

Media Release - *Embargoed to 11pm Sat 9 October*

Kāpiti and Wairarapa Sweep NZ Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards

New Zealand, 9 October 2021 – Kāpiti and Wairarapa Olive Oil makers have swept the annual New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards, winning all of the five major awards for Olive Oil Excellence.

The New Zealand Olive Oil Awards began in 2000 and recognise excellence in New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oils (NZ EVOO). The winners were announced tonight at the Olives NZ 2021 Award Ceremony.

The top awards were as follows:

- Best in Show – Kapiti Frantoio Blend, Kapiti
- Best Boutique – Tauherenikau - Olive2Oil, Wairarapa
- Reserve Best in Show – Blue Earth Intense, Wairarapa
- Reserve Best Boutique – Totara Tunnel Frantoio, Kapiti
- Best Flavoured Oil – Pressed Gold Midori No Yuzu, Wairarapa.

Gayle Sheridan, spokesperson for Olives NZ, says the Kāpiti and Wairarapa climate and soil contributes to its success, both in New Zealand and on the world stage.

“New Zealand has had a reputation for producing outstanding Extra Virgin Olive Oil that can compete at the highest standard internationally. Despite challenging growing conditions with our maritime climate, our growers have adopted proactive grove management strategies that have enabled our olive oils to just get better and better every year. We were pretty excited about the 2021 harvest and to have this recognised with a record number of Gold medals awarded is fantastic” says Gayle Sheridan.

The 2021 Awards had 165 entries, the highest on record. Charlotte Connoley, Head Judge, says the quality of the award entries is superb and shows what great shape the New Zealand Olive industry is in.

“The achievement of 81 gold medals and 72 silver medals out of a record entry of 165 olive oils was an outstanding achievement for the industry” said Connoley.

“The harmony and complexity of the oils was of a high standard across the single varietal entries as well as the blends – the skill of those crafting the oils is immense to ensure a positive experience for those consuming these extra virgin olive oils”.

Connoley, who has been involved with judging the awards since her study into Olive Oil quality whilst at Lincoln University in 2001, commented “The overall quality of the New Zealand oils has improved immeasurably since those early days of the competition, which is reflected in the high number of Gold and Silver awards”.

“In particular the high quality of the oils, evidenced in the high number of Gold awards, is becoming the standard rather than the exception, as it may have been in the past. We certainly saw this year that the bar has been lifted across the industry as a whole and this may in part be due to a good season, but also no doubt as a result of the work that Olives New Zealand has contributed to within the industry.”

Sheridan agrees that the association has been focused on providing support to growers “Olives New Zealand has had ongoing projects on improving grove practices as well as professional development workshops on processing practices, including optimal harvest time, racking and storage practices”.

“Producers are better informed in respect of what is perceived as a quality oil based on feedback from consumers.” Connoley says this was in particular evident with the flavoured oils “Producers are understanding the importance of using a quality base oil or olives that will complement the flavour infused, and ensuring the flavour is authentic with good purity of character”.

The judging process was carried out during level 4 and 3 alert levels for Auckland and level 2 elsewhere in New Zealand. This involved remote judging where all of the entries were decanted into 100ml bottles and then packed into flights and sent to each judge. It would appear however the benefits of remote judging outweigh the negatives according to Connoley “Of course juggling work, home schooling, young children etc. whilst judging a competition of this calibre is not ideal, but the remote judging does allow judges to set their own pace and manages palate fatigue much more effectively”. “The judges were still able to come together by video conferencing and the consistency of the scoring across the panel of judges was very high”.

There were 81 Gold, 72 Silver and 9 Bronze medals awarded across all of the growing regions in New Zealand. In total Wairarapa received 77, Kāpiti 20, Canterbury 19, Nelson 11, Auckland 9, Hawke’s Bay 6, Bay of Plenty 5, Waiheke Island, Northland and Marlborough 4 each, Central Otago 3. The Awards are judged by a panel of six experienced judges to International Olive Oil Council Panel (IOC) standards.

The 2021 Winners

Best Boutique – Tauherenikau – Olive2Oil, Wairarapa

Tauherenikau Olives is a medium-sized grove of almost 1,300 trees owned by Rod and Elaine located at Tauherenikau near Greytown. Tauherenikau Olives specialise in boutique production of blended olive oils. This year’s winning blend was from the French Picholene and Greek Koroneiki varieties.

Quite a stunning and beautifully balanced oil. With floral notes over green grass and black pepper on nose vibrant and balanced in the mouth.

Reserve Best Boutique – Totara Tunnel Frantoio, Kāpiti

Totara Tunnel is a boutique grove of around 550 trees located on the Kāpiti Coast and owned by Brent Meldrum and Sally Murrey. Totara Tunnel is one of the few olive groves in New Zealand following organic practices and all three of their entries in the 2021 NZ EVOO Awards won Gold medals.

A delightful balanced oil. With black pepper and grassy notes on the nose with a pleasant medium intensity lingering (chilli) finish on the palate

Best in Show – Kapiti Frantoio Blend, Kāpiti

Kapiti Olives is a commercial sized grove of 2,300 trees located close to the Otaki River and owned by David and Helen Walshaw. Kapiti Olives is one of the few olive groves in New Zealand that supply a range of supermarkets as well as specialist food stores. Their Frantoio Blend is predominantly the Frantoio variety with artful blending of the Koroneiki, Leccino and Picual varieties. Kapiti Olives have previously won Best in Show at the NZ EVOO Awards on two occasions and are consistently in the top awards. They have also been awarded Gold at the prestigious New York International Olive Oil Competition.

An outstanding and harmonious oil. With floral notes over black pepper and green grass. Vibrant in the mouth with warm lingering finish

Reserve Best in Show – Blue Earth Intense, Wairarapa

Hanson Farm Partnership that produces the Blue Earth Olive Oil is owned by Mike and Margaret Hanson. It is located on the outskirts of Martinborough and is a medium-sized grove of around 1,000 trees. The Blue Earth Intense is a blend of Koroneiki and Manzanilla varieties. Blue Earth has previously been awarded Gold medals and Best in Class at the NZ EVOO Awards as well as having won Gold at the prestigious New York International Olive Oil Competition.

Black pepper and rocket notes on nose lovely balanced palate with a zingy chilli pepper finish

Best Flavoured Oil – Pressed Gold Midori No Yuzu, Wairarapa

Pressed Gold is the brand of the Olive Press located in Greytown, Wairarapa. The Olive Press manage a number of groves across the Wairarapa and Kāpiti and specialise in the production of Extra Virgin as well as flavoured olive oils. The Midori No Yuzu was produced by processing fresh Yuzu fruit with Frantoio olives “agrumato style”. Obviously delightful to finish off Japanese dishes, it also enhances fish and vegetable dishes. The Olive Press consistently win Gold medals with both their Extra Virgin and their Flavoured Oils. They have also been awarded Top Olive Oil Processor in New Zealand every year since 2013.

Lovely balance on nose and palate with the yuzu infusion enhancing the base oil and lingering on the palate

A complete list of the award entries and results can be found [here](#).

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About Olives New Zealand

Olives New Zealand is the industry body for olive growers and supports its members to produce premium quality Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) and other olive products. Olive NZ also certifies the oils as Extra Virgin Olive Oils by using an International Olive Council accredited laboratory in Australia. Only certified New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil then carries the red OliveMark. People should look for the red OliveMark to ensure they are buying the authentic New Zealand EVOO product. Imported products are typically not required to meet the same stringent standards.

For More Information Contact:

Gayle Sheridan, Executive Officer for Olives New Zealand admin@olivesnz.org.nz or mobile 021 057 7635