

BERGAMOT WINE co

Rebel Grape Society

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Who runs the world? It's the women, clearly. Let's start with the obvious recognition that the wine industry, like so many others, still has a long way to go to create an equal landscape of opportunity for the numerous deserving producers, but here's to the progress that's been made thus far. The most important step can be seen in the past few years where the honest recognition of women winemakers has been based on their hard work, their personal talent and their delicious results. They are no longer looked at as an industry anomaly.

We present to you this month three such winemakers, business owners, risk takers and, coincidentally, lovers of the greater Santa Cruz area. All three have found paths for their small production labels through working with flavors that are under-represented in the California landscape. They are quickly creating more believers and followers of these Rebel grape varieties every time one of their wine bottles is opened up and enjoyed.

- Kevin Wardell, March 2021

WINE NO. 1

Ser

Vermentino

Cedar Lane Vineyard, Arroyo Seco, California 2019

RE-ORDER: \$27

GRAPE: VERMENTINO [ver-mehn-TEE-noh]

Vermentino claims its native terroir in the very heart of the Mediterranean Sea. It is most widely known as being from the Island of Sardegna and thrives along the coast of Italy, in Liguria and Tuscany, and in pockets along the south of France (under the rockin' name Rolle). It is a prolific grape variety that has proven to feel right at home here in the California sun and demand for more vines is on the rise! Vermentino can make a versatile range of wines with beautiful aromatics and, most importantly, ample natural acidity. Vermentino is certainly a grape to be on the lookout for more of here in the states and could even be the first Italian native white variety to truly take off here (Pinot Grigio doesn't count.)

WINEMAKER: Nicole Walsh is a Santa Cruz surfer who has cut her teeth in the industry working under the notorious local Rhône rogue, merry punster and viticultural visionary, Bonny Doon's Randall Grahm. She's a Michigan native whose original segue into wine began with studying sustainable agriculture. So it's no wonder why the growers and vineyards she has chosen to source her fruit from are some of the best around. Cedar Lane vineyard is located in the Arroyo Seco appellation in eastern Santa Lucia Highlands of Monterey County. The soils here are well-drained alluvium, the gravelly loam of an ancient river bed. Arroyo Seco is relatively cool climate but with a wide diurnal swing that prompts fruit with plenty of acid and verve. Vermentino is such a versatile and resilient chameleon that it can be approached from many different angles in the cellar, and Nicole presses the grapes whole cluster, and begins to ferment in stainless steel before transferring mid way through into neutral french oak puncheons to finish fermentation and a short aging to preserve that full-throated fruit.

GLASS: This may just be the perfect après-surf cocktail, a fresh and lively celebration of subtle white peach fruits kissed with a wet sand texture and a hint of sea spray. It leads with a tropical tonal fun nose of guava and starfruit (read: pair with pre-sunset beach sipping) and a slightly sweet kiss on the finish like a baked pineapple tart. As pretty as the perfect wave curling to shore. This wine is most certainly built to be the best companion to fish tacos.

WINE NO. 2

Margins Counoise

96% Counoise + 4% Mourvèdre

Sattler's Vineyard, Santa Clara Valley, California 2020

RE-ORDER: \$27

GRAPE: COUNOISE [ku-nwaz]

Counoise is a unique menu item from the Southern Rhône, not typically served à la carte but as a spicy ingredient added to blends. It is one of the 13 grapes allowed in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but it makes up barely a fraction of its vines.

There are only a handful of plantings in California, but as it is vigorous and loves the warm and semi-arid Rhône valley, it may be catching on. It is sort of a goldilocks grape, not too dark in color, not too high in acid, tannin or alcohol, and that hint of cracked pepper is juuuust right.

WINEMAKER: Margins' name reflects the idea that vineyards, grapes, and regions can be outcasts just like underrepresented folks in society. Margins is the work of Megan Bell, seeking to give much deserved attention to the "other" vineyards and varietals throughout northern California. Her small project is based in the Santa Cruz Mountains but she has experience all over the world: apprenticing in Napa, Livermore Valley, Willamette Valley, New Zealand, and the Loire Valley, and receiving a BS in Vit and Enology from UC Davis. She works with growers to transition to organic farming by providing informed advice, and assurance that their grapes have a home in her cellar.

The Counoise comes from Ed Sattler's 2.7 acre backyard vineyard planted in 2009 - a hot, dry site with an intense diurnal swing (and not quite enough elevation to make it in the SCM AVA.) They've been converting to organic and this is one of Megan's proudest accomplishments. The Counoise is destemmed, fermented with native yeasts for ten days, and aged in neutral oak for four months. Margins is a clarion new voice in the Cali movement for wines made from sustainably farmed vineyards from underrepresented regions, made without winemaker frills.

GLASS: Coun-wowza! There is so much fun to be had in this Counoise fest, from the fuchsia tones popping in this precocious wine to a whole smorgasbord of aromatics that bloom right out of the glass, with heaps of black raspberry and fresh cut citrus rinds, rich cherry fruit leather, and baked mixed berry galette. The berry fruit vibrancy is reminiscent of a fresh fermentation, with a playful hint of Nerds candy and a flush of tropicana fruit punch. There is plenty of verve that persists throughout, finishing with just the right dusting of tannins.

WINE NO. 3

NoneSuch

Mourvèdre

Enz Vineyard, Lime Kiln Valley, San Benito County, California 2018

RE-ORDER: \$38

GRAPE: MOURVÈDRE [mohr-VED-dra]

A grape that was once pigeonholed as just the Mmm in GSM- that classic blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre burdened by a catchy nickname (darn you Aussies)- Mourvèdre is really on the rise. Spain has long produced single varietal examples (as Mataro or Monastrell) that have more than proved the grapes' value as a dark, velvety, and aromatic complex beauty. Like the great examples from Jumilla or the sought-after reds and pinks of Bandol, Mourvèdre also has a long history here in the US, albeit terribly overlooked commercially. The Grenache Syrah connection may have helped with name recognition, so producers savvy enough to make varietal Mourvèdre don't have to do so much explaining when they proclaim what a noble grape it is and how very much more Mourvèdre we should be drinking.

WINEMAKER: NoneSuch was developed in 2017 to showcase exceptional vineyards which convey California's expansive diversity. Caitlin Quinn is a daughter of the San Luis Obispo wine country, immersed in home winemaking and a graduate of UCSC. She has over a decade of production under her belt at stellar locations like Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard, Unti Vineyards, and currently as the assistant winemaker at Arnot-Roberts. She is an encyclopedia of facts in wine, music, and succulents, as well as an equal parts enthusiast of white water rafting and saucy limericks.

Her first project displays just how amazing a wine from as epic a site like the historic Enz Vineyard can be. 95 year old vines, head-trained, basket-pruned, own rooted, Organic and dry farmed. Her lofty ambitions paid off immediately as this wine has quickly turned heads and inspired echoed praise as possibly the best wine to have been made from this vineyard. The grapes were foot-tread and fermented 100% whole cluster with native yeast and aged in five neutral oak barrels for ten months.

GLASS: Racy and spicy right out of the gate, this is such a vibrant purple that pops in the glass. Fresh blackberries plucked straight off the bramble meet mineral veins of graphite and fresh pencil erasings. Blood orange and dried rose petals balance on a stemmy texture with dried thyme, oodles of spice, hibiscus juice and sparkling granite crunch. This is yet another lesson in the brilliance of old vineyards- striking a baffling balance of depth and nuance, expressing tons of character and yet elegant expansiveness at the same time.