

# Moss



# Wood

## Newsletter

No. 9

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### New Releases: 1987 Pinot Noir and 1989 Semillon

An unheard of four inches of rain in February meant that the 1989 vintage was almost four weeks late. This caused some botrysis problems with the Pinot Noir and the Chardonnay. As they would have adversely affected the finished wine, the botrysis grapes had to be picked out with these varieties. This was not considered necessary with the Semillon as only about one to two percent of the crop was affected and the impact of the botrysis was likely to enhance the wine. It did, however, result in the wine becoming higher in alcohol than usual - 13% - and developing in a different style from the herbaceous Moss Wood Semillons of 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

With the 1989 Moss Wood Semillon, the fruit is rich rather than ripe and the wine is luscious and well-rounded with good length. In spite of the sweetness of the fruit, this is one of the driest Semillons made at the vineyard. The wine shows restrained grassy aromas on the nose and is fresh, clean and lively on the palate. Although it displays evidence of regional character, the 1989 wine is more delicate than previous vintages of the Moss Wood Semillon. It is elegant, beautifully balanced and flavoursome with a lovely mouth feel and a lingering aftertaste.



The growing season leading to the 1987 vintage encouraged good fruit aromatics in the Moss Wood Pinot Noir, giving the wine a more spicy character than the 1986. It was made in the traditional way, with half the fruit being crushed and half being added as uncrushed bunches. As usual, it was given two weeks skin contact before pressing. After fermentation, the wine spent twelve months in barrel, with only 10% new oak being used. This relatively small percentage of new oak was used because the 1987 vintage produced a finer wine than, for example, the 1986 and any more new oak would have dominated the delicate Pinot fruit.

The 1987 Pinot Noir is softer and spicier than the big, rich Pinots produced at Moss Wood in 1981 and 1985 and more like the softer wines of 1982 and 1984 which were particularly enjoyable when young. The nose has powerful aromas of strawberries and cherries with nuances of charry oak, while the palate has good acid, delicate, spicy fruit and soft tannins. It is well-structured, beautifully balanced and has good length.

The 1987 Moss Wood Pinot Noir is a complex wine with an appealing depth of flavour, a lovely mouth feel and a long, lingering finish.

## Pinot Noir Vintage Chart

**1979** The wine has developed classic Pinot Noir aromas, reminiscent of mushrooms, which are counter balanced by fresh cherry characters on the palate. It is a balanced wine which has good length and is drinking beautifully now, although it will continue to develop in the short term.

**1980** The wine has a deep ruby colour, an intense nose with aromas of ripe berries and charry oak. On the palate, the 1980 Pinot has soft, rich, ripe berry fruit in harmony with its soft tannins and reasonable length.

**1981** This outstanding Pinot Noir has a deep crimson colour, a superb nose with aromas of strawberries and cherries, an excellent structure and good balance, a depth of rich, ripe fruit flavour and good weight on the palate. It is a complex wine with considerable length which is still amazingly fresh and continues to drink beautifully.

**1982** When young, this wine was forward, soft and spicy. It has developed well with age forcing Keith to reassess his opinion of its quality and potential. The 1982 Pinot is still rich and soft with good length but has developed old pinot characters which Keith finds reminiscent of corn beef and mushrooms but with an underlying cherry character.

**1983** This is a soft, balanced wine which is full of flavour. It has ripe, cherry fruit and dusty oak aromas on the nose, a tightly structured palate with pleasant Pinot fruit in harmony with the French oak and a finish of reasonable length. It lacks the complexity of some of the other Moss Wood Pinots.

**1984** The wine has a light ruby colour, lovely strawberry-like aromas with nuances of intense charred oak. On the palate, it has strong, rich, full fruit flavours reminiscent of cherries and strawberries but with hints of fresh field mushrooms. It is quite a light, delicate wine but has intense flavours, lovely balance and good length. Drinking well now.

**1985** This wine has deep ruby colour, spicy, perfumed aromas and intense, youthful, rich, round, cherry fruit on the palate and nuances of charry oak. It is a soft, well-balanced and stylish wine with a pleasing mouth-feel and good length.

**1986** The 1986 Pinot has a perfumed nose showing restrained strawberry character and some complex Burgundian features reminiscent of light oak, cherries and mushrooms. On the palate, it has good acid, a pleasing softness, excellent structure, clean, flavoursome Pinot fruit, powerful though not aggressive tannins, and a long finish. This is a luscious, seductive wine of considerable complexity which still needs time for the tannins to soften, the bouquet to fill out and the depth of flavour on the mid palate to intensify. It will improve over the next ten to fifteen years.

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	Yield (t/ha)	Vintage Rating (out of 7)
1979	17 February	12.3	6.6	3
1980	29 February	14.2	3.5	3
1981	4 March	13.1	3.8	6
1982	13 March	12.95	8.2	4
1983	19 February	12.85	6.0	5
1984	16 February	12.9	5.7	5
1985	25 February	13.3	6.4	6
1986	24 February	13.3	5.8	6
1987	24 February	12.9	5.8	6
1988	10 February	13.1	6.0	6
1989	15 March	12.9	6.5	5

# The Vineyard Year at Moss Wood

## The Margaret River Region

Margaret River is on the south-western tip of the Australian continent on 34° S latitude, approximately 300 kilometres south of Perth. It has a maritime climate and avoids both summer and winter extremes. The ocean also benefits the area as the consistent summer sea breeze maintains a relatively high humidity.

The rainfall occurs mainly in winter, as can be seen from the following:

Average annual rainfall (long term)	1125mm.	Average annual rainfall (last 8 years)	960mm.
Average rainfall Oct-March (long term)	190mm.	Average rainfall Oct-March (last 8 years)	169mm.

The wind and hail damage that sometimes results from spring gales can lead to crop losses - Chardonnay has been significantly affected three times in the last six years and the Pinot Noir crop was halved in 1980.

## The Vineyard

The vineyard is situated on a gentle, north-east facing slope, where the soils vary from sandy loam to a gravelly, red-brown loam, over a clay subsoil. It is unirrigated and is wide spaced with 3.0 metres between rows and 1.8 metres between vines. The following varieties are planted:

Cabernet Sauvignon	4 hectares
Semillon	2 hectares
Pinot Noir	2 hectares
Chardonnay	2 hectares
Cabernet Franc	0.5 hectares
Merlot	0.1 hectares

## Vineyard Management

In order to maintain a disease-free vineyard and achieve the best possible vine performance and fruit composition, Keith Mugford has experimented with ways of overcoming problems like erosion of the steeper section of the vineyard in the heavy winter rains and keeping the area weed-free without becoming too dusty. As a result, he now applies undervine herbicide in late July and late September, mulches in September and ploughs using the method known as one discing in late October. Any further weed growth is controlled by spot spraying.

Experimentation is also going on with canopy management in order to reduce the density of the canopy of leaves covering the grapes. This is important because it makes spraying against disease easier and improves the juice composition of the grapes because of better bunch exposure. These experiments have also made it easier to prepare and train the vines.

## Vine Development

Each stage of the growing process for the four main grape varieties produced at Moss Wood occurs roughly one week apart: with the Chardonnay being followed by the Pinot Noir, the Semillon and finally the Cabernet Sauvignon.

### Stages of the growing process

Budburst	Chardonnay
	Cabernet
Flowering	Chardonnay
	Cabernet
Véraison (colour change)	Chardonnay
	Cabernet

### Approximate time of year

second week in August
last week in September
third week in October
last week in November
first week in January
first week in February

## In Brief

### The WA Wines Exhibition in Sydney

Keith and Clare presented the 1987 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon, the 1987 Moss Wood Pinot Noir and the 1989 Moss Wood Semillon to enthusiastic visitors to the second Western Australian Wines Exhibition at the Sheraton Wentworth from August 28th to 30th. They rated the Exhibition a great success and were fullsome in their praise of the Technology and Industry Development Authority and organisers David McCulloch and Colin Slattery.

The Exhibition gave New South Wales consumers the opportunity to taste a wide range of Western Australian new releases - something that is rare as the small volume of wines produced in Western Australian are quickly absorbed in a market the size of Sydney.

### The Willyabrup Descent

The Willyabrup Progress Association proudly sponsored the inaugural Willyabrup Descent. Organised by Mike and Jan Davies, consultant winemakers at Ribbon Vale, it featured fifteen teams of four representing most of the wineries of the district. The Herculean task confronting each team was to escort a wine barrel three kilometres down the Willyabrup Brook from the John James crossing at Ribbon Vale to the crossing at Pierro.

Disaster struck before the starting gun with the last minute withdrawal of 'Tinker' Bell from the Moss Wood lineup. The announcement of the official reason - a hockey grand final - was greeted with some scepticism and a rumour has since been circulating in the district that 'Tinker' Bell's absence was due to fear of getting his tutu wet.

Although badly weakened by this body blow, the hardy Moss Wood team - Keith, Nigel, Richard and Frank - battled near freezing water, underwater obstacles, rocky terrain and confusion over the rules to finish a creditable fifth behind Vasse Felix and Cullens.

The event was considered so successful that it was decided to make it an annual event.

Next year...

### Nediz - tu

Chinese/Vietnamese chef, Le Tu Thai, continues the success story he began at Neddy's, with one of Adelaide's very best restaurants - the appropriately named Nediz Tu - located close to the centre of the city at 170 Hutt Street. Named by the *Bulletin* recently as one of Australia's top 27 restaurants, Nediz Tu produces a unique cuisine fusing Australian and Asian influences. The excellent, reasonably priced wine list concentrates on South Australian wines but includes the 1983 Moss Wood Special Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon.

If you're looking for a great meal in Adelaide with an outstanding wine to accompany it, Nediz Tu is well worth the visit.

### Performance at Auction

The August edition of the *Wine Industry Journal* has an interesting article by Andrew Caillard on 'The Wine Auction Market'. Caillard explains that high prices are paid for wines which have a track record for quality, perceived limited supply and credibility with the consumer.

He ranks the best performers as Penfolds Grange (Grade A1), Maurice O'Shea wines and Penfolds Bin 60A (Grade A2 Rarities). It is pleasing to see the Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon included on the list of a dozen reds and half a dozen whites Grade A wines.

### 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.