



MOSS WOOD
Wilyabrup
MARGARET RIVER
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*Est'd
1969*

MOSS WOOD RIBBON VALE 2019 MERLOT

VINTAGE NOTES

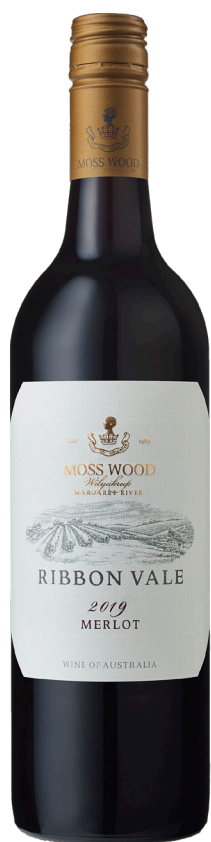
We hope readers enjoy our reports about seasonal conditions and how these impacted our winemaking lives. An important part of the fun in making and drinking wine is that every vintage is different and carries with it the stamp of the often-small weather variations that prevailed. The results are the nuanced but perceivable changes in the style of wine we made.

Our most interesting stories typically come from complicated years. The more Mother Nature throws out the challenges, the harder we have to work to achieve the high quality upon which we pride ourselves. As we progressed through the 2018/19 season, it became clear she was definitely in one of those moods.

Mild and wet, was the theme of the spring. Calendar year 2018 was above average for rainfall and it kept coming right till the end of the year. The Cabernet varieties all flowered late, around 20th November and were accompanied by 9 days of rain, delivering a total of 53mm, not to mention 10 days when the temperature dropped below 8°C. Flowering was at least a week late across all varieties and it's no surprise that yields were variable. Good old Cabernet Sauvignon coped well and was actually up ever so slightly, by 2%, at 7.10 tonnes per hectare but the brothers-in-arms, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Malbec were all below average to varying degrees. Cabernet Franc was the worst offender, down 34%, at 5.27 tonnes per hectare.

We kept our part of the bargain by keeping fungicide treatments on track and so the vineyard was free of disease. When the leaves are green and healthy, the vines are able to maintain good ripening, something quite crucial when the temperatures are a bit low, giving them the best chance to achieve good flavours.

Our other important step we can take is to make sure our foliage management is timely. When the shoots are properly positioned, standing vertically, with all the leaves and bunches exposed to the sun, we maximise the ripening potential and minimise the disease risk. In the sporting parlance, the 1%ers can really make a difference and attention to detail is



Median Harvest Dates

Merlot 13/4/2019
Cabernet Franc 10/4/2019

Median Harvest Ripeness

Merlot 13.0°Be
Cabernet Franc 12.8°Be

Yield

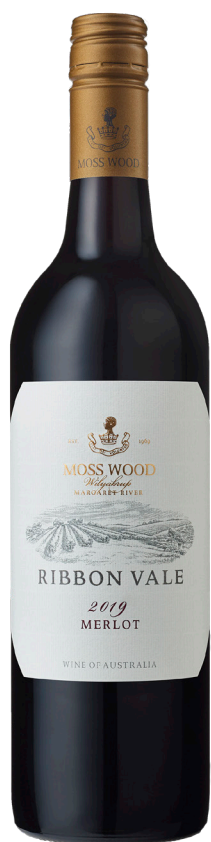
Merlot 6.22 t/ha
Cabernet Franc 5.27 t/ha



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**Ripening Time
from Flowering to
Harvest**
Merlot 131 days
Cabernet Franc 132 days

Alcohol

13.5%

Bottled

9th August 2021

Released

29th October 2021

critical.

As the season progressed all this became more and more important as Mother Nature gifted us on-going mild temperatures and several good dollops of rain. With the vineyard in good shape, disease wasn't a risk but ripening was slow.

As dry land farmers, we have something of love/hate relationship with rain. We love to have it anytime but it's a mixed blessing late in the season. As we progress into autumn, we get a bit edgy. Falling temperatures reduce the progress of the Cabernet varieties and rain slows things even further. By mid-April things can reach the point in cool years when ripening all but stops.

The other issue is the birds get very hungry at that time of year and although the crop is protected by nets, we have to check continually for holes. The silvereyes, in particular, will find the smallest opening to stream through and get stuck into the fruit. Nothing is more frustrating than watching the birds help themselves to almost-ripe grapes.

With all of the above in mind, it was a relief when Ribbon Vale closed in on full ripeness. On 10th April, we got under way with Cabernet Franc and Malbec, soon followed by Merlot. We were still waiting on Cabernet Sauvignon, anxiously following the many weather forecasts available these days and decided on Good Friday morning that Easter Saturday was the big day. We were experiencing some showers but they were likely to be easing by the afternoon, so we agreed to take the nets off late in the day. What happened next will remain one of those magic moments we'll remember forever.

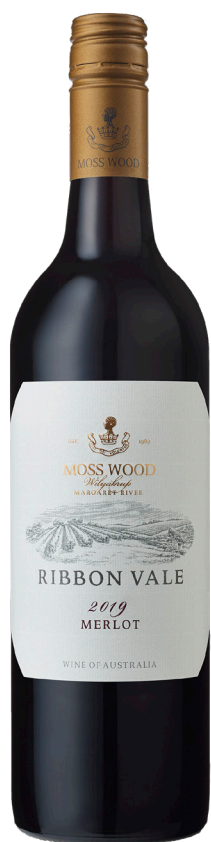
As the vineyard crew left Moss Wood, which luckily was all finished by this stage, to take off the aforementioned nets, an almighty storm passed over the top of the winery, leaving hail piled up against the south side of all the buildings. Very exciting indeed! As can happen with these things, it was a strip about 1 kilometre wide, passing roughly straight over the top of Moss Wood, with Ribbon Vale on the very southern edge, so fortunately it missed



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the worst. Also, believe it or not, we also need to thank the birds because their pressure meant we'd left the nets on until the very last minute and these prevented the hail from damaging the fruit. Sometimes you get lucky!

PRODUCTION NOTES

As always, the fruit for the Ribbon Vale reds was hand-picked and delivered to the winery where it was destemmed and sorted. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Malbec were all put into small, open fermenters, for hand plunging 3 times per day. Merlot went into closed fermenters and was pumped over 3 times per day.

All batches were seeded with multiple yeast strains for primary fermentation and temperatures were controlled to a maximum of 30°C. Time on skins was 10 days for Malbec, 16 days for Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot and 17 days for Cabernet Franc.

After pressing all batches underwent malolactic fermentation in stainless steel and were then racked to barrel. All casks were French oak barriques, and in the Cabernet Sauvignon 26% were new and in the Merlot, 14%.

On 16th November 2020, the final blends for both wines were made up. The 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon is 91% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 3% each of Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Malbec. The 2019 Merlot is 93% Merlot and 7% Cabernet Franc. The finished wines were then returned to barrel.

In early August 2021, after 28 months in wood, both wines were racked to stainless steel and fining trials were carried out to assess tannin balance. No finings were necessary and so both were sterile filtered and bottled on 9th August.

TASTING NOTES

Colour and condition: Deep brick red hue; bright condition.

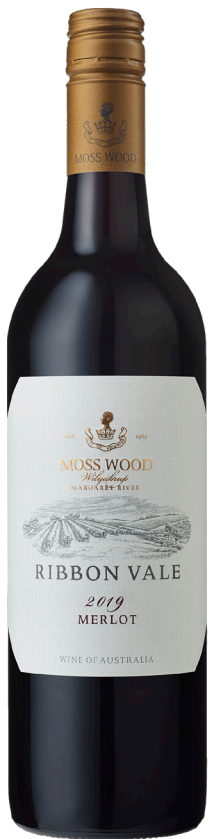
Nose: Merlot is lauded for its dark fruit notes and the 2019 has this in spades. Lifted cherry, blackberry and blackcurrant fruit aromas dominate



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and underneath there are just the first hints of leather and tar.

Palate: The same theme follows on the palate, with intense blackberry and cherry notes in the mid palate, sitting over a firm but balanced structure. It captures the theme of 2019, with lively acid and firm tannin and on the finish the oak is toasty, with some old-fashioned pencil shavings.

CELLARING NOTES

This is certainly a wine for the cellar and it will repay long term patience. The generous fruit characters of the 2019 vintage mean it is an easy-to-drink youngster but 15 years in the cellar should see the tannin begin to soften and for the tar and leather notes to add complexity to both the nose and palate. Full maturity should be reached around 25 years of age.