

Margins ‘Contra Costa Muscat’ 2020

Producer - Megan Bell

Provenance: Contra Costa AVA, California

Grape(s): 97% Muscat, 3% Clarksburg Chenin Blanc

Vineyard: Cecchini Ranch typified by alkaline, sandy 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: ½ the Muscat is destemmed and skin fermented for 2 days, ½ is whole cluster pressed. Aged separately in neutral barrel on gross lees for 5.5 months. Blended just before bottling.

Fining/ filtration: none.

Sulfur: 20 ppm 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 Muscat is grown in alkaline sand and clayey soils at Cecchini Ranch under the aegis of First Generation Farmers in Contra Costa. Founded in 2013 when prodigal daughter Alli Cecchini returned to her family farm to convert part of their large-scale asparagus farm into diversified organic farming. In 2015 they started working with Brentwood Land Trust to begin organic conversion on half of the Cecchini’s sprawling 550 acres to organic farming. Since 2017 the Erggelet brothers have been farming and managing the property, running a WOOF connected organic farming program and in the early phases of starting an organic viticulture program for highschool kids interested in wine that can’t afford UC Davis. “I’m really drawn to cooperative farming models” Megan says “I lived in a coop in college with a huge garden in the middle of campus.”

2018 was the first vintage for this collaboration and she had less control over picking time. With each successive vintage she has been more confident in picking early, this

time at a super early 16 brix. The result is a low alcohol wine that has all the parts of 18's Muscat she really liked but with a more appropriate balance.

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:

Megan makes her wine in a shared facility with three other winemakers in a little town called Aromas in southern Santa Cruz county. "I wasn't like dying to make Muscat" she says but she wanted to do something "slightly outside of the box." The Muscat is split in two with one half destemmed and skin fermented for two days with one punch down per day. The other half was whole cluster pressed. The base wines were aged separately in neutral barrel for 5.5 months. After 5 months aging, base wines are racked into tank with an addition of 20 ppm sulfite and bottled a week after without finning or filtration.

For more details email info@OlmsteadWine.com

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