



Featured California Winegrower: Ken Deaver Shenandoah Valley, Amador County

"It's a lifestyle."

Farming and ranching is his hobby, his career, his life. Ken Deaver farms, quite simply, because he's a farmer. It's hereditary. Each year the fifth generation grower nurtures and harvests Mission variety grapes his grandfather first planted in the Sierra Foothills during the 1850s. He also tends to Zinfandel vines that are a century old. It's got to be the genes.

Or maybe it's Ken's philosophy. He's not organic. But he's certainly not conventional. He counts on many faithful allies. Predator Mites. Manure. And "Voodoo Juice." (A good-smelling, natural pesticide laced with cinnamon, clove, peppermint, rosemary and thyme.) "We've tried all sorts of stuff."

That almost goes without saying. Ken isn't just a winegrape grower. He's also a rancher, has cows, sheep. Prefers goats. He's co-owner, with wife Jeannie, of a bed and breakfast, pumpkin patch and the largest flower farm in the West that sells daylilies. And he has a wine label and tasting room. Diversify is the name of the game, but Ken isn't looking to expand his 2,000-case wine production too quickly

"We're not looking to get big. We're not looking to set the world on fire. We're just putzing along."

The humble attitude suits Amador County's blooming wine country. Although winegrapes have dotted the hills for decades, new wineries have given the region a makeover. There's elegance and style. But like Deaver Vineyards, most of the tasting rooms are charming. They're modest. Bucolic.

When he indulges in wine, Ken prefers Zinfandel, of course. But it has to be hearty. And go well with lamb.



<p>Education: Cal-Poly, San Luis Obispo (farm management) Hobbies: Farming Trademark: Denim and cowboy hat Politics: Former Amador County Supervisor Passion: Agriculture</p>
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