

30 September: Herald – Bite Magazine

# jo's kitchen

## Who knew?

I popped in to Massey University's Albany campus last week to get a peek at the judging of the NZ Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards. These awards recognise excellence in certified New Zealand olive oils and, because the judges are international, enables New Zealand olive oils to be benchmarked against the best in the world.

There are more than 200 olive groves in New Zealand producing 400,000+ litres of olive oil annually and despite being a boutique industry, New Zealand olive oils typically punch above their weight in international competitions.

Head Judge Sue Langstaff from California said "I have recently judged at the Los Angeles County Fair Show which attracts a huge international entry. The oils I tasted for the New Zealand awards were predominantly up there with the best internationally. I was also impressed that all entrants must have been formally assessed as extra virgin olive oil as a condition of entry."

My interest in all of this came about through the red OliveMark – I had seen this sticker on olive oil bottles but didn't really know its significance. It means the oil has met the stringent certificate requirements of Olives New Zealand and has passed the International Olive Council's tests for being extra virgin olive oil. We can be assured that

olive oil displaying the red OliveMark is extra virgin, of high quality and an authentic product. It must be extra virgin to have the associated medical benefits.

The 2013 award winners had not been announced as we went to print, but I get the feeling they are worth looking out for because every good cook needs to have a quality extra virgin olive oil to hand. See [olivesnz.org.nz](http://olivesnz.org.nz) for the results.



*Judges in their booths, from back to front: Sue Langstaff – Head Judge from California, Richard Gawer – South Australia, Charlotte Meehan – Auckland, Raffaella Delmonte – Auckland, Hilary Fenemor – Nelson, Peter Olson – New South Wales.*





Award winning extra virgin olive oil producers Chris and Annette Moore.

**A Banks Peninsula olive grove has won New Zealand's most prestigious competition for olive oil for an unprecedented two years in a row, further reinforcing the area's reputation as a premium olive growing area.**

Robinsons Bay Olives near Akaroa took out the 2013 Best in Show as well as Best in Class in the Commercial Medium Blend Class at the New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Awards. The Awards are run by Olives New Zealand, the national organisation for olive oil growers.

## Olive oil champions twice in row

By Heather Chalmers

The judging panel of six trained and experienced international and New Zealand olive oil tasters praised Robinsons Bay Olives' Grove Blend saying "it has a striking green herb aroma, balanced on nose and palate, ripe fruit flavours, a real beauty".

Robinsons Bay, a medium-size grove of nearly 1,000 trees, is owned by Chris and Annette Moore. The grove was established in 1994. Robinsons Bay also took out the supreme award of Best in Show in 2012 and has been a consistent medal winner at previous awards.

Chris Moore told the awards dinner in Christchurch that "we obviously live in an outstanding area for growing great olives". He also noted the consistent awards recognition achieved by the nearby Akaroa olive grove of Jan Whyte and Niall Holland, Old French Road.

Juno Olive Grove from Wairarapa won the Best in Boutique Category for growers who produce less than 100 litres of certified extra virgin olive oil, with their Juno Koroneiki. Juno Olive Grove is owned by Ian and Karen Juno and their medium single varietal Koroneiki was described by judges as having "aromas of fig leaf, olive leaf and artichoke. Good balance with a warm finish". Juno Olives have also been consistent medal winners.

Medals were spread across New Zealand's growing regions with 22 going to Wairarapa, 11 to Hawke's Bay, 10 to Kapiti, eight to Auckland, six to Canterbury, five to Nelson, three each to both Waiheke Island and Bay of Plenty, and one to Northland. This equated to 11 gold medals, 47 silver medals and 11 bronze medals.

Chief international judge Sue Langstaff, a sensory scientist from California, said she had recently judged at the Los Angeles County Fair Show which attracts a huge international entry. "The oils I tasted for the New Zealand awards were predominantly up there with the best internationally."

Robinsons Bay Olives' second win in a row comes despite two markedly different seasons, with a lack of sunshine and difficult harvesting conditions in 2012 compared with hot, dry conditions in 2013. "We had a huge crop this year – the biggest ever – and the yields were good," said Annette Moore.

"There were similar oils involved in the blend. You taste it and try it and see how it is balancing out. You can't follow a formula as it is different every year." The main variety in the winning blend is Manzanillo, blended with smaller quantities of other varieties.

"It's great for the olive industry to have these awards and it's good to hear from international judges that the standard of New Zealand extra virgin olive oil is high and comparable with elsewhere," said Annette.

At Robinsons Bay, traditional Italian varieties Fantoio and Leccino have performed best, along with Manzanillo from Spain and Verdale from South Australia. Each variety is harvested by hand separately, and pressed individually, with the grove then putting together one or two blends. Annette also picks olives for the table, with Verdale, Nabali and Manzanillo proving the best varieties.

The property, which also includes a bed and breakfast, is on the market.

### Best in Class winners 2013 (commercial – 100 litres and above of production):

- *Light blends, Parkhill Olives – Delicate, Ross and Margie Legh, Auckland.*
- *Light single varietal, Moutohora Picual, Kanuka Forest Wines, Bay of Plenty.*
- *Medium blends, Robinsons Bay Grove Blend 0113, Chris and Annette Moore, Banks Peninsula.*
- *Intense blends, Old French Road blend, Jan Whyte and Niall Holland, Banks Peninsula.*
- *Medium single varietal, Weka Koroneiki, Laraine Rothenberg, President, Nelson.*
- *Intense single varietal, Dali Picual, Ross Vintiner and Andrea Stewart, Wairarapa.*

New Zealand olive oil displaying the red OliveMark has met the strict standards for Olives New Zealand Certification, is extra virgin, of high quality and an authentic product. A further mark of excellence is a medal from the Olives New Zealand Awards. 🏆

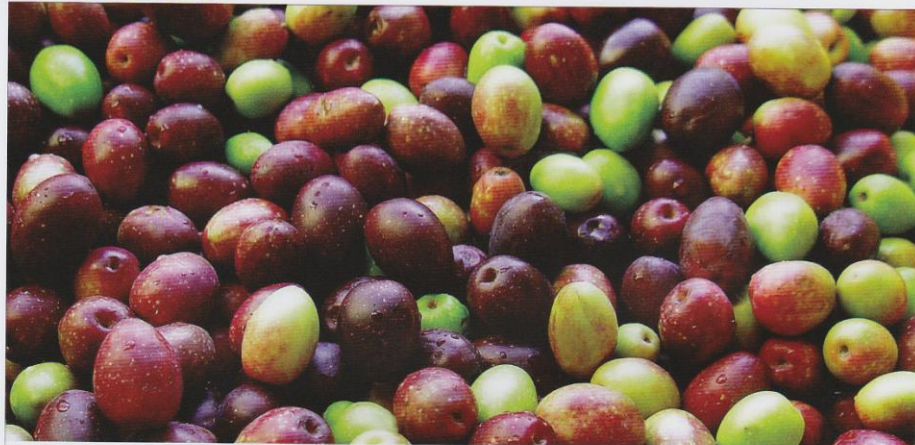


Visiting United States olive oil tasting expert Sue Langstaff. Olive oil is judged in blue glasses, so as not to distinguish its colour when tasting.



A Robinsons Bay Grove blend has won Best in Show for the second year in a row.





## Processor seeks buyer

By Heather Chalmers

**Award winning processor, Canterbury Olive Processors, is looking for a new individual buyer, or co-operative, to take on the valuable task of turning growers' fruit into oil.**

Processor Graham Keen has sold his 1,800 tree olive grove Gravel Estate, just north of Christchurch, with the olive press in storage awaiting a new buyer. Canterbury Olive Processors was named best processor in the 2013 Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards. It has processed several award winning olive oils, including Robinsons Bay Grove Blend, named Best in Show for the last two years. Other Canterbury-based shareholders in the plant include Mark Nichols.

"Due to my gathering years I've decided that enough is enough. It was a big commitment," said Graham. The operation processed olives from Kaikoura to Pleasant Point, mainly from smaller groves. "The best fruit came

**"As long as you followed the process all you need then is good fruit. Because there are olives and olives."**

from Banks Peninsula. It is probably the premium area in New Zealand as it has the right climate."

Mr Keen began processing in 2005, originally with a hydraulic mat press which was very hard physical work. Subsequent upgrades to a centrifuge and vertical separator made "life a lot easier". "It would be a jolly shame if the press was sold outside of Canterbury as there is quite a large group of growers which have relied on it." The type of equipment used means olive oil can be bottled immediately, rather than having to wait until the sediment and water have separated. Canterbury Olive Processors has a fully audited food safety programme.

"As long as you followed the process all you need then is good fruit. Because there are olives and olives."

"By and large Canterbury is marginal for olives, with the exception of Banks Peninsula and parts of Waipara, North Canterbury. Because of the climate growers do not get the high yields needed to make it economic."

"I've been very fortunate in that since 2005 I've had first taste of each customer's olive oil," Graham said.

Wairarapa co-operative The Olive Press was also recognised by Olives New Zealand with an industry innovation award. President Andrew Taylor paid tribute to The Olive Press investors who established a large processing facility in Wairarapa, an area that initially didn't have a lot of production, but had a lot of olive trees planted. A large centrifugal olive press was imported from Florence, Italy, in time for the 2001 harvest. The Olive Press now not only provides processing for Wairarapa, but for growers from the Kapiti Coast to Hawke's Bay. 🍴

## Telling the real oil

By Heather Chalmers

**Learning to detect whether olive oil has fusty, musty or rancid defects, or the positive sensory attributes of being fruity and pungent is just a matter of training and practice, says a United States expert.**

A seminar to up-skill growers on the sensory evaluation of extra virgin olive oil in conjunction with the industry's national awards was aimed at improving New Zealand olive oil growers' ability to appreciate their own product, said Olives New Zealand president Andrew Taylor. "It is not something you are born with, it is a learned behaviour."

Sue Langstaff, a sensory scientist from California, evaluated beer and wine before turning her attention to olive oil. "I'm coming off a cold, so may not be at my peak performance," she told the seminar. Ms Langstaff is the leader of the University of California Davis Olive Oil Taste Panel and a member of two other olive oil taste panels, as well as a regular judge at various olive oil competitions.

"A lot of people think sensory science is subjective, uses soft data and is about whether people like something or not. We use humans as our measuring device and humans are variable. You are not the same yesterday as you are today."

"Sensory evaluation is a science. It is not just people sitting around saying this tastes good, let's have another glass. It's impartial and analytical."

The definition of sensory evaluation is that it is a scientific discipline used to evoke, measure, analyse, and interpret reactions to characteristics of foods and materials as they are perceived by the senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing.

"That is how food companies gain an edge and gain market share, by identifying what flavours and textures people like."

While sight – the colour of olive oil – is not a big consideration for judges, smell, taste and touch (or mouth feel) are extremely important. When evaluating olive oil, oil samples are tasted from blue glasses so judges cannot detect colour. This is to prevent judges making assumptions based on colour, such as a yellow olive oil will be buttery, nutty and have the taste of ripe fruit, or green oil will be herbaceous.

As with wine, the aroma is first inhaled before the oil is tasted. "A lid is put on the glass and we warm it up and swirl it,

which helps release volatile gases into the head space before smelling."

The basic olive oil tastes are sweet, sour and bitter. "A lot of people have confusion between sourness and bitterness."

Touch, or mouthfeel, has to do with the texture of the oil, whether greasy, astringent or pungent.

Ripe fruit aroma and flavour descriptors include buttery, ripe banana, tropical, floral and nutty. Green fruit descriptors include green grass, green tea, herbaceous, minty and artichoke. Other descriptors include citrus, black pepper, cinnamon and straw.

Sensory judges have separate booths and data is recorded separately, so they cannot influence each other. Soda water, sliced apples and yoghurt are used to clean the palate between olive oil tastings.

A defects wheel for olive oil, developed by Sue Langstaff, includes defects such as fusty (smells and tastes like sweaty socks, decomposing olives), rancid (old oil which smells and tastes like stale walnuts, old peanut butter) and frozen (oil made from fruit frozen on the tree which has been thawed).

"Rancid is the No. 1 issue in the US as it is a dumping ground for the world's old olive oil. So we want people to recognise the characteristics of rancid, when olives and oil have been exposed to oxygen. Rancid oil also has a greasy mouthfeel, it is not sharp and fresh."

While terroir, the grove's geography, has an effect on how olive oil expresses itself, the harvest date has a larger impact – whether earlier or later in the season.

Good management practices are important. "As in the wine industry, you cannot make wonderful olive oil out of lousy fruit. To obtain quality oil, olives should be healthy, picked from the tree, not the ground, and taken for processing as soon as possible. Heat and light are enemies of olive oil."

"At every stage of harvesting and processing growers need to be testing and tasting their product. Train yourself to evaluate these different stages to detect any sensory defects which may develop."

Olive oil is judged the same way all over the world, she said. "It's all about balance, complexity and harmony. Harmony increases when the attributes are balanced, while complexity increases with the number and intensity of aromas and flavours." 🍴

**"Sensory evaluation is a science."**





**Fruity finish:** Olive-oil judge Sue Langstaff has praise for New Zealand olive oils. Photos: FAIRFAX



**Peninsula winner:** A blend of olive oils from Robinsons Bay takes top prize at NZ awards.

## Region has the good oil

Abbie Napier

**T**he 2013 New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards were held in Christchurch last month and showcased the best the country has to offer, with Canterbury coming out on top.

Akaroa's Robinsons Bay Grove Blend collected Best in Show and a Best in Class (commercial, medium blend). Best Processor went to Canterbury Olive Processors Ltd. Old French Road also collected a Best in Class (commercial intense blend).

Head judge and sensory scientist Sue Langstaff was

flown in from California to lead the process.

She says New Zealand, like America and Australia, is classed as a 'new world' olive oil producer because of our relatively recent arrival on the scene. Old world producers include countries such as Spain and Italy, which have been making olive oil for centuries.

Langstaff judges olive oil internationally and says New Zealand extra virgin oils are on a par with other new world producers.

New world oils are characteristically fresher and have less historical baggage in the production process. Many

old world oils are produced today the same way they have been produced for generations. The new world doesn't adhere to tradition and the oils are usually made with modern machines and processes.

Langstaff and her team of judges blind-tasted all 75 oils entered in this year's national competition. Robinson's Bay Best in Show was set apart by its balance and long fruity finish.

"We all agreed this was an outstanding oil," Langstaff says.

"You've got really great products," Langstaff said. "They are more expensive, but once you've tasted fresh New Zealand olive oil, you won't go back."



# Robinsons Bay makes NZ's best olive oil – again!

**T**hey are thrilled. Again. For the second year in a row Annette and Chris Moore have won the supreme award in the New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards.

The judging panel of six trained and experienced tasters said that their 'Grove Blend' oil had a striking aroma, was balanced on nose and palate, had ripe fruit flavours and was a 'real beauty'.

Chris and Annette have been running the olive grove in Robinsons Bay for about 8 years, and the first of the nearly 1000 olive trees were planted in 1994.

"We are thrilled, obviously thrilled" Annette said after the award ceremony in Christchurch last week when they were presented with the awards for Best in Show, Best in Class (commercial, medium), as well as gold medal status for their Robinsons Bay Grove Blend 0113 oil.

"It was wonderful last year, but this year..."

She said that growing good olive oil is rather like growing good wine. Every year is different.

"It depends on the summer – how much rain and sun you get."

The trick then is to blend the oils from the different varieties so as to get something that really works.

"We put together what we think is pretty damn good – and it is nice that someone else agrees with us."

Annette said that the main variety in the winning blend is Manzanillo, with smaller quantities of other types blended in.

It was a good season at their Robinsons Bay olive grove, with a bigger harvest of olives than ever before, and with bigger individual fruit.

The Moores did the picking themselves, with the help of family members.

"It was a huge up on last summer – the biggest ever."

The awards ceremony at the Sudima Hotel in Christchurch included a dinner featuring oils from the competition.

Robinsons Bay oil was used in a main course dish matched with Akaroa salmon steak.

"That was quite cool – a perfect combination"

Annette said.

And the Moore's winning oil was processed by Canterbury Olive Processors Ltd, of North Eyre Road, which also won a special award to mark it as the country's best processor of olive oil.

The Moores were not the only local winners either – Jan Whyte and Niall Holland were Best in Class and won gold medal status for their Old French Road blend in the 'commercial, intense – blends' category.

They also won silver medals for two of their single varietal oils.

One was awarded to their Manzanillo oil in the commercial, light, single varietal class and one to their Kalamata oil in the commercial, intense, single varietal class.

"Commercial" indicates a production of over 100 litres of the variety concerned.

There are separate award classes for productions of between 30 and 99 litres.

In all 22 awards went to Wairarapa growers, 11 to Hawkes Bay, 10 to Kapiti, 8 to Auckland and six to Canterbury.



Chris Moore was back at the Riccarton Farmers Market on Saturday offering what is officially New Zealand's best olive oil, for the second year in row.





## Living the Good Life

The New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oils Awards were recently judged in Auckland with an entry of 75 New Zealand produced and certified Extra Virgin Olive Oils.

The Head Judge was Sue Langstaff from California along with two judges from Australia and three from New Zealand. All judges have been trained to International Olive Council standards and are experienced olive oil tasters. The New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards recognise excellence in certified New Zealand olive oils. With the use of international judges this enables New Zealand olive oils to be benchmarked against the best in the world.

Olive growers in the lower North Island (Kapiti, Wairarapa) performed very well winning almost half of the medals awarded. Gold Medals were awarded to Dali Picual (also taking a Best in Class), Blue Earth, Boundary Gardens and Gabbani Olives Frantoio. Plus there were 24 Silver and 4 Bronze awarded to local growers.

The red OliveMark® signifies that the olive oil has met the stringent certification requirements of Olives New Zealand; it has passed the International Olive Councils tests for being Extra Virgin Olive Oil (both chemical

and Organoleptic), it is packaged and labelled appropriately and it is New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Consumers can be assured that New Zealand olive oil displaying the red OliveMark is extra virgin, of high quality and an authentic product. It must be Extra Virgin to have the associated medical benefits.

There are more than 200 olive groves in New Zealand producing 400,000+ litres of olive oil annually. There are olive groves from Northland to Central Otago. The industry is mainly a boutique industry with growers focussed on producing high quality extra virgin olive oil and other olive related products. Despite being a boutique industry, New Zealand olive oils have typically punched above their weight in international competitions regularly taking out Best in Class and Gold Medals.

Sue Langstaff, Head Judge for the New Zealand EVOO Awards, said "I have recently judged at the Los Angeles County Fair Show which attracts a huge international entry. The oils I tasted for the New Zealand Awards were predominantly up there with the best internationally. I was also impressed that all entrants must have been formally assessed as Extra Virgin Olive Oil as a condition of entry."



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## A DECADE OF AWARDS FOR OLIVE GROWERS

### ANN READING

David and Helen Walshaw, from Kapiti Olives, in Te Horo, deserve congratulations.

Last week they continued their 10 year unbroken medal-winning streak at the Olives New Zealand annual olive awards.

They were awarded silver medals for both of their olive blends.

The Walshaws bought their eight hectare property, a former cattle run-off by the Otaki River, in 2003, and planted five varieties mostly Italian, Spanish and Greek.

Their oil is certified extra virgin. "That's the only way we can win awards," Mrs Walshaw explained, "it has to pass the chemical analysis and blind tasting tests before it can be certified, and only certified oils can enter for the awards."

Of the continuous 10 year stream of awards Kapiti Olives has won best in show 2010, best in class 2005, and either gold, silver or bronze medals every year.

They produce over 4000 litres of oil annually and their bottles of competition oil are just taken from store so what wins is exactly what is found in the supermarket, in restaurants or online.

The oil is marketed by direct sales. They also supply restaurants and New World supermarkets.

The olive grove has often been visited by overseas university groups interested in the New Zealand olive scene and the Walshaws have regularly held field days on the property to help develop the industry.

Kapiti Olives was one of only two New Zealand olive oils chosen by the USA Olive Society to promote to their membership in 2005. Kapiti Olives is used by various high profile New Zealand chefs.

The Walshaws are in the throes of pruning, which Mr Walshaw says is as important as correct fertilisation and planting techniques to produce the best crops.

They say last year's good, long, hot summer has helped in the production of this year's medal winning oils.

"It has been most rewarding to continue producing consistent medal winning oils and also to have a choice of a fruity, more pungent, oil along with a softer, smoother oil to suit a wide range of palates," he said.

More information about Kapiti Olives can be found on the website [www.kapitilives.com](http://www.kapitilives.com)



**AWARD WINNING TREES:** David and Helen Walshaw and their eye-catching van among the Frantoio olive trees at Kapiti Olives grove at Te Horo.

PHOTO: ANN READING / KAP031013AROLIVES



# for Thornton growers

THORNTON olive growers Gerrit and Wil Kruithoed have collected more prestigious olive oil awards in spite of fierce competition this year in Olives New Zealand's Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards.

They won best in class in the commercial light single variety category for their Moutohora Piquet, and a gold award for the same variety – one of the best six oils in the competition.

Mr Kruithoed said they thought their two other entries had a better chance of winning so it was a big surprise to win the best in class award for their Moutohora Piquet 2013.

He said in their view their Moutohora Koroneiki with its delicate flavour and delicious taste was "a real cracker".

The judges commented that the Kruithoed's piquet was a well-balanced olive oil with fragrances of artichoke, kiwifruit and herbs, while their koroneiki produced aromas of artichoke, herbs and pomme fruits.

Mr Kruithoed said each year the competition standards increased and this year "the competition was a lot tougher."

They won silver medal for their Moutohora Grove Blend in the commercial light blended category and for their Moutohora Koroneiki in the commercial light single variety category.

The 2013 olive season with its high temperatures was a great year for producing olive oil, but Mr Kruithoed said the high temperatures and the drought posed difficulties growing olives in the Thornton sands.

They had a lot of extra work keeping their trees watered during the drought he said.

Their olive oil is processed by Parkhill Olives of Wellsford, which won best in class for processing.

Mr Kruithoed said Parkhill Olives was just one point behind the best processor.

The Kruithoeds are regular winners in Olives New Zealand's annual olive oil awards.

In 2011 they won the supreme



**WINNER:** This Piquet variety of extra virgin olive oil produced by Gerrit and Wil Kruithoed of Thornton, won best in class and a gold medal at Olive New Zealand's recent Extra Virgin Olive Oil awards.

Photo: Troy Baker C96/5-04

award for their Moutohora Grove Blend. They also won three gold awards.



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**food**

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More than 400,000 litres of olive oil is produced each year in groves around New Zealand. Sarah Catherall talks to olive growers whose oils recently won awards.

# Olive industry COMES OF AGE





**Oil bounty:** Olive groves are spreading around the countryside, allowing New Zealanders to buy local olive oils.

**W**HEN Karen Juno was growing up in Greytown decades ago, her family home was surrounded by an olive grove. Those olive trees were planted by her Lebanese grandfather, who imported them from his homeland about 80 years ago, and they're still standing today. She says: "I had to help shake the trees every May and my grandmother pickled the olives. Despite that, my uncle imported drums of olive oil for the family as you couldn't get olive oil here at that time."

Today, Karen and her husband, Ian Juno, grow 2000 olive trees in their olive grove, Juno Olives, in Greytown, and their story shows how much the olive oil industry has changed over the years.

While olive oil was difficult to source when the couple were growing up, today their grove is one of 72 in the Wairarapa.

Says Ian: "We were looking at doing something different in the later part of our lives, for our retirement, and that's how it all started."

Their oil won a gong in the New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards — the premier awards for extra virgin olive oils which are judged by international olive oil specialists. Juno's medium single varietal, Koroneiki, was described by judges as having "aromas of fig



**Harvest time:** Juno Olives.

leaf, olive leaf and artichoke. Good balance with a warm finish."

Another Wairarapa olive oil producer, Dali, was awarded Best in Class and Gold Medal for its

Picual olive oil.

Juno Olives grows eight varieties, and produces five extra virgin olive oils along with infused oils such as orange, lemon and basil. Last season,



**Liquid gold:** Juno Olive oil.

Karen and Ian picked six tonnes of olives which turned into 600 litres of oil.

Ian says: "It's a bit like buying a white wine. A pinot gris is different to a sauvignon blanc. Different trees produce different flavours."

At Dali Olives, Ross Vintiner, and his partner, Andrea Stewart, commute from Wellington to the Martinborough grove they bought two years ago. For Vintiner, a communications

## Origins of oil

Olive oil has been produced for more than 4000 years, and was once rubbed on dinner guests as a mark of respect. Today, there more than 200 olive groves in New Zealand producing more than 400,000 litres of olive oil annually, with the largest olive groves being in Auckland and Hawke's Bay. Olive operations vary from hobby groves of less than 100 trees to commercial groves of 40,000 trees. Despite being a boutique industry, New Zealand olive oils have typically punched above their weight in international competitions, regularly taking out Best in Class and Gold Medals.

consultant, it's a return to the lifestyle he first ventured into about 20 years ago, when he bought an olive grove in the Wairarapa.

Vintiner was one of the first to make the brave move at a time when flat land in the Wairarapa was filled with vineyards and paddocks and few olive trees.

He says: "I had a trial plot and it worked okay but for a variety of reasons I sold it after three years. I decided to come back to it later. Part of that is because I

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**Dali estate:** A view from Dali Estate in Martinborough.

really love a good olive oil.”

While Juno Olive trees grow in gravel, Dali Olive trees sit in silt. Vintiner is also focused on producing a grassy, herbaceous oil, so he deliberately picks early.

“It’s the way they pick in Spain and Tuscany, and my philosophy is to make oils that are unashamedly green.

“The picual has a really strong flavour, and not many people grow it in the Wairarapa or New Zealand for that matter.

“But in Spain, it’s really popular.

“It’s got a beautiful flavour and it’s great with roasted foods.”

Another Dali winner, Frantoio, an Italian olive varietal, is much less intense and is used with salads, sautes and dipping.

To enter the national award, oils must pass strict international chemical and sensory tests.

Says Vintiner: “It was a generally good growing year.

“While the drought was bad for farmers, it was great for olives, and the

Wairarapa did particularly well.”

### Dali Frantoio Chocolate

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp Dali Frantoio

200G of 70 per cent chocolate, chopped

145ml of water

Sprig of rosemary

Orange zest

Place chocolate, water, olive oil and rosemary sprig in a heavy bottomed pot over medium heat. Stir until smooth, watching it does not catch on the base of the pot.

Transfer chocolate mixture to high-sided metal bowl, immerse in larger bowl filled with ice cubes and water. Remove rosemary.

Hand beat chocolate for 5 minutes until thick and glossy, like butter and cream mixture.

Immediately scoop chocolate mixture onto parchment paper in a tin and refrigerate until needed. Sprinkle with orange zest when serving.

## THE JUDGE

Sue Langstaff is California’s leading sensory scientist. Even as a child she had a strong sense of smell, picking up leather shoes and handbags and sticking her nose in them. After training in sensory science, she began her career smelling, tasting, and judging beers. Five years ago, she became interested in olive oils, and became a member of the University of California Davis olive oil panel. Since then, she has been tasting – and judging – olive oils in both hemispheres.

Langstaff says olive oils from New World regions like South Africa, California and Argentina are typically green and herbaceous. Old world countries like Greece, Italy and Spain, which have been producing olive oils for centuries, are more likely to use what we would regard as spoiled oils. “The New World is much more concerned about freshness,” she says.

After judging our oils for the recent awards, she says that just like our wines, an olive oil from Auckland will taste exceptionally different from an oil produced from Central Otago trees. “For me, I like moderately pungent oil with some bitterness. It’s like asking the question – what wines do I like best?”



**Winning oils:** Dali champions.



# NZ FARMER MANAWATU

[nzfarmer.co.nz](http://nzfarmer.co.nz)

On a back road near Foxton, where rows of olives briefly interrupt the fields of grass, is a small firm that, in its first go, tasted success at the national olive oil awards. **Mathew Grocott** went to see how.





**Top crop:** Paul Stephens checks his olive grove in Foxton, from which he produced olive oils that won a gold and two silver awards.

# The good oil

**“I**’m meant to be retired but it’s fun.” So says Paul Stephens as he walks along a row of olive trees on his Foxton

property considering what needs to be pruned from each tree.

And, with 2200 trees, his olive grove is no mere retirement hobby. It’s a business that has just been recognised with a gold and two silver awards at the national olive oil awards.

“It’s a bit of trial and error,” Stephens says of the pruning needed.

The trick, he says, is to consider each tree from the north and open it up so light can get through to the back of the tree. The trees also need to be open to make picking easier.

With the trees about to flower – the fruit won’t be picked until May – a myriad of tiny buds runs along each branch.

“Soon these will be rows of white, yellow flowers,” Stephens says.

Then the olives will start to grow, small and green at first. And all the

time, he has to consider spraying, watering and mowing.

Regardless, olives seem to like growing in this patch of Horowhenua, just north of Foxton in Motuiti Rd.

Stephens thinks it is the mix of sandy, free-draining soil and fairly regular sunshine. The almost constant southerlies are a problem so he has planted shelter belts.

These trees then started growing their roots out in one area to take nutrients from the olives so that had to be fixed.

As Stephens says, it’s trial and error.

The 2200 trees on the property produce on average about 24 kilograms of fruit each, with about 1000 olives needed to make a kilogram.

Picking season takes six weeks, with the olives being trucked, along with those from surrounding estates, every other day to a press in Masterton, where they are turned into olive oil.

He recalls seeing in Italy olives left for days between being picked and pressed, the fruit going off in the heat. “The best olive oil is made if you press

it the next day.”

And through all his trial and error, Stephens has learned a thing or two about making top olive oil.

He entered the national olive oil awards after attending an event for growers in Kapiti.

There his Frantoio oil was among those tasted by top olive-oil judge Sue Langstaff of California. She said it was good enough for a gold medal and so he entered it into the awards.

Sure enough, the panel of five judges, including Langstaff, agreed and Gabbani Olives won the only gold medal given to a grower on the western side of the North Island.

Gabbani also won two silver medals for its Koroneiki oil and Tuscan Blend.

The judges said the Frantoio had “complex flavours” and a “good balance” along with tomato and fresh almond aromas.

For Stephens, the awards mean recognition and hopefully a boost in sales.

His products sell in stores in Horowhenua, Palmerston North and



wards at the New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards.

Photos: MURRAY WILSON/FAIRFAX NZ



**Award winners:** The three oils recognised at the national awards.

Whanganui, and his oil is used by some cafes in the area.

Promoting the products has meant a lot of visits to potential clients but word is spreading and the company now sells its oils in both 250ml bottles and 2-litre packs for those who really love it.

Stephens' own love for growing olives was sparked his wife. On a trip to Italy, she suggested they buy a villa and grow olives, but Stephens did not want to settle in Italy.

After they returned home, they realised they could have their own slice of Italy in Horowhenua.



**Family ties:** The Gabbani brand is named after Paul Stephens' wife's maiden name.

"I came home from work one day and she said, 'I've found it, I've found a villa'. I said 'where?' She said 'Foxton' and I said 'you're joking'."

That was 2009 when the oldest trees there were 5 years old. The villa is a Tuscan-inspired building that overlooks the property.

As a former Tararua dairy farmer who sold up to run a resort in the Marlborough Sounds, Stephens said the olive grove was his retirement plan. "To me, it's a lifestyle."

He can work every day if he wants, or not, and is aided in the business by his family. He has been told the farm is



**Somewhat secret:** Gabbani Olives is one of several of olive plantations just north of Foxton.

capable, in time, of producing 40 tonnes of fruit a season once the younger trees he has planted in the past two years mature.

However, as long as he's covering his costs he's content; after all, this is meant to be his retirement.

"I don't expect to make a fortune, but I don't want to sit back and be bored, it's good to have interests and something to do."



# Bay blend takes gold

BY TIM WAKELY  
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Hawke's Bay couple Shona Thompson and Bob Marshall reaped the rewards of their 650 olive trees by winning a gold medal award at this year's New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards.

The prestigious competition, which took place in Christchurch, was judged by three international judges who awarded a range of extra virgin olive oils with either a bronze, silver or gold status.

During the competition, the judges praised the Kiwi oils as world class.

Shona and Bob, who have been producing their own olive oil for 11 years and selling it for eight, says they were overwhelmed with the result their Aquiferra olive oil received.

"This is our first gold. We are very happy with the result as the judges only gave out 11 golds this year," smiles Bob.

"This was our third time entering. The last twice we entered we won a silver and bronze — this gold rating really tops it off," says Shona.

The couple, who have a small olive grove at the back of their Maraekakaho lifestyle block, put part of their award-winning blend down to last summer's dry weather.

"We had a great season last summer as it was hot and dry — it was the perfect weather for growing olives," says Bob.

He says it takes 11 years of trial and error to get the perfect blend.

"Taking our oils to the Black Barn Markets and the market in Napier has been a really good way



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**WINNERS:** Olive growers Shona Thompson and Bob Marshall's Aquiferra olive blend has won gold at this year's Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards.

PHOTO TIM WAKELY

to get feedback. It's a really good way to learn what people do and do not like," laughs Shona.

Bob says the perfect olive oil contains equal proportions of fruitiness, bitterness and pungency.

However, proportions can often differ depending on the type of olive oil being produced.

The Aquiferra label has been

embraced by the Bay, now supplying olive oil for Elephant Hill, Craggy Range and Vidal Estate.

The Auckland escapees, who both work at EIT, moved to Maraekakaho to escape the big city lifestyle.

"As soon as we arrived, we decided to set up a small olive grove as a way to do something

practical with the land."

The couple says the support they've received from local growers has been fantastic.

They say their main aim is to get Hawke's Bay residents to buy local.

"Having a New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil award is a prime example of the high quality olives grown in New Zealand", she says.

Online articles:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/rural/223165/akaroa-company-again-wins-top-olive-oil-award>

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/wairarapa-times-age/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1503414&objectid=11133874](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/wairarapa-times-age/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503414&objectid=11133874)

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/agribusiness/9289262/The-good-oil-comes-from-trial-and-error>

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU1309/S01065/dali-recognised.htm>

**TIP: Why not do your own press release to your local papers?**

If there was an article in your local paper on your success at the 2013 NZ EVOO Awards, please scan and email a copy to the Executive Officer for inclusion in this document.

And great to see the bottle below is NZ EVOO ...



Catching up by Kate Fraser

## Lil Huckle, executive chef White Tie



Lil Huckle graduated in 1997 from Christchurch Polytech (by Recognition of Prior Learning) and prior to 2010 was head chef at Hay's Restaurant in Victoria St, where she tutored students from the New Zealand School of Food and Wine in practical work experience. She has been with White Tie Catering for three years.

"As executive chef I manage all food production for White Tie both here at 'base' in Gasson St and our kitchens at Koru Club Wellington and Christchurch.

"I enjoy developing recipes and menu ideas with our team and on busy days rolling up my sleeves and working in event kitchens. At the Gasson St site we have staff lunch every day and anyone having a birthday gets to choose what we cook (and eat). We have a fantastic team and we love what we do."

### FAVOURITE HOME COOKED MEAL

Crispy skinned roast chicken, roast agria potatoes with roast preserved lemons and gremolata, new season's asparagus and bernaise sauce. For dessert, warm berry clafouti and freshly

My cooking style is eclectic. It depends on using great ingredients and making everything taste of what was used to make it. I love to experiment.

churned vanilla bean icecream. My secret tip for the chicken is to salt it overnight.

### MY MOST MEMORABLE MEAL

This was everything served from the degustation menu at Attica in Melbourne and meeting Chef Ben Shewry.



### THE STAPLES

#### Our work fridge:

Grappa Padana, confit garlic, prosciutto, fresh thyme

#### My home fridge:

Preserved lemons, Castello cheese, kalamata olives

#### The work and home pantries:

In White Tie kitchens and my home kitchen there are always quantities of Village Press olive oil, sherry vinegar, Belgian chocolate, and flaky salt

It was all wonderful but the outstanding dish of the meal was a crab broth: absolute umami heavenly perfection.

### FAVOURITE TIPPLE

If I can get my hands on it, a glass of Veuve Clicquot. Another favourite at the moment is gin and tonic, with a fresh lime.

### LAST MEAL (if I knew the end was nigh)

Oysters Rockefeller; Beef Wellington with bordelaise sauce and creamed spinach; apricots from our tree at home, with panna cotta.

### INSPIRATIONS

You can never have too many cookbooks. My current favourites are Bouchon by Thomas Keller, and Momofuku.

### TOOLKIT

I would never want to be without my Magimix and a microplane.

### ESSENTIALS

Fresh herbs from our home garden: Italian parsley, coriander, lemon thyme, lemon verbena...

