kangaroo Island helping apiarist Brenton Davis to produce the famous honey for which the island is known.

Next on the list is Richard Vuletich, a Kiwi from Hawke's Bay and holder of the Bachelor of Wine Science and Viticulture from Charles Sturt University at Wagga Wagga. He has a Croatian background and his grandparents started Continental Wines in 1969, by coincidence the same year that Bill and Sandra Pannell started Moss Wood. Richard's father took over the business ten years later.

In 1999 the business was renamed Long View Wine Estate and it processes 100 tonnes of fruit annually.

We also have an Italian connection this year. Jacopo Dalli Cani, otherwise known as "Japo" has been helping us in the vineyard and winery since October. He is a native of the Soave region of Italy and holds a Bachelor Viticulture and Oenology from the University of Padua, with many years work experience at Cantina di Soave. He's an affable fellow and keen student of wine and very much enjoys working in Australia. He's also very popular with the female visitors and competes with Alex Coultas for the title of Moss Wood's cutest guy. Jarod and Josh seem to be getting too old!

Staff Changes

While we recognise that a small changeover of staff can be a good thing for keeping an organisation fresh, we are very proud that our staff turnover at Moss Wood has been very low.

However, nothing is forever and in the last year we have seen several of our long-serving people resign.

Perhaps the most notable departure was Aileen Dickhart, who was at that point our longest-serving staff member. Aileen joined Clare and Keith in 1989 when the company office was the spare bedroom at their house in Busselton, everything was written, not typed on a keyboard and our most sophisticated office machine was a fax. It's curious to



Aileen Dickhart

share this information with the younger crew at Moss Wood because their bemused response suggests they think the story must be made up. How could businesses run without computers or mobile phones? Readers will understand Aileen saw significant change in the organisation and the Mugford family over that time but took it all in her stride. The move



Jane Patterson



Amy Sobol



Toby Koch



Michelle, Mike and Kota

of the office to Wilyabrup in 1991 meant that she drove an 80 kilometre round trip to work each day and to her credit, she kept this up for 17 years! We were all sad to see her leave but all at Moss Wood wish her well in her future.

Jane Patterson, formerly with Alcoa and a red hot West Coast Eagles supporter, has now come on board in Aileen's role. She's extremely thorough and doing a great job.

Anyone who has visited or telephoned Moss Wood since 1996 will almost certainly have talked to Amy Sobol. Her friendly manner meant she built numerous friendships with our customers. Her varied role meant she assisted us in all office activities and was a key player with the operation of our computers and use of the internet. However, she will be remembered most for her phenomenal attention to detail

and her ability to proof read every document and identify the smallest error! We all thank her very much and wish her well in her current role managing the very prestigious Constellation Apartments in Margaret River. If any readers are looking for a quality place to stay during a Margaret River visit please give Amy a call.

In our Perth office, Jeanette Gee, who joined us in 2006, has decided to move from part-time to full-time studies, in the hope of completing her second degree before her children commence tertiary education. Naturally enough this will leave her with little time for helping with Moss Wood administration work and so she has resigned and we wish her all the best.

In her place we now have Megan Healy. Megan grew up in Busselton and has known the Mugford family for many years. Luckily that hasn't put her off! She is working part-time because her real job is to be a first year Law/Arts student at the University of Western Australia.

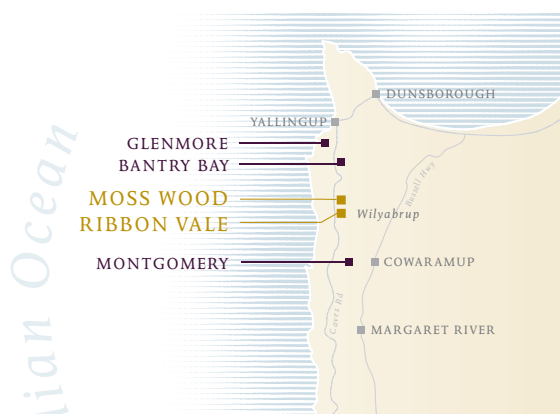
Last but not least, Toby Koch joined us in November to continue on the great

horticultural work Mike and Michelle Rossi have been doing for us since 2000. Like Michelle, Toby trained at Kings Park in Perth and is a walking encyclopedia of plants and he continues, amongst other things, our revegetation work and maintenance of the olive grove and all the Moss Wood and Ribbon Vale amenity gardens.

Toby Koch joined Mike and Michelle because there have been big changes in the Rossi household. A very handsome boy, Kota John Rossi, was born 5th December 2008. Everyone is going well and Kota is such a clever boy for choosing such a fine family!

Olive Harvest

On the subject of the olives, this year we are looking forward to a bumper crop. In fact we look like having more than our family and close friends can consume and may even have a commercial quantity. Planted in 1999 as three year old trees, our varietal mix is Leccino, Pendolino, Frantoio, Manzinillo, New Norcia and Kalamata. These combined produce a flavoursome and aromatic oil, which we have found is very agreeable for "dipping".



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