

Vics Picks:

Shale Canyon Wines of the Prader Family

by Victor Kong



Victor Kong (4th from left) and Ken Gallegos (3rd from right) with the Prader family: Sue, Lise, Jake, Keith, Kimberly, Tim and Danielle.

Last spring, when I added the wines of Shale Canyon to the shelves at Star Market, it dawned on me that I was continuing a business association that began over 50 years ago. In the late 1950's, Jack Prader started developing a shopping center at the south end of Salinas. At the time, my father and his partners owned a successful grocery store in Watsonville, and Jack approached them about building a super market as anchor for his new center. The partners bought the idea and Star Market opened in 1961. The Prader family and our families have been friends and associates ever since. Then, this past March, I learned that the winery that Jack's three grandsons had formed would be releasing its first vintages under the Shale Canyon label.

The Prader brothers, Jake, Keith and Tim, began looking at the vineyard potential of their Arroyo Seco property behind Sycamore Flats in the mid-1990's. Jake asked his long-time friend and Salinas native, Ken Gallegos, to join in the venture. At the time, Ken was well into his winemaking "apprenticeship" at Ahlgren Vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains and making wines of superb character. Finding water was a problem, but in 2007 they brought in a good well and proceeded to develop an estate vineyard while concurrently showcasing Ken Gallegos' winemaking talents with grapes sourced from some of the finest local vineyards. These recent releases of Shale Canyon Wines include small lots of handcrafted 2008 Chardonnay, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. How good are they? I'm just sorry it took 50 years to get them on our shelves. Meet me in the wine aisle and let me introduce you to the fantastic wines of Shale Canyon. 🍷

Note: Victor Kong is the wine-buying partner at Star Market in Salinas.