

Someone's in the Wine Cellar

We Can Clone Grapes. Can We Clone Him?

By **RICHARD** and **AMANDA PAYATT**
Special to CASA

AT THE TENDER AGE OF THIRTEEN, Doug Margerum was at the storied Clos des Papes winery in France, doing barrel tastings of Chateaufort du Pape, when it hit him: This is it! Wine is good living! He had been eating and drinking his way across France and Italy with his parents, and really enjoying himself. But this was a taste of something that really changed his life. Now, his life is like a dream, traveling and tasting in France, California, and Washington, making wine, and sharing all his discoveries and creations with the rest of us.

Doug worked in restaurants through high school and college. It was with some persuasion that he talked his father into opening the original Wine Cask in 1981, which they turned into a wine shop and tasting room. A bistro followed suit, and soon the restaurant that we all know and love.

In 1986, Doug started making wines in conjunction with two of the guys that he had met when he first opened up The Wine Cask shop: Jim Clendenen and Bob Lindquist. He had been buying their wines for the restaurant, but he wanted to actually get into the wine making part that

got him interested in the business. For a dozen years Doug helped Clendenen and Lindquist make the wines. He wasn't the winemaker, but he was working with two of the finest winemakers in California.

In 2001 Doug made the big move to making his own wines. He kept it simple at first. His *SYBARITE* Sauvignon Blanc, the *ÜBER Syrah*, and his *M5* blend of five Rhone Valley varieties (Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Cunoise, and Cinsault,) were the starting lineup. The wines got rave reviews at the restaurant and in the tasting room. Soon Doug was consulting for a series of vineyards in the Santa Barbara area. And he just kept making wine until it became apparent to him that he could either run a restaurant, or make wine. He had to choose. So, in 2007, he sold The Wine Cask to focus on wine.

In 2010 The Wine Cask reopened under Mitchell Sjerven's direction, with Doug as a partner. The adjacent tasting room reopened, and now it features not just Doug's line up of Margerum Wines, but also the wine labels he makes for other wineries, or consults on. This includes such labels as *BARRACK* wines, *Ten~Goal*, *PIOCHO*, *CHUKKER*, *Cimarone*, and *Cent'anne*. This gives him the ability to create a huge variety of wines with different moods and purposes. We recently

tasted over 30 of these wines, and were delighted by them all. Sadly, there isn't room to begin to describe these wines here. It would require a book.

The Margerum tasting room also has a great collection from small producers in France. Many of those wines are ones that are imported by... Margerum Wines. If Doug likes a wine that he encounters in his travels, and if he likes the people making it, he arranges to import it. The upshot of all of this is that every bottle on offer has a story behind it, and Doug to vouch for it!

The Margerum tasting room is an integral part of our Urban Wine trail. It is not just a place for Doug to sell these wonderful wines. For him, it is a place to hang out and return to his roots in the business. With the restaurant on one side, and Intermezzo bar-café on the other, there is the opportunity to have fantastic wine pairing evenings. Examples would be the recent Memorial Day weekend event, celebrating the opening of Jim Clendenen's new tasting room next door; and the upcoming BBQ event on August 13th, from 1pm to 4pm, with four chefs pitting Memphis-style BBQ against our local tri-tip variety. Lucky for us, Doug spends a lot of time at the tasting room, because it is where every aspect of his life comes together. If he is pouring, ask him to tell



Doug Margerum

you the story behind the bottle. You won't believe how quickly the hours will fly by.

Margerum Wines Tasting Room, The Wine Cask, and **Intermezzo** are located at 813 Anacapa St. Reach them at (805) 895-4084.



Amanda and Richard Payatt combine their considerable writing skills with their incredible knowledge and experience of fine dining to bring you this column.