



MOSS WOOD
Wilyabrup
MARGARET RIVER
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*Est'd
1969*

MOSS WOOD 2021 PINOT NOIR



VINTAGE NOTES

The growing conditions we experienced for the 2020/21 season were very much in our favour. All the key aspects we follow were very much as we would have liked them.

The rainfall for calendar 2020 was good, although slightly low. We received 929mm, 7% below our average but certainly plenty for growing vines. During the flowering period we received 92mm on 12 days and so this was a slight disruption for the vines. On the other hand, during that crucial period, the temperature only dropped below 8°C on 3 days, for a total of 7 hours, so things remained warm enough for a good fruit set.

Looking at the temperatures in general, the average from flowering to harvest was a very mild 18.7°C, and the vines received 968 hours in their preferred range of 18°C to 28°C and only 21 hours above 33°C. Altogether, this means the vines enjoyed good conditions but they ripened quite slowly. This can be seen in the season length, which at 109 days was about a week longer than usual and this is reflected in the harvest date, the 1st March, 5 days later than average.

We get a different and interesting insight when we look at the yields, which at 4.41 tonnes per hectare, were down 29%. The first thing to note is the bunch number per vine was down around 50%, which is very significant. This is explained by the vines still recovering from the hailstorm of October 2019. This happens because the wood available for pruning in the winter of 2020 carried the damage inflicted by the hail. If a normal season follows and no further damage happens, when pruning in the second year after the hail we're able to choose wood that hasn't been affected, and bunch numbers should return to average.

MEDIAN HARVEST DATE

1st March, 2021

HARVEST RIPENESS

14°Be

YIELD

5.96 t/ha

**RIPENING TIME FROM
FLOWERING TO HARVEST**

109 days

BOTTLING

1st November, 2022

RELEASED

1st September, 2023

ALCOHOL

14.5%



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If the vines are carrying fewer bunches, we typically expect them to be slightly heavier at harvest but this didn't happen in 2021, where they were down by around 13%. We suspect this happened for two reasons. Firstly, we've already mentioned flowering conditions were quite damp, with 92mm rain falling on 12 days. That is certain to have had an impact but we also experienced a significant wet spell in the first week of February, when a tropical low (designated 12U by the Bureau of Meteorology) dumped 82mm of rain on us.

We get a bit touchy about these late season events because they can cause all sorts of havoc. The almost-ready fruit is soft and susceptible to splitting and fungal disease, although in this instance, our spray program during the season meant we had good control. However, Pinot Noir, being the somewhat contrary thing that it is, has a very tight bunch and when the vines experience rain, they take up the moisture and the berries expand and then run out of space in the bunch and detach at the base. This can be a bit soul destroying because when we walk through the vineyard after this sort of rain, we find a light carpet of Pinot Noir berries on the ground. Had the rain stayed away for another couple of weeks, they would have been in tanks turning into wine instead of rotting on the ground.



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The fun doesn't end there because there is a second impact, that is just as amusing, if we can put it that way. Some berries remain partially detached and don't fall off and these begin to shrivel and turn into raisins. This dehydration leads to much higher sugar levels in those berries, compared to the rest of the bunch. It also means sampling the grapes becomes more difficult because we can only guess as to what percentage of shrivelled berries we should include. It can be quite good fun in the Moss Wood lab when the analysis for the next Pinot sample comes through and we take bets as to what the number might be. We are happy to admit that our accuracy can be a challenge for the punters.

The final piece of the puzzle involves the flavour ripeness, something we focus on very closely. While the dehydrating berries provide a spike in sugar levels, the majority of the grapes remain sound and their development continues at normal pace. The result is more sugar accrued at the point flavour ripeness. This means the 2021 has our preferred flavours but we had to accept a higher Baume. On the plus side, the result is wine with pretty fruit fragrances, courtesy of the mild temperatures but the generous palate weight associated with a warmer year. In some respects, it might be considered a natural version of the Italian "Amarone" technique.



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PRODUCTION NOTES

This juggling act which was the 2020/21 season finally came to a conclusion when these many different influences aligned on 1st March and we started harvest. All the fruit was hand-picked and delivered to the winery where it was de-stemmed and put into small, open fermenters. After destemming, we added the last 8% of the whole bunches into the tanks for some additional complexity.

Each batch was seeded with multiple yeast strains for primary fermentation. Temperatures were controlled to a maximum of 32°C and extraction of colour and flavour was by hand plunging 3 times per day. The wines remained on skins for 17 days after which they underwent malolactic fermentation in stainless steel tanks. Once that was out of the way, they were racked to 228 litre barrels, all of which were French oak and 17% were new.

After 8 months, the different batches were blended and returned to wood, where the wine stayed until October 2022, when all the barrels were racked for the final time and blended in stainless steel. At this point, fining trials were carried out but none improved the wine, so it remained unfinned. It was then sterile filtered and bottled 1st November, 2022.



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TASTING NOTES

Colour and condition: Deep ruby hue; bright condition.

Nose: A bright combination of red and dark berries, including strawberry, cherry and plum, as well as musky, rose petal fragrances. The complex notes combine cinnamon, a touch of tar, and Lapsang Souchong-type spiciness with some light, toasty oak.

Palate: The red and dark fruits continue here and so the immediate impression is bright strawberry, cherry, plum and musk flavours. These are underpinned by a balanced structure of fresh acid and firm but rounded tannin. There is good length and the wine finishes with some smoky oak.

CELLARING

The 2023 Moss Wood Pinot Noir is a bright and friendly youngster, with lively fruit flavours and good balance and can certainly be enjoyed now. However, like its many siblings, it has a long life ahead in the cellar, for those who are prepared to wait. It should develop some bottle complexity by 10 years of age but full maturity will take at least 2 decades. By then it will still display its red and dark fruits but will be much more complex, showing the variety's famous earthy notes of mushroom, meat, farmyard and freshly turned soil.