

Margins 'Arroyo Seco Sangiovese' 2020

Producer - Megan Bell

Provenance: Arroyo Seco AVA, California

Grape(s): 100% Sangiovese

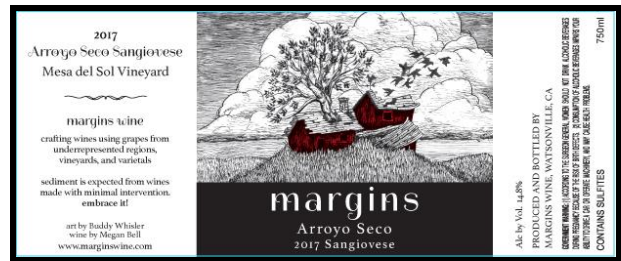
Vineyard: Mesa del Sol vineyard is a 7 acre vineyard planted in 1999 into rocky dry soils.

Fermentation/ Aging: destemmed and fermented in macro bins with one punch down per day. Pressed after 12 days as the ferment goes dry into neutral barrel for 10 months aging on gross lees.

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.

Fining/ filtration: none.

Sulfite: 10 ppm sulfite added in March and another 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 wines are delicious, totally unfussy and super clean.

The Vineyard:

“Something I really like that I feel balances out the vineyards in conversion (to organic farming) is vineyards that have always been farmed organically.” Mesa del Sol is a 7 acre vineyard (of which 1.25 acres are planted to Sangiovese) in the hot Arroyo Seco AVA at the foot of the Santa Lucia mountain range with very rocky, alluvial soils. Ann Hougham planted the vineyard in 1999 with her husband to be his new project but he passed away the following year and ever since she has cared for it in his memory. The vineyard surrounds the beautiful Arroyo Seco Retreat house. “The place feels more magical,” Megan says “it doesn’t feel like work when I’m there; it has this historical California dreamy vibe.”

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.

This wine in particular reflects the enormous challenge of the vintage. With fire raging through nearby Big Sur, Megan and a small crew snuck past a police blockade to reach the ash covered Mesa del Sol vineyard for a long, brutal day of picking ashy grapes. The grapes were trekked back at the end of the day and washed off in the evening before processing. What Megan hadn’t realized was that the water she was using to wash the grapes was high in chlorine and so she added an additional 10 ppm in March.

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. She doesn’t like green character in wine and given a natural leaning towards a brambly character in most of the fruit she works with, she does not ferment anything whole cluster. The reds are essentially made the same way with alterations made when logistics demand: destemmed fruit is fermented in polyethylene macro bin. “I found a style and I’m sticking to it!” she says with enthusiasm. During fermentation she uses a metal tool for gentle, daily punchdowns. “I’m literally punching each section of the cap once,” she says “not mixing it up, not trying to introduce air. Very very gentle maceration, to get as little extraction as possible.” Macerations typically last the duration of the ferment (around two weeks) and base wines are pressed into neutral barrels for lees aging. The first addition of 10 ppm sulfite is made in March and after 10 months aging, base wines are racked into tank with an addition of 20 ppm sulfite and bottled a week after without finning or filtration.

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