

Margins ‘Skin Fermented Chenin Blanc’ 2020

Producer - Megan Bell

Provenance: Clarksburg AVA, California

Grape(s): 100% Chenin Blanc

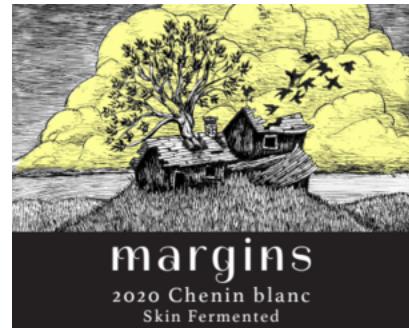
Vineyard: Wilson Vineyard - 20 acres of Chenin began conversion to organic practices in 2017. Alluvial, loam soils.

Vintage: In 2020, Megan doubled her production, moved to a new winery and was forced to evacuate her home due to wildfires just after the first pick. The growing season also presented challenges with heatwaves and a powdery mildew pressure across the Santa Cruz Mountains, she was obliged to pick earlier and find ways to manage alkalinity.

Fermentation/ Aging: Destemmed and skin fermented for 25 days before pressing into barrel for 5 months lees aging.

Fining/ filtration: none.

Sulfite: 30ppm added a week before bottling.



The Producer:

“Complicated things don’t really interest me,” Megan muses “I want wine to be thought of as something that’s very not complicated - that’s something that affected me a lot at the beginning.” Megan’s interest in wine grew out of high-school brewing experiments to studies at UC Davis. From the beginning she found the pall of mystery that hung over wine to be discouraging and totally unnecessary. Her project, initially funded through a crowdsourcing campaign, is dedicated to the less evangelized regions of California and their scrappy mom ‘n pop vineyards.

The Vineyard:

The Chenin Blanc comes from Wilson Vineyard in Clarksburg, planted in 1998. When Megan got started in 2016 she was relatively unknown and freshly returned from a transformative experience in the Loire that had her fixated on getting ahold of some Chenin Blanc. Initially, she was cold calling vineyards and getting almost no response until a few growers in Clarksburg responded to her. Of them, David Ogilvie was the one she connected best with. Although the sprawling 100 acre farm isn’t organic, David agreed to try the 20 acre block of Chenin Blanc as an organic pilot project. Megan helps farm the rows she pulls from and as of 2020 this part of the vineyard is fully organic.

2020 was an especially challenging year for Megan. She moved into a new winery space with a friend which brought with it the joys of permitting and licensing paperwork, and doubled her production from 1,000 cases to 2,000 cases without hiring additional help. ‘I didn’t quite realize how much that was going to be for one person’ she told us. To further complicate matters the neighborhood where she lives was evacuated due to wildfires after the very first pick. With 27 tons left to pick and process, Megan was living in a friend’s guest room while managing a new workflow in a new space.

The growing season also presented challenges with heatwaves frontloading pick dates to catch as much acidity as possible. Despite all this Megan highlights that she thinks “quality was outstanding for white wines in 2020.”

The Winery:

The skin fermented Chenin Blanc has been a labor of love for Megan. “It’s hard to do skin fermented whites,” she says “I just keep learning more and more how to do it.” From 2019, she’s got a firmer handle on managing oxygen control and shortened the maceration from the 30 days she’s done before down to 25. Destemmed fruit is skin fermented and macerated in steel for a total of 25 days with manual punch downs once a day before pressing into neutral barrel. After 5 months aging, base wines are racked into tank with an addition of 30 ppm sulfite and bottled a week after without finning or filtration. This is the first time she’s ever added sulfite at press “I’ve never added that much to one my wines before but I knew that it could be really good and I had to ask: *do I want it to taste really good or be low in sulfur*” Megan really really really does not like mouse in her wines: “it makes me want to barf and die.”

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