

Tasting for Aspiring Judges – September 2012

There were 12 people from Auckland and Northland on the “Tasting for Aspiring Judges” course run at Massey University’s Albany Campus on Tuesday 18th September. The course was limited in size to enable maximum interaction. The presenter was Fernando Román Martínez from Spain – Head Judge for 2012 New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards.

Senor Martinez gave a brief background of the olive industry in Spain as an introduction. The main varieties planted are Leccino, Picual, Hojiblanca, Arbequina, Cornicabro and Manzanillo. However there are a total of 256 varieties. Annual production is on average 10m kg producing 1.5m tons of olive oil. There are 1800 mills with the largest processing 1m kg daily during the season and only Picual.

Senor Martinez then discussed the processing process and the IOC standards and in particular for defects, what normally causes these.

Defect	Cause	* Not found in New Zealand
Grubby	Olive fly *	
Soap	Fungus *	
Earthy	Olives harvested off the ground & dirty	
Humid	Rain	
Musty	Oils left too long before processing	
Hay/wood	Olives too dry	
Frost/wet wood	Weather	
Dirtiness	During processing	
Fusty	Fermentation	
Winey/Vinegary	Fermentation	

Fernando emphasised a number of times the importance of hygiene and the requirement on reception of olives to clean, wash, shower and dry the fruit before it goes into the crusher. He said that if batch processing, for example daily operations of 8-12 hours, then the processing plant must undergo a complete clean down in between each batch. If processing 24 hours per day, then the clean down must be done on a daily basis.

Fernando talked about the psychological errors in tasting as follows.

Error of	Expectation	– identification of the oil impacting on tasting (thus blind tasting)
	Stimulus	- affected by size, colour (thus standard blue glasses)
	Logic	-visual appearance
	Suggestion	-gestures, noise from other judges

Fernando also explained the physiology of the tongue and how the six main sectors affect taste and sensation.

The Mario Solinas Judging system was discussed; as this is the system used for the Olives New Zealand EVOO Awards and is typically used in other international competitions.

Then it was on to the guided tastings. There was a total of four ‘flights’ of three oils each tasted. The oils were from New Zealand, Australia, Greece, France, Italy and included Spanish varieties.

Unfortunately the samples sent off by Fernando had been rejected by the Spanish authorities so never arrived. The tasting was a very interesting experience as several oils were found to be rancid – none of the New Zealand oils I would hasten to add! Participants used the IOC criteria to rate the oils and then had animated discussion about why and how they had scored.

Course evaluations from the Tasting for Aspiring Judges were very positive but several people commented that it would be better to make this a two day course to allow more time for tasting more oils. This will be looked at for the next course. Thanks to those who attended this course.

Research papers on the olive industry provided by Fernando can be found at:

<http://www.olivesnz.org.nz/members-news/research/fernando-roman-martinez-presentation-and-articles/>