

# Margins ‘Contra Costa Muscat’ 2021

**Producer** - Megan Bell

**Provenance:** Contra Costa AVA, California

**Grape(s):** 100% Muscat

**Vineyard:** Cecchini Ranch typified by alkaline, sandy soils.

**Vintage:** “I don’t know if I’ll have a vintage that good in my career again,” Megan says of the spectacular 2021 wines. A cold summer meant a month longer hang time for better flavor development and grape chemistry for easy fermentations and great quality.

**Fermentation/ Aging:** ½ the Muscat is destemmed and skin fermented for 3 days, ½ is whole-cluster pressed. The two lots were fermented in steel and 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,” muses winemaker Megan Bell, “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 husband and wife Julian and Allison Erggelet-Cecchini at Urban Edge Farm 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. Though they were running a WOOF connected organic farming program and organic viticulture program for highschool kids, the business has moved away from those projects. They’ve purchased an orchard down the road and are focusing extensively on exploring IPM (Integrated Pest

Management) farming as a gateway to persuade local, old-school farmers to work more ecologically.

Cecchini Ranch is located in the shadow of Mount Diablo at the true delta of California's Central Valley where the brackish waters meet. Constant, hot winds travel across the water and keep the vineyard from cooling overnight and as a result, this is the only site Megan picks at night.

"I don't know if I'll have a vintage that good in my career again," Megan says of the spectacular 2021 wines. A cold summer meant a month longer hang time for better flavor development and grape chemistry for easy fermentations and great quality. This vineyard, in particular, is a challenging site for timing harvest times because the intense heat can lead to sudden sugar increases. Megan feels that in 2021, "we picked at a really good point" hitting the ideal 20 degrees brix for the intended style.

### **The Winery:**

"I wasn't like dying to make Muscat" Megan 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 three days with one punch down per day. Megan explains "I do that skin fermentation because the vineyard is too hot," pointing out that she feels the bitterness of the Muscat skins helps to create the kind of necessary structure. The other half was whole-cluster pressed. The base wines were aged separately in neutral barrel for 5.5 months. After aging, base wines are racked into tank with an addition of 20 ppm sulfite and bottled a week after without fining or filtration.

**For more details email [info@OlmsteadWine.com](mailto:info@OlmsteadWine.com)**

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