



# ANCIENT PEAKS

**'Some of the leading ladies of the California wine scene  
who are driving the industry forward today'**

**-Wine Enthusiast about Amanda Wittstrom**

**'Ancient Peaks has its origins in an ambitious vineyard development by Robert Mondavi in the mid-1990s. Many of its vines grow in deep beds of giant fossilized oysters. Today, the winery produces a bevy of keenly priced, high-quality wines that deserve to be better known.'**

**- Robert Parker**

**Year Founded: 1992**

**Region: Santa Margarita, California**

**Owner/Co-Owner: Carl Wittstrom,  
Rob Rossi, Doug Filippini**

**Winemaker: Mark Sinor.  
Recognized as one of Central  
Coast's highest-rated winemakers.**

**Known for: One of the coolest,  
longest growing seasons in Paso  
Robles region; a rare diversity of soil  
types originating from the tectonic  
uplift that created the surrounding  
Santa Lucia Mountain peaks; and an  
abundance of rainfall, totaling 29  
inches per year on average.**

**Fun Fact: Ancient Peaks recently had  
the honor of being featured in  
"An Exploration of Renowned Single  
Vineyards," the latest episode of the  
Geographical Digest webinar series by  
National Geographic Books and The  
SOMM Journal.**

**-SIP Certified Sustainable & Vegan-**

Our estate Margarita Vineyard stands alone and apart as the southernmost vineyard in the Paso Robles region, and as the only vineyard in the Santa Margarita Ranch AVA. Cattle were first introduced to Santa Margarita Ranch by Franciscan missionaries in 1774 and have remained prominent on this land ever since.

Today, Santa Margarita Ranch endures as one of California's oldest continuously operated cattle ranches, and the ownership families of Ancient Peaks are actively involved in the ranching operations. Steeped in Mission-era history and Wild West mythology, Santa Margarita Ranch is today owned by three longtime local winegrowing and ranching families who are committed to advancing the land's legacy of 'early California rancho hospitality.' The pronounced marine influence, combined with unusually cold spring temperatures, creates a late, long growing season that allows the fruit to develop a signature combination of fully developed flavors and fine structure. As the only vineyard in its vicinity, Margarita Vineyard is alone in benefitting from the climate conditions of this particular location. Here, the ripening process is slow and sometimes challenging, an attribute that is shared by many of the world's finest vineyards. Ancient Peaks wines exhibit a natural complexity that is a direct reflection of Margarita Vineyard's rare array of soils. Margarita Vineyard spans five separate soil types that ebb, flow and intermingle throughout the vineyard. Few vineyards boast such a spectrum of geological diversity. This diversity enables us to grow the same grape varieties in a range of soils, ultimately enhancing the texture and dimension of the resulting wines. Our practices have earned SIP Certification for Margarita Vineyard, the leading standard for viticultural sustainability.





# THE BACKBONE OF OUR WINE

## The 5 Soils



**GRANITIC:** Granite is an intrusive igneous rock. The granitic elements at Margarita Vineyard were created by the weathering of granite-based formations to the east of the vineyard. These weathered granite soils are composed of diverse minerals mixed with organic deposits, yielding fruit with fine mid-palate weight and rich flavors.



**ROCKY ALLUVIUM:** The rocky alluvium found at Margarita Vineyard is dominated by gravel with elements of clay, silt and sand. This amalgam was created by ancient water flows and erosive phenomena, which weathered the surrounding terrain into a downflow of alluvium deposits. This richer soil profile lends itself to dry farming, and that produces pure, plush fruit flavors.



**VOLCANIC:** Ancient volcanic activity has indelibly shaped the landscape of southern San Luis Obispo County- most notably in the towering ‘morro’ mountains that were formed by volcanic extrusion. The volcanic deposits at Margarita Vineyard occupy sloping terrain that includes rocky basalt. The high iron content of these blocks brings lower yields with excellent flavor concentration.



**SHALE:** Monterey shale is part of a coastal formation that accumulated in deep structural basins during the mid-Miocene period. Soil pits in parts of Margarita Vineyard reveal densely packed, orange-tinged layers of Monterey shale rock that are brittle and flaky to the touch. The abundantly rocky profile in these spots yields intense flavors with dimension and complexity.



**ANCIENT SEA BED:** In the Oyster Ridge block of Margarita Vineyard, thousands of large white oyster fossils are literally spilling out of the soil- testifying to the land’s origins as an uplifted sea bed. Wine&Spirits Magazine called it “perhaps the most dramatically calcareous chunk of earth in the state.” Here, elevated calcium content yields high-toned flavors with pretty aromatics.



### 2023 Sauvignon Blanc

Exhibits a vivid varietal character that is rooted in our estate. Here, amid one of the Paso Robles region’s coolest growing environments, the Sauvignon Blanc grape achieves a fine balance of ripeness and raciness with crisp acidity and appealing mineral accents. Our aim is to produce an authentic Sauvignon Blanc that reflects the cooler growing conditions at Margarita Vineyard. Comes predominantly from Block 41, one of the coolest locations at Margarita Vineyard. Block 41 occupies rocky alluvial soils that vary in density, elevation and exposure. As the block slopes downward from its crown, the soils become thicker, and the temperatures become cooler. These variances create different fruit expressions and complexities in our cool-climate Sauvignon Blanc fruit. Into this mix we include fruit from select vineyards in warmer areas of Paso Robles. These complementary sites layer in riper tropical fruit flavors that bring added dimension to the finished wine.

Each Sauvignon Blanc lot was cold fermented at 55 degrees to retain delicate aromatics and pure fruit flavors over fermentation periods spanning 3-4 weeks. The individual lots were then aged for 5 months in stainless steel tanks to further preserve textural crispness. After the final blend was assembled, it matured in tanks for an additional month prior to bottling. Offers bright aromas of tropical guava, honeydew and pear with traces of minerality. Crisp, clean textures deliver flavors of apricot, melon, grapefruit and lemon rind with trailing accents of wet slate, green apple and star fruit. Zesty acidity carries long into a brisk, mouthwatering finish.

**90 Points - Vinous** - *“Opens in the glass with a blend of spring flowers, lemon zest and sage. It’s soft upon entry yet quickly builds tension as citrus-tinged orchard fruits cascade throughout. It finishes wickedly fresh with a tactile crunchiness that calls the taster back to the glass.”*



## **2023 Chardonnay**

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**'Top Value Wines'** - Wine Spectator 2020

100% Chardonnay. Our estate Margarita Vineyard is cradled along the coastal Santa Lucia Mountains just 14 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Here, amid one of the Paso Robles region's coolest growing environments, we are able to produce a varietally true Chardonnay with a singular sense of place. We aim to strike a fine balance between the leaner and richer styles of Chardonnay, all with the intent to create a versatile, food-friendly wine. After producing limited-edition Chardonnays for several years, we were recently inspired to include Chardonnay in our core family of wines. The 2023 vintage was marked by relatively cool spring and summer conditions, followed by a pitch-perfect warming trend that brought the harvest season to a late yet ideal conclusion, with the last of our Chardonnay fruit picked on October 20. After harvesting and light pressing, 70 percent of the juice was cold-fermented in stainless steel tanks for the preservation of delicate aromatics and bright fruit flavors. The remainder was barrel fermented and aged on the lees in 80-percent new oak to add roundness, texture and complexity. This oak-aged lot also underwent secondary malolactic fermentation and consistent lees stirring, which ultimately lent a touch of creaminess to the wine.

**93 Points – '22 Tasting Panel** – *“An exquisite nectar of pineapple and peach melds with vanilla cream in this perfectly balanced wine with an inner light that augments its complexity.”*



## **2021 Merlot**

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100% Merlot. Merlot excels at our estate and has been a mainstay in our small family of wines since day one. Here, ancient sea bed soils combine with a long growing season to yield a Merlot with silky dark fruit flavors and a luscious texture, resulting in what has become one of the Paso Robles region's most notable Merlots. Our aim is to capture the signature velvety fruit character of Merlot while showcasing the cooler climate nuances and structure inherent to Margarita Vineyard. The 2021 growing season was marked by temperate weather, extended ripening and dry conditions that fostered excellent flavor concentration—all converging to create a standout vintage in Paso Robles. After harvesting and destemming, each lot was cold soaked for 48 hours prior to fermentation for a gentle extraction of initial color and flavor. After fermentation and light pressing, the lots were aged for 17 months in a combination of French (50%) and American (50%) oak barrels, 25 percent of which featured new oak. We combine French and American oak barrels to cultivate complementary flavor profiles that enhance overall wine complexity.

**90 Points – Vinous** - *“Lifts from the glass with a pretty mix of blue- and purple-toned florals that complement ripe blueberries. It's lifted and energetic, with crisp red and blue fruits further enhanced by cooling acidity as a saline tinge forms toward the close. A staining of fine tannins lingers along with a pleasantly bitter sensation as the 2021 finishes with admirable length.”*





## 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon

**'The best California Cabernets for \$20 or less right now'** -San Fran Chronicle 2021

**'Central Coast's Central Players'** - Wine Enthusiast **'Best Buy'** -Wine&Spirits 2020

**'The Ancient Peaks Margarita Ranch is a nuanced steal.'** -Wine Enthusiast

Cabernet Sauvignon (85%), Merlot (8%), Cabernet Franc (5%), Petite Sirah (2%). Cabernet Sauvignon excels at our estate, where it achieves both ripeness and balance amid one of the coolest, longest growing seasons in the Paso Robles region. Here our Cabernet Sauvignon vines are planted to a range of soil types, bringing added natural complexity to the wine. We strive to produce a wine that showcases the depth and structure inherent to the Cabernet Sauvignon fruit. After gentle destemming, the must was cold soaked for 48 hours prior to fermentation for a gentle extraction of color and flavor. After fermentation, the wine was racked to an equal combination of French and American oak barrels (25% new), where it aged for 19 months prior to blending and bottling. Small lots of estate-grown Merlot, Malbec and Petite Sirah were incorporated into the final blend for enhanced color, mouthfeel and flavor dimension.

**91 Points – Vinous** - *“Black currants, grilled sage and crushed stone form a darkly enticing bouquet. Surprisingly juicy and energetic in character, with racy wild berry fruits offset by a tinge of sour citrus. It tapers off with dramatic length and grippy tannins yet somehow leaves the mouthwatering for more. Hints of cocoa and a twist of tangerine linger.”*

**90 Points – Wine Enthusiast**



## 2021 Zinfandel

**'Best of Class'** -San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition

**"A joy to drink."** - Jeb Dunnuck

100% Zinfandel. Our estate Margarita Vineyard has become renowned for producing one of Paso Robles' most acclaimed Zinfandels. Here, amid one of the region's coolest growing environments, the Zinfandel grape achieves a rare balance of robust flavors and elegant structure. Zinfandel has been a cornerstone variety of Paso Robles for more than 100 years, and we are proud to feature it in our small family of wines. We aim to produce a Zinfandel that faithfully reflects the terroir of Margarita Vineyard, balancing varietal richness with an elevated sense of elegance and spice. The 2021 growing season was marked by temperate weather, extended ripening and dry conditions that fostered excellent flavor concentration—all converging to create a standout vintage in Paso Robles. Prior to fermentation, the separate lots were cold soaked for 48 hours for a soft extraction of flavor and color. After fermentation and light pressing, these lots were racked to a combination of French and American oak barrels (20% new oak), where they aged for 16 months prior to blending and bottling. The barrels were minimally racked during aging to preserve varietal aromatics.

**93 Points - Editors Choice - Wine Enthusiast** - *“A very successful Zinfandel, blending earth, spice and fruit into a savory, yet thirst-quenching package. Aromas of cherry, toasted almond, thyme and asphalt lead from the nose into a tense palate of blueberry, oregano, peppercorn and spicy red-flower flavors.”*

**93 Points – The Tasting Panel**



## **2021 'Renegade'**

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Syrah 83%, Petit Verdot 14%, Malbec 3%. A Syrah-driven blend with complements of Malbec and Petit Verdot, all from Margarita Vineyard. The winemaking vision of Renegade is to craft a bold Syrah-driven wine with the structure and finesse provided by classic Bordeaux blending varieties. Each lot was cold soaked for 48 hours prior to fermentations spanning 12 to 15 days. After fermentation, the individual lots were aged for 20 months in a combination of French (60%) and American oak (40%) barrels, including a total of 25 percent new oak. A majority of the Syrah was aged in barrels with medium-plus toasting to accentuate the varietal's savory, smoky nuances. The Bordeaux varieties were matured in medium-toast barrels for pure fruit expression. In the final blend, Syrah sets the tone with deep black fruit and savory nuances. The Petit Verdot intensifies the overall color, nuance and tannin profile, while the Malbec brings juiciness to the mouthfeel. The result is a uniquely styled blend and a true Ancient Peaks original.

**92 Points - Vinous** - *"Wafts up for the glass with a sweetly seductive blend of wild blueberries, violet flowers and crushed stones. It's sleek and racy in style with crisp wild berry fruits and tactile mineral tones that swirl under an air of lavender. It finishes with a reverberation of tension, leaving a tinge of cocoa and licorice to slowly fade."*

**92 Points - Editor's Choice - Wine Enthusiast** - *"Presents complex aromas of violets, blue fruits and pomegranate. The palate is rich and racy with flavors of cherry, currant, raspberry and smoked meat. Trailing accents of cedar and white pepper add intrigue to a lively, chewy finish."*



## **2020 'Oyster Ridge' (Black Label)**

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The 2020 vintage is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (75%), Cabernet Franc (12%), Petit Verdot (7%), Merlot (3%) and Malbec (3%), all from meticulously farmed vineyard blocks cultivated for the Oyster Ridge program. After hand harvesting, each lot was cold soaked for two to three days. More than 90 percent of the blend was fermented in small 10-ton fermenters to generate added thermal energy for enhanced extraction, with attentive phenolic monitoring to dial in an ideal mouthfeel. After fermentation, only the free-run juice was selected. Each lot was aged separately for 23 months in premium French oak barrels, inclusive of 75 percent new oak. The final blend was assembled from only those barrels that exhibited exemplary complexity, structure and aging potential. Cabernet Sauvignon is predominant with broad, polished layers and classic varietal expression. Cabernet Franc enlivens the aromatic profile with suggestions of violets and savory spice, while Petit Verdot contributes color, structure and aromatic nuances of cedar and pencil shavings. Merlot adds lift and silkiness to the palate, and Malbec completes the experience with undertones of juicy red fruit.

**90 Points – James Suckling** – *"A rich and chewy red with blackberries, dark plums, currants and baking spices. Full body with firm tannins. Serious and generous with a compact finish."*



## **2020 'Pearl' Cabernet Sauvignon**

Cabernet Sauvignon (95%), Petit Verdot (5%). The Cabernet Sauvignon Pearl Collection is crafted as the ultimate expression of Cabernet Sauvignon from our estate Margarita Vineyard. The 2020 growing season was marked by a mild spring and summer, punctuated by two late-summer heat waves that accelerated the pace of ripening into harvest. The fruit was gently destemmed, cold soaked for three days and fermented in small 10-ton fermenters. Detailed phenolic management allowed for the development of a full, round mouthfeel during fermentation. The individual lots of free-run juice were aged in 100-percent new French oak barrels by Taransaud, Tonnellerie Ô and Sylvain. Each of these barrels featured naturally tight-grained wood for seamless oak integration, as well as medium to medium-plus toasting for judicious complexity. Extended barrel aging for 23 months allowed for perfect integration and maturation prior to bottling. This wine showcases Paso Robles as a world-class region for Cabernet Sauvignon while revealing Margarita Vineyard's striking sense of place.

### **96 Points – The Tasting Panel**