



The Bentivoglio olive grove, Rylstone, NSW.

Bentivoglio Olives: a landmark for quality and sustainability

By MALCOLM GWILLIAM

In the New South Wales central tablelands, Rylstone enjoys the high altitude, hot summers and consistent rainfall of Tuscany and is similarly ripe for olive growing.

On 127.5 hectares of old grazing country, Jayne and Peter

Bentivoglio, and a growing team of 13, have developed a grove of 8000 olive trees and a modern oil processing facility. Jayne's motivation and commitment comes from a wish to impart knowledge and guidance to olive producers for the sustainability of the industry and the environment.

Her achievements include co-producing the olive manage-

ment guide for Australian olive growers, regularly advising new growers about production methods and hosting the Annual Olive Harvest Workshop each year in September.

Jayne is also a member of the nationally accredited Australian Olive Oil Sensory Panel that assesses Australian olive oil according to international standards.

With its long list of medals and awards, Rylstone Olive Press continues to be a model for the industry and is instrumental in guiding Australian organic olive oil producers to deliver quality produce.

GROVE MANAGEMENT

The operation has an impressive commitment to high standards. Both the olive grove and the processing plant are certified Australian Certified Organic (ACO), with JAS and USDA Certification approval as well as HACCP, Demeter and Kashrut Authority (Kosher) Certification.

Organic principles have been followed since 1997, with no herbicides or synthetic fertilisers used at any stage.

Varieties grown include Frantoio, Correggiola, Leccino, Coratina, Picual, Manzanillo Barnea and Pendolino.

To increase biodiversity, an organic garlic crop is being trialled near the composting area. The garlic looks successful and plantings are expected to increase in 2006.

There are also plans to introduce livestock once trees are well established, in the near future.

This fits in well with the organic management system as sheep will continuously replenish the soil with organic matter and allow composting to occur naturally. Weeds will also be controlled as they provide feed.

Extensive soil testing is carried out with soil fertility moderate, and low calcium and phosphorous requiring lime and rock phosphate supplements to correct the balance.

In an effort to further increase soil fertility and health, a

compost trial is being conducted with the University of Western Sydney.

The trees are only irrigated as a supplementary measure, as local rainfall is good for olives.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

The olive grove has expanded its operation to accommodate a function room and small restaurant attached to the olive processing area. It is a regular venue for seminars and workshops while the restaurant is a popular tourist stop. The cellar door hopes to market more locally grown organic produce.

Organic table olives also have a future at Rylstone, however, they require a separate, involved processing system and will be introduced slowly.

Jayne's objective is to export 50-75% of her oils with the rest distributed nationally. She is looking to expand her organic extra virgin olive oil sources within NSW and possibly all of eastern Australia.

Exporting the world-class extra virgin olive oils is slow, mainly due to the competition from Europe and the subsidies given to European organic producers.

There are, however, prospects for international sales. Jayne has introduced her oils to the east coast of the US and a number of Asian distributors (following the successful Organic Expo in July 2005) have taken product samples to Japan and Korea.

Bentivoglio Olives are available from some selected retailers and organic food stores as well as direct from the Rylstone Olive Press. ■

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The home of Bentivoglio Olive Oils is a popular tourist stop.

