



MOSS WOOD
Wilyabrup
MARGARET RIVER
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*Est'd
1969*



RIBBON VALE 2023 CHARDONNAY

VINTAGE NOTES

The 2022-23 growing season was a very good one, potentially great! The vines enjoyed a solid winter of rainfall with 1114mm falling for the calendar year 2022, 9% above average. This level is optimal for our unirrigated vines as their deep root systems are able to access this soil moisture throughout the summer and avoid stress as the grapes begin to ripen.

We're a bit fussy about when we want the rain to fall... lots through the winter, but once the vines begin flowering, we like the weather to turn mild and dry. Chardonnay, in particular, is extremely susceptible to inclement conditions which can result in below average yields. Readers can draw their own conclusions as to whether we're asking for too much of mother nature. Fortunately, she looked after us in late 2022, with just 23mm falling during the Chardonnay flowering period and 8.6mm falling on the Sauvignon Blanc. All in all, conditions were fantastic and we were hopeful of solid crops.

We didn't have it all our own way, however, as after the 9th of December, the tap pretty much turned off, with no rain recorded again until the 15th of March. Once again, if we're being picky, we like to see some rain falling during December and January as these little top ups can help sustain the vines. Nevertheless, the drought wasn't a problem and this became clear when we harvested. Both Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc produced good yields. Chardonnay came in at 5.72 tonnes/hectare, 19% above average, and Sauvignon Blanc registering 10.8 tonnes/hectare, 1% above average.

MEDIAN HARVEST DATE

24/03/2023

HARVEST RIPENESS

12.7° Be

YIELD

5.72 t/ha

BOTTLING

18th January, 2024

**RIPENING TIME FROM
FLOWERING TO HARVEST**

123 days

ALCOHOL

14%



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Temperatures were ideal, with Chardonnay recording an average growing season temperature of 19.96°C and Sauvignon Blanc 20.21°C. For context this puts 2022/23 as slightly cooler than 21/22 (21.01°C) and slightly warmer than 20/21 (19.43°C). These differences may seem small, but they're responsible for perceivable stylistic variations in the wines.

Ultimately, the season unfolded smoothly, characterised by warm, rain-free days. The vineyard was free of disease and the fruit was in immaculate condition. Sauvignon Blanc was picked on the 14th March, about 2 weeks later than average, and Chardonnay coming off on the 24th March, 2 days later than average.

Since we now have two Chardonnay wines, it allows us to reinforce a very important part of the Moss Wood Philosophy. The Moss Wood and Ribbon Vale vineyard wines are all from single vineyards. We see this as an expression of the individuality of both sites.

This being the 3rd vintage of Ribbon Vale Chardonnay, we now have a small sample to compare with the Moss Wood Chardonnay. Ribbon Vale is a cooler location than Moss Wood by virtue of its aspect and altitude and, despite the vineyards only being one kilometre apart, this leads to slower ripening. Unsurprisingly then, stylistically the two wines are different and we are happy they complement each other nicely in our stable of wines. Ribbon Vale Chardonnay displays more of the lime, white peach and grapefruit characters, whereas Moss Wood Chardonnay tends more into the yellow peach, marmalade and cashew nut spectrum. It is very interesting to observe these differences, given that the vineyard and winery techniques are identical.



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For Ribbon Vale Chardonnay, our style requirement is somewhat clearer because we've accrued so much experience with Moss Wood. At the same time, we're still learning because the two vineyards are quite different and not all the historical knowledge is easily applied. Nevertheless, our preference is for chardonnay's riper fruit spectrum, with the emphasis on stone fruit and nuts and this occurs at just over 13% alcohol equivalent, which is similar to Moss Wood but here's a curious thing. Despite the vineyards being only one kilometre apart, Ribbon Vale ripens roughly 2 weeks later. This, of course, makes it just that bit more challenging, while we wait and watch the weather, hoping things stay fine.

Our preferred ripeness for Sauvignon Blanc is now not less than 12.5 and not more than 13.0° Baume and with the 2022, we landed right in the middle. That was either good luck, or good management, but we'll take the latter. Essentially, we want to pick the fruit green enough to provide zestiness but it still has to be ripe enough to provide generosity and weight on the palate. It's a delicate balancing act.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The inspiration for the Elsa production techniques continues to be the wines of the Loire Valley in France, specifically the localities of Sancerre and Pouilly-Fume. In both regions the emphasis is on complex Sauvignon Blanc and methods employed are similar to Burgundy. In its freshest form, Sauvignon Blanc produces ethereal, grassy wines typified by the Marlborough region in New Zealand. Although these wines have their place, our preference is for the more complex aromatics and texture and weight seen in the Loire.



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Both the Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc were picked by hand and transported to the winery, where identical winemaking techniques were applied. The grapes were hand-sorted and pressed as whole bunches, followed by juice clarification and inoculation with multiple yeast strains for primary fermentation in stainless steel tanks. Alcoholic fermentation was maintained at a controlled temperature of up to 20°C. At the midway point, as activity slowed, the fermenting must was transferred to oak.

For the 2023 Ribbon Vale Elsa, barrels were 225-litre French oak barriques, with 7% being new. We aim for an integrated oak presence, harmoniously complementing both the aroma and palate.

In contrast, the 2023 Ribbon Vale Chardonnay was fermented and matured in 23% new French barriques, a higher component, which reflects the variety's ability to carry oak flavours.

Following full malolactic fermentation, each batch was blended, treated with sulfur dioxide, and returned to barrel. Oak aging continued until January 3rd, 2024, totaling 9 months, before both wines were blended in stainless steel. Although fining trials were conducted to optimise tannin balance, no treatments proved beneficial. Subsequently, both wines underwent bentonite fining for protein stability, cold stabilisation, sterile filtration, and were bottled on January 18th, 2024.



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TASTING NOTES

Colour and Condition:

Clear and bright condition, light to medium straw colour. Golden hues.

Nose:

The nose begins with stonefruit notes peaches and nectarines, enhanced with a background of tropical fruits like Guava and Lychee. There are layers of complexity underneath including shortbread biscuit, butter-baked pastry of the croissant type, roast almond and cashew nuts.

Palate:

The palate has ripe stonefruits of nectarine and peach, as well as honeydew melon, kiwi fruit and popcorn. The wine has a firm structure with good acidity and tannin which is balanced by the full body and richness. There are some complex notes of caramel from malolactic fermentation and toasty oak from the new barrels.

CELLARING

The hardest part of cellaring Chardonnay is to resist consuming the wine because it is so attractive as youngster. For those who can resist temptation, it will need a decade to develop its secondary bottle bouquet of butter, caramel and toast. Final cellaring time should be at least 20 years, using our experience with Moss Wood Chardonnay.