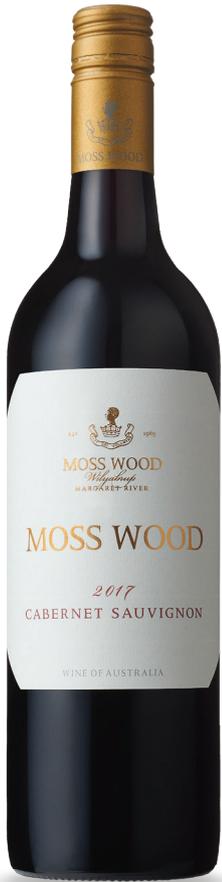



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MOSS WOOD 2017 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

VINTAGE NOTES

We knew from quite early on the 2016/17 growing season was going to be a mild one. The spring temperatures were below average delaying the flowering by a fortnight and this remained the theme all the way through to harvest.

We always get a bit edgy when contemplating cooler seasons because there's a delicious irony (nice pun?) to confront. On the one hand, they have been responsible for some of Moss Wood's greatest wines and 1975 and 1990 come quickly to mind. However, they can make ripening of Cabernet Sauvignon very marginal indeed and as Chrissie Amphlett used to sing, it's a fine, fine line between pleasure and pain. As much as we love the subtlety and complexity of the above two wines, we could do without the anxiety associated with all the waiting during ripening.

For those not quite following the point, the lower the temperature the slower the ripening. Our most important but latest ripening variety is Cabernet Sauvignon, which typically ripens in the last week of March. However, if we have a cool season and ripening drags on into April, the quality is threatened by rain and bird attack. On the other hand, the lower temperatures are very beneficial for the fruit aromas and flavours. In these seasons Cabernet Sauvignon retains floral notes that give a rare glimpse of its full range.

As we said, it's a fine line and we are entirely in the hands of Mother Nature. In 2017 she made plenty of idle threats but in the end took pity on the humble grapegrowers of Margaret River and delivered a classic, West Coast Indian Summer. We couldn't have done any better if we'd written the script ourselves.

Aside from the generally low temperatures discussed above, we had drizzly weather during flowering and 16 days when minima were below the crucial 8°C. These cool nights were right at the beginning of the process, so appear to have done little harm, with yield for Cabernet Sauvignon being only very slightly below average. There was a 39mm dump of rain that came on 12th December which didn't help matters but at least on that day the temperatures

Harvest Date

Cabernet Sauvignon – 10/4/2017
Cabernet Franc – 4/4/2017
Petit Verdot – 15/4/ 2017

Harvest Ripeness

Cabernet Sauvignon – 13.0° Be
Cabernet Franc – 13.9° Be
Petit Verdot – 13.9° Be

Yields

Cabernet Sauvignon – 7.37 t/ha
Cabernet Franc – 4.39 t/ha
Petit Verdot – 7.25 t/ha

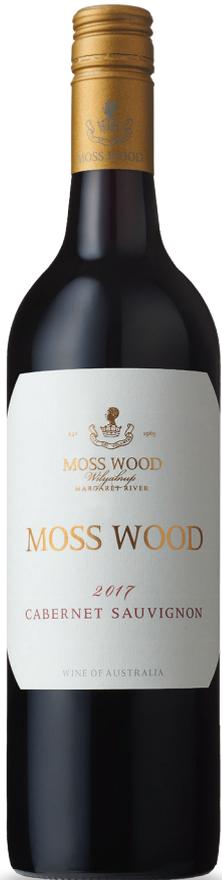
Growing Season Average Temperature

18.9°C



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**RIPENING TIME
FROM FLOWERING
TO HARVEST**

Cabernet Sauvignon – 122 days
Cabernet Franc – 123 days
Petit Verdot - 130 days

ALCOHOL

14%

OAK MATURATION

31 months

BOTTLING DATE

04/11/2019

RELEASE DATE

04/05/2020

weren't too low.

Through January we experienced delightful conditions, if somewhat mild. The mean temperature of 19.5°C was nearly 1° below average, so beach days were at a bit of a premium. February was similar and during the second week we also received 22mm of rain which freshened things up. It was during March when we started to have Chrissie Amphlett ringing in our ears, when we racked up 81mm of rain. Yes, with the arrival of autumn we expect to see some showers but not necessarily quite that much.

At this stage, the late flowering and mild temperatures were beginning to loom large. Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon needs at least 1100 hours where the temperature is between 18 and 28°C to reach full ripeness but by the end of March, it had received 1046 and astute readers will note that to achieve the additional 50+ hours, we needed another 10 bright sunny days.

At this point Mother Nature had a complete change of heart. The sun shone and most importantly, the rain stopped and we started picking Cabernet Sauvignon in the second week of April, at 13.0° Baume and with full flavour ripeness after 1120 hours of ripening under its belt.

Meanwhile, the blending varieties were going about their business. Cabernet Franc came off on 4th April at a very creditable ripeness of 13.9° Baume, followed 11 days later by Petit Verdot at an even more impressive 13.9 Baume. Who would have known it had been so mild?

Yields across the 3 varieties were varied. At 4.39 tonnes per hectare, Cabernet Franc was down 26% but Cabernet Sauvignon was virtually spot on its average at 7.37 tonnes per hectare and Petit Verdot went ballistic. Its yield of 7.25 tonnes per hectare was an amusing 32% above average. We don't often get the chance to write a statement like that.

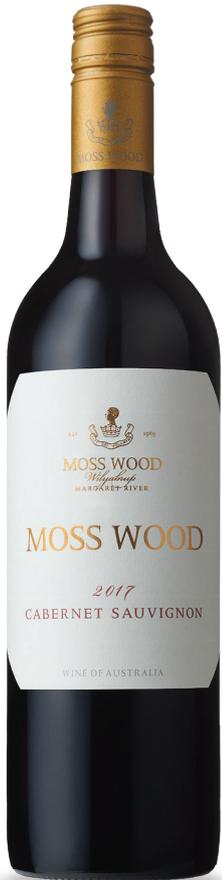
PRODUCTION NOTES

All the fruit was hand-picked and delivered to the winery where it was destemmed and placed in small, open fermenters. Each batch was seeded with multiple yeast strains and hand-plunged three times per day for extraction. Time on skins was typically 14 days, although one batch was pressed after a rare 22 days in the fermenter. As always, each one was tasted daily and pressed according to taste.



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In May 2017, after malolactic fermentation in stainless steel tanks, each batch was racked to wood. All barrels were 228 litre French oak and 15% were new. In November 2018 all the individual batches were racked and blended for the first time. The final makeup of the assemblage was 88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Petit Verdot and 4% Cabernet Franc.

People familiar with the traditional Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon blend will note the higher percentage of Petit Verdot than is usual. As we noted above, we had a surprisingly high yield. We had no hesitation including it in the blend because the mighty 2001 was 89%, 7% and 4%, respectively. We were more than happy with how that turned out.

In October 2019 the wine was racked from barrel for the final time and we conducted fining trials to see if we could improve the tannin balance but no fining was necessary. It was then sterile filtered and bottled on 1st Nov, 2019.

TASTING NOTES

Colour and condition:

Deep brick red, in bright condition.

Nose:

A classic Cabernet combination of blueberries, violets, blackberries with tar and cedar notes. The musky, black fruit note also suggests the higher percentage of Petit Verdot this year. There's also pencil shavings and pomegranate and a very light toasty oak.

Palate:

In the traditional Moss Wood style, the first impression here is one of bright, generous blue and black fruit flavours, sitting over concentrated but balanced tannin. It's the classic vineyard statement. However, there are also some pointers to the 2017 season, with crisp acidity, giving the palate a taut, almost zippy feel. The finish is firm, with a very light touch of toasty oak, mixing with cedar and tar.

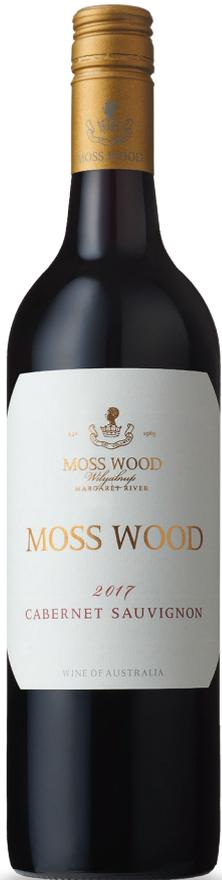
CELLARING NOTES

Apparently, Mark Twain once said history never repeats itself but it often



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rhymes and we reckon grape growing seasons are a classic example. Moss Wood followers will know we're fond of reminiscing about vintages past and how they compare with current releases and yes, it's a useful way to give perspective on wine style and cellaring potential. With the 2017 we turn immediately to the 1990 because these two share some remarkable similarities. Both were mild growing seasons with plenty of rain and in March, not only were the dates similar but also the amounts. It resulted in similar ripeness, 13.0 Baume in 2017 compared with 12.8 in 1990, and harvest with the former picked on 10th April and the latter on the 12th. Most importantly, this means we have great expectations of the 2017 because its older sibling remains one of Moss Wood's finest that continues to drink well 30 years later. At present, the wine is showing vibrant fruit aromas so it's an appealing youngster and can certainly be enjoyed now. However, the underlying structure is firm and will support long term aging, just as it did for the 1990. Over the next decade it should begin to soften but it will take until at least 20 years of age before it reaches full maturity.