



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

*Est'd  
1969*



## MOSS WOOD RIBBON VALE 2018 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

### VINTAGE NOTES

The tale of the 2017/18 growing season is delightfully simple. Essentially, benign conditions prevailed nearly all the way such that even Hanrahan wouldn't have complained!

Rainfall during calendar year 2017 was above average with 1117mm, so there was plenty of moisture in the soil but with a solid 267mm falling during the growing season, the vines were never in danger of being stressed.

During the flowering period for the Cabernet varieties at Ribbon Vale, from 7th November to 12th December, there were only 3 days when the temperature dropped below 8°C, so the only interruptions were caused by rain. Hanrahan might have grumbled with his mates in the congregation when we had showers or drizzle on 14 days and received a total of 50mm of rain, which gave us lighter bunches and commensurately lower yields, the only serious disappointment of the vintage. Cabernet Sauvignon cropped at 5.06 tonnes per hectare, down 27%, while Cabernet Franc at 6.55 tonnes per hectare was down 17% and Merlot, doing its best to save the team, cropped at 7.38 tonnes per hectare, down only 5%.

At this point, however, even he would stop complaining.

Temperatures during summer and autumn were very enjoyable for those of us working in the vineyard. An absence of sustained hot weather made outdoor activities easy, although the nights were fresh and didn't provide too many balmy evenings for holiday makers. Apart from one hot day on 14th January when the mercury topped out at 39.1°C, there were very few days when the temperature exceeded 33°C, so the vines were very comfortable indeed.

### Median Harvest Dates

Cabernet Sauvignon – 8th April, 2018  
Cabernet Franc – 16th March, 2018  
Merlot – 18th March, 2018

### Mean Harvest Ripeness

Cabernet Sauvignon – 14.0° Be  
Cabernet Franc – 13.1° Be  
Merlot – 13.3° Be

### Yields

Cabernet Sauvignon – 5.06 t/ha  
Cabernet Franc – 6.55 t/ha  
Merlot – 7.38 t/ha

### Ripening Time from Flowering to Harvest

Cabernet Sauvignon – 137 days  
Cabernet Franc – 119 days  
Merlot – 122 days

Given these mild conditions, it's no surprise the rate of ripening was a bit leisurely. It's almost as if the vines knew they had plenty of time to enjoy good conditions and were determined to do so. Cabernet Franc used its average 119 days to proceed from flowering to ripeness but Merlot was more casual, taking 3 more days than usual at 122. Cabernet Sauvignon, as is often the case at Ribbon Vale, was the laggard, coming in 10 days later than average with 137 days.

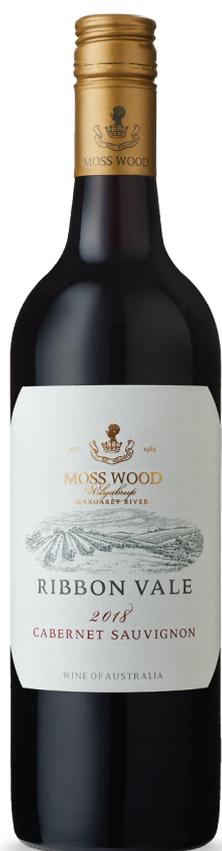
This last point is interesting and in all but the warmest years can certainly challenge us. As we proceed into autumn and the average temperature drops accordingly, we often find Ribbon Vale ripening noticeably slower than Moss Wood, a product of its elevated, south-facing location. It gets quite chilly out there, especially overnight, and the vines take longer to warm up and get moving in the morning. We have to be patient and keep an eye on the weather and are happy to leave the fruit out as long as we can, but we always get a bit touchy if rain is looming. We need to be ready to jump in at late notice and this is how it was in 2018. The last pick was on 9th April and over the next 2 weeks, 50mm of rain fell. We couldn't have left things any longer but the quality was worth the wait.

We were successful in deterring the birds and our fungicide program ensured we had no



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**Alcohol** 14.5%

**Bottled**  
10th & 11th August, 2020

**Released**  
10th November, 2020

disease, so each variety produced grapes in excellent condition and which also means the pressure goes on in the winery because we don't want to spoil all that good work.

#### PRODUCTION NOTES

The fruit was hand-picked and delivered to the winery where it was sorted and destemmed.

Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc were both placed into small, open fermenters, seeded with multiple yeast strains for primary fermentation and hand plunged, 3 times per day for colour and tannin extraction. Both varieties remained on skins for 12 days and were then pressed to stainless steel and underwent malolactic fermentation. The time in the fermenter was one or two days less than we normally expect and is an indication of how well balanced the tannins are in the 2018 wines.

Merlot was placed in small, closed tanks for primary fermentation because we apply a slightly different technique. Initially, we chill the juice down to around 10°C and allow some extraction of colour without the presence of alcohol. It's a technique we use on Pinot Noir but in open tanks. After 48 hours, we seed for primary fermentation with multiple yeast strains and pump the tanks over 3 times per day for extraction. We choose this over hand plunging in open tanks because, for reasons that are not entirely clear, we get better colour, in particular. After 16 days on skins each batch was pressed to stainless steel tank for malolactic fermentation.

For each variety the steps post-MLF were the same – adjusted and racked to 228 litre French oak barrels.

In December 2019, the final blends were assembled after tasting trials. The Cabernet Sauvignon was at its best with 96% of that variety, combined with 2% each of Merlot and Cabernet Franc and contained 16% new oak.

#### TASTING NOTES

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

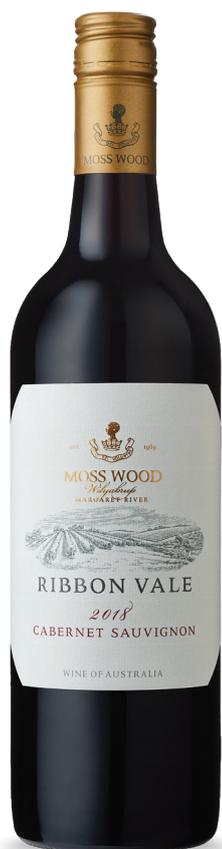
*Nose:* Cabernet Sauvignon has a range of fruit aromas that very few varieties can match. It dominates this wine, with red currant, leather and tar but unusually for Ribbon Vale, there is a suggestion of floral aroma, in particular, violets. The small percentage of Cabernet Franc has bolstered the black fruit note by introducing cherries and similarly for Merlot, which adds in blackberry.

*Palate:* The high-quality theme for the 2018 vintage continues on the palate, with full body and a concentrated tannin structure playing a co-starring role behind generous and supple blackberry, blueberry and fruit cake flavours, complemented by some tarry, smoky and toasty oak notes on the finish. Very smooth indeed and probably the best Ribbon Vale Cabernet Sauvignon we have made.



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CELLARING NOTES

In some respects, we are beginning to feel our cellaring recommendations are becoming a bit academic. By this we mean after 20 years we are now very confident the wines from the Ribbon Vale vineyard will age just as well as their Moss Wood siblings. The Cabernet Sauvignon will cellar for decades but for those who seek some complexity from cellaring but don't wish to wait say 25 years for full maturity, we recommend at least 10 years cellaring. Of course, as with the 2018 Ribbon Vale Merlot, this wine shares the sheer generosity of the vintage and will be hard to resist for long.