



**MOSS WOOD**  
*Wilyabrup*  
**MARGARET RIVER**  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*Est'd  
1969*



**MOSS WOOD**  
**2020 PINOT NOIR**

**VINTAGE NOTES**

As mentioned in the discussion of the 2021 Moss Wood Chardonnay, the key story of the 2019/20 growing season was the hailstorms that hit the Margaret River region on 24th October. Moss Wood and Ribbon Vale weren't spared and all varieties were impacted.

With hail damage, there's very little we can do, other than treat the vineyard to ensure we don't get secondary fungal infections on damaged vine tissue, so we applied a fungicide and waited for vintage to see exactly how bad the result actually was.

Apart from this rather aggressive outburst, Mother Nature was very kind to us. We had only limited rain during flowering and only one day where the temperature dropped below 8°C. At least this ensured the remaining bunches were able to flower in good conditions and maximise whatever crop was left. We were thankful for small mercies!

The season progressed with some nice warm weather and the vines enjoyed 1152 hours between 18°C and 28°C, plus 68 hours above 33°C. Between this and the tiny crop, the fruit charged through to ripeness, taking 98 days to go from flowering to harvest at 14° Baume on 12th February, 11 days earlier than average.

We have this thing with low yielding years where during the season, we assess the crop and when the estimates are really low, we invariably think, no, it can't be that bad. Of course, when the crop comes in, our unrealistic optimism is exposed when the fruit finally arrives at the winery weigh bridge. So, it was in 2020, when the weighing scales revealed the bad news of a yield of 3.00 tonnes per hectare, down 52% and our lowest ever.

To digress for a moment, there is much debate about the relationship between grape yield and wine quality. In France, the figure of 40 hectolitres per hectare of wine, or roughly 6 tonnes per hectare of grapes, is considered the benchmark for high quality yields.

**MEDIAN HARVEST DATE**

12/02/2020

**MEDIAN HARVEST RIPENESS**

14.0° Be

**YIELD**

3.00 t/ha

**GROWING SEASON AVE  
TEMPERATURE**

20.7°C

**NUMBER OF HOURS ACCRUED  
BETWEEN 18 AND 28°C**

1152

**NUMBER OF HOURS ABOVE  
33°C**

68

**DAYS ELAPSED BETWEEN  
FLOWERING AND HARVEST**

98 days

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Above that, quality may be reduced, depending on the season. Typically, the warmer and drier the year, the better will be the quality at yields higher than this.

Our experience roughly confirms this although there are differences between our varieties. For example, Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon can produce wines with very firm tannin in the low yielding vintages and these are slightly atypical. Conversely, the opposite tends to be true at the other end of the yield scale and a good example is 2001, a really outstanding vintage, which cropped at 9.55 tonnes per hectare.

Returning to Pinot Noir, we've found it produces its best quality at lower yields and 6 tonnes per hectare seems to be about right. Indeed, prior to 2020, our lowest yielding Pinot was the 1981 and at 3.48 tonnes per hectare, was the greatest wine our vineyard has produced. The 2020 vintage, at even slightly lower yields, has delivered a similarly outstanding quality year.

**PRODUCTION NOTES**

All the fruit was hand-picked and delivered to the winery where it was hand-sorted, destemmed, placed in small, open fermenters and seeded with multiple yeast strains for primary fermentation. Temperatures were controlled to a maximum of 32°C and each batch was hand plunged 3 times per day for extraction of colour and flavour.

After 16 days on skins, each batch was pressed to stainless steel tank and underwent malolactic fermentation. The wine was then racked off gross lees, adjusted and racked to wood on 4th March 2020. All barrels were 225 litre French oak and 23% were new.

On 26th October 2021, after 19 months in oak, all the barrels were racked and blended in stainless steel. In preparation for bottling, fining trials were carried out but no treatment improved the wine so it remained unfinned and was sterile filtered and bottled on 1st November 2021.

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**TASTING NOTES**

**Colour and condition:** Deep ruby hue; bright condition.

**Nose:** Bright fruit aromas set the tone, with red fruits of strawberries and strawberry jam, combining with black fruits of cherry and plum. There is a rich background of musk, earth and spicy, toasty oak.

**Palate:** The same intensity shows on the palate where generous strawberry and cherry fruit flavours fill the mouth, supported by full body and good acidity. There are earthy and tarry notes on the finish. The tannins are quite dense and mouth-filling for a Pinot Noir, giving the wine a long, smooth finish.

**Cellaring:** In our commentary above, we referred to the mighty 1981 Pinot Noir as an example of the high quality our low-yielding years can offer and it sailed comfortably past 40 years of age in 2021 and looked fantastic. Although 2020 was a slightly warmer and earlier vintage than its older sibling, it has similar concentration and power, exactly the makeup it needs to deliver 4 decades in the cellar. If this is somewhat daunting, we share two other thoughts. It has delicious flavour and balance and can definitely be enjoyed now and for those who would like to see just a little bit of development in the bottle, we recommend short term cellaring of 10 years.

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