

Press release by the University of Applied Sciences Wädenswil on 30 March 2006

Golden and Silver Olive awards for “Extra Virgin” Olive Oils

On 30 March 2006 the “5- International Olive Congress – Zurich 2006” took place at the University of Applied Sciences Waedenswil (HSW). The highlight of the event was the presentation of the “International Olive Award – Zurich 2006”. Producers, importers and retailers from twelve different countries had submitted a total of 161 “extra virgin” olive oils for consideration. The expert panel of the HSW tasted the products and performed objective sensory evaluation. Seven olive oils were awarded the coveted “Golden Olive” and twelve received the “Silver Olive”. Another eighteen olive oils “extra vergin” received an “Award” for their outstanding sensory quality.

The evaluation of the olive oils was based on ten criteria defined by the IOOC (International Olive Oil Council). The first step was to ensure that the oil was free from negative characteristics, which is a requirement for its inclusion in the “Extra Virgin” category. In addition, the fruitiness, bitterness and piquancy of the oils were assessed, all of these being positive attributes of olive oil. These three attributes together form the basis for a general impression of the harmoniousness of the oil and, together with how long it lingers in the nose and the palate, are the deciding factors for the awards.

Of the 148 oils submitted, 55 qualified for the final round. Seven oils were awarded the “Golden Olive”, and twelve the “Silver Olive”. The winners received a certificate and the right to print the “Golden Olive” or “Silver Olive” logo on their labels. The 148 olive oils came from eleven different countries: 52% were from Italy, 16% from Greece and 14% from Spain, 9% from Turkey. The remainder originated from Australia, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Portugal, South Africa and even from Switzerland.

Transparency in the olive oil market

At a consumer tasting at the “Gourmesse Zürich” in the Kongresshaus Zurich from 13 to 16 October 2006 the oils were blind tasted by end consumers and ranked by preference. The 15 favourite oils are able to use the “OLIO 2006 mark on their labels. The objectives of the Olive Oil Award are transparency in the olive oil market and sustainable quality enhancement. The results serve as a scientific basis for producers, importers and retailers to assist in their achieving medium- and long-term improvements in the quality of “native” olive oils. At the same time, the event provides a representative overview of the quality of olive oils on the national and international market.

Consumers as the focal point

The awards took place during the “5th International Olive Congress – Zurich 2006”. The conference programme clearly stated “The consumer is our focus”. This was particularly underpinned by the talk given by Dr. Michele Bomio, CEO of Innocat AG, who spoke about the quality expectations of Asian, American and European consumers. The manager of MangiaSano Consulting, Dr. Leoluca Criscione, gave a presentation entitled “Olive oil – healthy or fattening?”. The participants listened to her talk with great interest. A novel attraction was the opportunity to see the world of olives from the perspectives of literature and art. Werner Cüppers and Bernd Kirstein, two artists from Germany, made this possible.

After the congress and prize-giving, the oils were available for tasting. This provided an ideal opportunity, particularly for consumers, to meet both producers and purveyors.

An electronic version can be found at www.hsw.ch/medien or www.oliveoilaward.ch

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