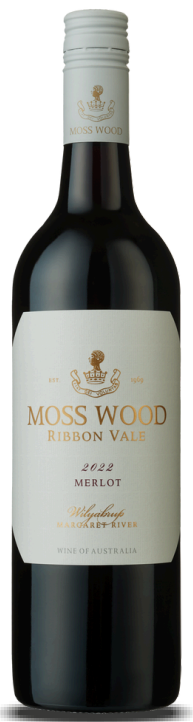




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MARGARET RIVER
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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RIBBON VALE 2022 MERLOT

VINTAGE NOTES

In keeping with our normal practice of explaining our wine styles by focusing on the growing season in which we made them, it's nice that we can publish a wonderfully simple report for the Ribbon Vale 2022 Merlot.

Mother Nature was in a very benign frame of mind.

Rainfall for calendar year 2021 was a record-breaking 1440mm, so our unirrigated vineyards had plenty of soil moisture. However, during the flowering period for the Cabernet varieties at Ribbon Vale, 13th November to 20th December, there were only 11 days of rain, which delivered 21mm. At the same time, there were only 5 nights when the temperature dropped below 8°C. Here's an amusing fact – despite being well into summer, the lowest minimum of 4.3°C occurred on 19th December, by which time flowering was effectively finished.

These types of conditions would normally reward us with higher yields but that's not how things turned out. Cabernet Sauvignon was down 27% to 4.92t/ha, Cabernet Franc was down 17% to 6.45t/ha. Only Merlot managed to fly the flag, producing a yield of 8.04t/ha, 5% above average.

MEDIAN HARVEST DATE

Merlot – 4th April, 2022
Cabernet Franc – 5th April, 2022
Cabernet Sauvignon – 14th April, 2022

HARVEST RIPENESS

Merlot – 13.0° Be
Cabernet Franc – 13.1° Be
Cabernet Sauvignon – 13.3° Be

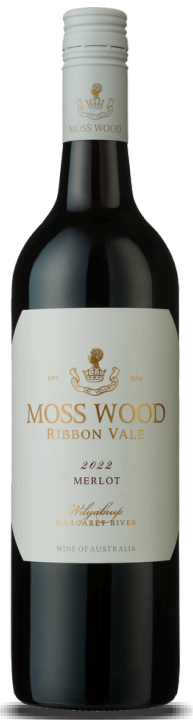
YIELD

Merlot – 8.04 t/ha
Cabernet Franc – 6.45 t/ha
Cabernet Sauvignon – 4.92 t/h



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The explanation lies in the temperatures. The Ribbon Vale Cabernet Sauvignon experienced 1078 hours between 18°C and 28°C, so plenty of time in the preferred range for good ripening. However, we also received 118 hours above 33°C, and there were some warm days, especially Boxing Day 2021, when the mercury hit 41.2°C. Toasty warm! That's the second warmest day we've recorded, the hottest being 25th February 1985, when we got to 41.5°C. The warm weather lasted through until mid-February and then eased in the autumn, to the point where Cabernet Sauvignon needed 132 days to reach full ripeness, 6 days longer than average. The point is, despite the mild finish, there was sufficient heat load earlier in the cycle to have a negative effect on the yield.

Overall, we were pleased with how things had gone and we had no problems with fungal disease or bird damage and so the fruit was in excellent condition when harvest began with Merlot on 4th March.

BOTTLING

2nd August, 2024

BLEND

86% Merlot
7% Cabernet Sauvignon
7% Cabernet Franc

**RIPENING TIME FROM
FLOWERING TO HARVEST**

Merlot – 127 days
Cabernet Franc – 126 days
Cabernet Sauvignon – 134 days

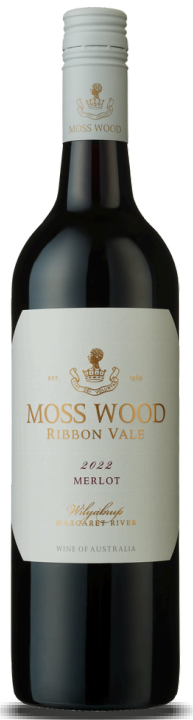
ALCOHOL

14%



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PRODUCTION NOTES

As is always the case, picking was done by hand, then the fruit is delivered to the winery to be destemmed and sorted. Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc were transferred to small open tanks and seeded with multiple yeast strains for primary fermentation. Once this was underway each batch was hand plunged 3 times per day and time on skins varied from 13 to 16 days. Temperatures are controlled to a maximum of 32°C.

Merlot is treated slightly differently and placed into closed tanks, where it was chilled to 10°C and allowed to cold soak. After 48 hours, the cooling was turned off and the temperature returned to ambient. Once it had reached 18°C the batches were seeded with multiple yeast strains for primary fermentation and pumped over 3 times per day, with temperatures also controlled to 32°C.

After pressing to stainless steel tanks, each batch underwent malolactic fermentation and was then adjusted with SO₂ and racked to barrel. All barrels were 228 litre French oak barriques and 21% were new.

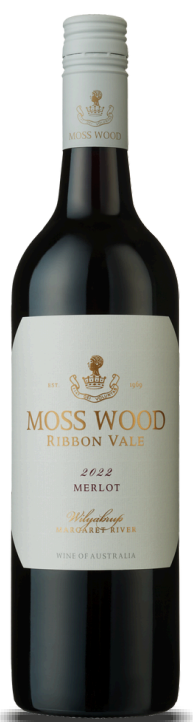
In September 2023, all the different batches were racked and blended in stainless steel. The final makeup of the Ribbon Vale Merlot blend was 86% of that variety, plus 7% each of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc.

The blended wine was then returned to barrel, for the final period of aging, where it stayed until July 2024. In all, the wine spent 26 months in wood. It was racked to stainless steel and fining trials were prepared but none of the agents improved the wine and so it remain unfinned. It was then sterile filtered and bottled on 2nd August, 2024.



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TASTING NOTES

Colour and Condition: Medium to deep ruby hue; bright condition.

Nose: Lifted primary aromas of raspberry, dark cherry, licorice, dark jubes, fruit leather, tamarillo, Tabasco, violets, musk and stewed plum. Background notes of dried roses, dried herbs, earth, cedar, tar, cinnamon, olive tapenade, mushroom, toasty oak, fresh baked fruit bread and some charry, toasty oak.

Palate: The wine is medium to full bodied, with generous red and black fruit flavours, consisting of blackberry, raspberry, boysenberry, strawberry, musk, plum, cherry, fruit leather, star anise and cinnamon. Lifted acidity gives it vibrancy, and tannins are quite concentrated, almost dusty and gravelly in texture and there is subtle vanilla and toasty oak on the finish.

CELLARING

The 2021/22 season has much in common with 2008, as both shared a warm summer followed by the early onset of a mild autumn, allowing the fruit to ripen gradually and retain more lifted fragrances. With this in mind, we're very confident of the aging potential of 2022 Ribbon Vale Merlot and encourage cellaring for at least 10 years, to allow some bottled aged complexity. However, full maturity will need at least another decade and we anticipate the wine reaching its peak around 25 years of age.