

MEDIA RELEASE

South Australia's 'perfect olive oil' wins food Oscar in UK

A South Australian olive oil maker's determination to produce "the perfect oil" has resulted in a gold medal for a Single Estate Olive Oil in the prestigious UK Fine Food Awards in London.

The Kangaroo Paw Chef's Choice extra virgin olive oil, produced at Buckland Park just north of Adelaide, was competing against 4500 entries from around Europe and other parts of the world.

The Fine Food Guild's Awards are the Oscars of the UK food industry, bringing together teams of experts including fine food buyers, delicatessen owners and fine food writers. Winners can expect to see sales of their products soar with some of the country's leading retailers such as Fortnum and Mason and Harvey Nichols all stocking their goods based on the Guild's recommendations.

Kangaroo Paw managing director Ted de Lyster said the company's olive oils were created using state-of-the-art, best practices technology in all facets of oil production, and has HACCP (Hazard and Critical Control Points) certification in regards to its growing, processing, storage facilities and bottling procedures.

"This means that all critical points of production from start to finish are independently assessed and accounted for each year," Mr de Lyster said.

"Our olives are processed within eight hours of harvesting ensuring no breakdown of the fruit occurs and its many health benefits are retained.

"The resultant oils are allowed to decant for the appropriate time in steel vats while covered by nitrogen blankets. Oxidization is not allowed to occur in this thermostatically controlled environment which extends up to and includes the bottling phases."

Mr de Lyster said the company had 60,000 olive trees in production at 125ha Buckland Park Estate, currently producing more than 350,000 litres of extra virgin olive oil, a figure expected to grow to 450,000 litres in 2006.

Harvesting was carried out by an over the row continuous harvester similar to that used in the grape growing industry.

“As a high density olive grove this method further enhances the attainment of higher quality olive oil,” Mr. de Lyster said. “Our 60,000 trees can be harvested in approximately 14 days and thus at their optimum ripeness. Over the row harvesting was popularized by the wine industry and indeed revolutionized it. It is softer on the fruit and allows the time from tree to crushing plant to be cut by days.

“One major achievement in our determination to produce the perfect olive oil has been that the Kangaroo Paw extra virgin olive oil has an acidity level of less than 0.3%.

“The Frantoio FS 17 variety was chosen for its high oil content, exceptional quality and the economic advantages it gives through highly technological developments in harvesting, production and annual returns.”

Although Kangaroo Paw olive oils have been available overseas for the past 18 months, they have only recently started appearing on the shelves of local fine food retailers such as Jones the grocer and David Jones.

He said South Australia was now regarded as one of the very few regions in Australia ideal climatically for maximizing the quality and quantity in the production of premium estate extra virgin olive oil.

“In terms of Australian growers and processors our company is unmatched in terms of the investment it has made to produce the perfect olive oil,” Mr de Lijster added.

“This investment has been further extended to include research and development in critical areas to fully understand what is possible and necessary.”

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