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Olio

The harvest period here begins slightly earlier than in Chianti Classico.

At Campogiovanni too the olives are hand-picked and brought the same day to the estate *frantoio*, or press house, at San Felice.

Sensory profile

Campogiovanni Extravirgin Olive Oil is a lovely green-tinged yellow gold in appearance. The nose releases a broad spectrum of aromas, from fresh-mown hay through fresh-cracked nuts. On the palate it shows notable smoothness, set off by a pleasantly bitterish note and subtle pungency present throughout its progression.



A history without end

Olea prima omnium arborum est, or, the olive is the first of all trees.

Columella stated such in his *De re rustica* a century after Christ, and we have no reason to believe, 2,000 years later, that this is not still true.

That the olive, among the wealth of foodstuffs, is the one most bound up with the notion of the sacred is amply borne out by the fact that it figures far more often in the fabric of myth rather than in the pages of historians.

The Egyptians attributed to Isis the art of producing olive oil, while the Hebrew tradition maintains that the olive sprouted, along with the cedar and cypress, from seeds placed between the lips of Adam and of his son Seth after his death.

As to the Greeks, they believed that the first olive tree grew up where Pallas Athene hurled her spear upon the Acropolis of Athens, and that primordial tree was still being pointed out to visitors in the 2nd century AD.

Within the realm of history, the Codex of Hammurabi records that olive oil was already an article of trade in Mesopotamia in 1760 BC, even though it is to the Greeks that we owe the olive's spread throughout the Mediterranean basin and its systematic cultivation, with ten individual varieties already catalogued by the 3rd century BC.

The Romans, however, provided its maximum thrust, developing the olive's cultivation to such a degree that they established a true olive-oil stock market, distinguishing fully 5 different grades of oil, depending upon the degree of ripeness and soundness of the fruit.

Evidence of olive cultivation in Tuscany dates to the middle of the 7th century BC. The Etruscans produced olive oil primarily from trees growing spontaneously, to be consumed as a food and also used for illumination and cosmetic purposes.

It was only in the 15th century that Tuscan oil began to appear as a commodity, in Italian markets, where it was appreciated for its sensory characteristics.

Despite the existence of a market for the oil, widespread diffusion of the olive in the Tuscan hills dates only to the middle of the 19th

century, following the expansion of agricultural activity that led to the planting of olives in reclaimed areas and in the hilly margins of



the zones where the trees could be cultivated.

Hills covers 68.3% of Tuscany's total area, mountains, 24%, and plains, 7.7%. Because of the ratio, the olive and vine together hold an absolutely pre-eminent economic-social position in comparison with other agricultural sectors.

In spite of periodic freezes that destroy the above-ground parts of the trees the disastrous storm in 1985 was only the fourth of the 20th century,

after those of 1907, 1929 and 1956 most of the olives in the region are old.

Productivity is low but quality is extremely high.



Montalcino

San Felice's involvement in the Montalcino area dates back to the 1980s, when it purchased this magnificent agricultural estate of some 65 hectares.

Lying at altitudes ranging from 250 to 300 metres, the Tenuta di Campogiovanni extends over the southwest-facing quadrant of the Montalcino hill. This position allows it to benefit from the mild breezes that come in from the Mediterranean.



Campogiovanni includes not only 20 hectares of vineyards but some 2,000 olive trees as well.

The olive varieties that predominate on the Estate are *frantoio* and *moraiolo*, with smaller percentages of *leccino* and of *olivastra di Montalcino*, both of the latter cultivars traditional to this area.

At Campogiovanni, as at San Felice, an olive tree produces on average 1-1.5 kg of olive oil per year. This is an extremely low production, but it has the effect of keeping oil quality at very high levels.

with garlic and tomatoes.

The DOP

Beginning with the 2000 harvest, San Felice olive oil may be labelled as Chianti Classico DOP.

The *Denominazione d'Origine Protetta* (Denomination of Protected Origin) represents an important step forward towards a system of "Italian olive oil zoning", **since it takes account of the distinctive characteristics of the different olive varieties, climates, and soils, thus highlighting the individual character of each oil and its distinctive sensory qualities.**

Further, the new legislation provides more effective control over the production process for each DOP product, as well as more stringent requirements regarding the minimum sensory qualities for the granting of the DOP approval on the label. And *vinum docet*- we have learned from grapes and wine that the protection afforded by official denominations is more effective when the areas that are regulated are small in extent. This entire process has as its objective a higher quality oil and, for the consumer, more effective guarantees and increased transparency: in other words, an important push towards protecting and promoting this oil and its centuries-old tradition.



The environment of olive cultivation

The classic zone of olive cultivation is located between the 30th and 45th parallels north. Those limits are surpassed at times due to the mitigating effects on the climate of large basins of water. In Italy, the olive grows in every region except Piedmont and the Aosta Valley.

From the thermal standpoint, the critical period extends from May to September or from the flowering to the beginning of ripening. The minimum temperature required by the olive varies with each phase of its vegetation flowering, 10° C (50° F); setting, 20°; veraison-ripening, 15°, and ripening-harvesting, 5°.

The olive suffers more from sharp and repeated shifts in temperatures, which can cause fissures in the trunk and branches, than from the low readings registered in the winter.

In respect to water and nutrients, the olive is well-suited to dry climates and suffers more from damp soils than from drought. Rainfall is most favorable in spring and summer when the trees are

in full vegetation.

The best type of terrain is of medium consistency but the tree also does well in clayey soils. It is well-suited to calcareous, sub-alkaline terrains, where it produces oil of excellent quality.



Chianti Classico

The hillslopes of San Felice, lying at elevations between 350 and 400 metres, have always yielded a low crop per tree, but the obverse of this scarcity is an oil that is exquisitely fruity, refined, and elegant.



San Felice currently cultivates 60 hectares of olive trees, which includes 16,500 trees, of which 5,400 are in intensive cultivation.

The clay-rich, calcareous-marl soils are derived from the breakdown of compact, clayey limestone *alberese* and friable limestone-sandstone *galestro*.

The most common form of training is vase-shaped.

The proportion of cultivars is:
Frantoio, 75%
Moraiolo, 15%
Leccino, 10%

As happened throughout the Chianti Classico area, the entire grove

Such defects often resulted from use of *fiscoli*, disks of vegetable fiber, in the old system.

Decanting ends with a centrifuge that separates the little water remaining in the oil.

Once the oil has been extracted and awaits bottling, it is preserved in a climate-controlled environment in stainless steel containers, protected from the air and light.

The final phase in the process consists of a very delicate pass over a cotton filter, holding back the heavier solid particles, it lets pass a clearer oil with refined fragrance and flavor that last over time.

The sensory examination

Tasting of the oil is without a doubt one of the most difficult tasks in the entire process. Only a few grams of oil, amounting to a small teaspoonful, may be sampled, otherwise the taster risks skewing the sensory impressions.

The taster rolls the oil around in the mouth, at first slowly, then vigorously, ensuring contact with all of the papillae, all the while inhaling and exhaling, but avoiding swallowing the oil. The procedure must be executed with calm, since some very delicate oils show finishes that are slow to develop.

San Felice oil shows a lively green that with time tends to shade into an intense, greenish-tinged gold-yellow. On the nose, it releases an appealing herbaceousness, with aromas of fresh wild greens, artichoke, and lettuce. On the palate, it is clean, supple, and fragrant, exhibiting impressions of sage, rosemary, and mint. Throughout the tasting, it continues to offer a succession of pungent and bitterish impressions, all intensely pleasurable and remarkably harmonious.

San Felice olive oil is perfect on any kind of grilled or barbecued meat or kebobs, on grilled vegetables, with hearty soups of beans, farro, or chickpeas, and wonderful on bruschetta, particularly along

That favors the oil's separation from the water contained in the olives. When oil begins to appear in the mixture, the paste is thoroughly blended.

Kneading facilitates the extraction of the oil, since it breaks the water-oil emulsion that can form during the grinding process.



The next and final phase is extraction with the use of a decanter. The decanter is a type of centrifuge, completely sealed off from air, capable of being thoroughly washed. The device separates oil from the solid residue soaked with the olive's water.

The decanter has replaced the traditional presses of the ancient extraction system. It substantially reduces oxidation and assures a final product that is

elegant. In addition, the cleanliness of the decanter obviates risks of unpleasant aromas and flavors.

was heavily damaged by the disastrous freeze of 1985.

Almost all of the trees were cut off at the base of the trunk, in order to stimulate the root ovules and to ensure that the groves would retain the same traditional varietal makeup.

The altitude of some 400 metres makes unnecessary regular and specific anti-pest treatments. In fact, the dacus fly (*dacius Oleae*), one of the most common and troublesome olive pests, is almost unknown here.

Harvesting is completely by hand, and usually takes place during November through mid-December.

The oil yield per tree is generally quite low. A mature olive tree will produce, at most, from 5 to 7 kg of olives, from which, depending on the vintage, only 0.5 to 1.0 kg of oil can be produced.

The varieties



Moraiolo: this Tuscan cultivar is now widely found in Italy and other Mediterranean countries.

Use of this variety is linked to excellent productivity and good oil yield. Moraiolo is moderately rustic, and suffers somewhat from pruning and it is often attacked by cycloconium (peacock's eye), a fungal parasite widely found in areas where the olive is cultivated.

The tree displays medium vigor and tends to grow upward. Foliage is not expansive but moderately thick. At the time of harvest, the fruit is purplish black ellipsoid in shape and medium in size. Moraiolo requires other varieties as pollinators, especially Pendolino and Maremmano. Flowering is intermediate and the olive ripens precociously.



Frantoio: this cultivar originated in Tuscany, then spread throughout Italy and to nearly all the zones worldwide where the olives grows. The reasons for its diffusion are outstanding production constancy and, above all, the widely recognized high oil quality.

Frantoio, is highly susceptible to cycloconium and the olive fly as well as cold weather, and is a self-fertilizing variety although it

benefits from cross pollination with Leccino and Pendolino. Frantoio is also a pollinating variety. Fruiting is discreet and constant. Ripening is in stages and late. The oil is highly appreciated, fine, sapid and aromatic. The tree is moderately vigorous and grows in a semi-pendulous form. The foliage is expansive and relatively thick. The branches are slender, with the tips turning upward. At harvest, the fruit, elongated ovoid in shape, is green in color but becomes black after a relatively veraison.



Leccino: the origin of Leccino is uncertain, although historically it has been associated with the areas around Florence and Pistoia. Leccino is cultivated in all olive-growing regions in Italy and the principal zones worldwide. The variety is particularly resistant to meteorological adversities (cold, winds and fog) and the most common pathogens.

It requires pollinators, of which the best are Pendolino, Maremmano and Frantoio. Leccino flowers in late May or early June and fruit is heaviest at the base or midsection of the branches. Production is good and constant and ripening is precocious and uniform.

The tree is extremely vigorous and assumes a semi-pendulous form with expansive and thick foliage. When harvested, the fruit is purplish black in color. Veraison is precocious and simultaneous. The fruit elongated ovoid in shape.

Extraction of the oil

San Felice's rule is that the extraction of oil must begin in the same day the olives are harvested and this is one of the principal factors in the success of our oil.

The period between harvesting and grinding is critical because the quality of the oil may be severely damaged if processing is not carried out promptly. Any delay will cause a substantial increase in acidity and other sensory defects.

Once the olives have arrived, we remove leaves and small pieces of branches from the olives, which are then washed. Those two operations, performed by a machine, prevent the oil from assuming

anomalous and unpleasant odors and flavors.

Immediately afterward, the ancient operation of extracting the oil begins. It consists, still today, of three phases: grinding, kneading and extraction.

Grinding consists of breaking into pieces (milling) both the pulp and the kernel. The process was traditionally carried out with stone grindstones, which, slowly rotating, cut deeply into the fabric the pulp and kernels. There was always a considerable risk of oxidation, which would have serious repercussions on the flavor of the oil.

Modern technology offers a better system, milling olives with knives that delicately break up the fruit and prepare the paste for the successive phase of kneading.

In this second phase, a machine equipped with a screw delicately mixes and kneads the paste.



That lightly heats the paste to a temperature of about 23-25° C (73-77° F). The heat is sufficient to reduce the surface tension of the oil and aids the process by which small drops combine to form large drops.