

Published December 19th, 2012

Enjoy Your Own Olive Oil

By Sophie Braccini



Graham Parkinson-Morgan with his first harvest.
Photos Jude Parkinson-Morgan

back with one and a half gallons of oil.

"Eighteen months ago we planted a Spanish arbequina olive tree that doubled in size, and we picked 28 pounds of olives from it this year," says Jude Parkinson-Morgan. "The whole olive oil idea came from a visit to my sister's olive estate in Lucca, Italy. We came back determined to plant olive trees in Lafayette."

With the help of Siamack Sioshansi and the Urban Farmers, Parkinson-Morgan identified a Burton Valley property that had trees in need of picking. "It took us three and a half hours to pick our trees and hers and we got a total of 109 pounds of olives on Nov. 10," she says. She remembers the date because the olives had to be picked the day before the milling and Olivina's community day was Nov. 11.

The Lamorinda residents carpooled on that Monday morning to get their harvest to Livermore. A very long line of cars started forming at Olivina even before the door opened. "They weighed our harvest," explained Parkinson-Morgan. "The cost is a minimum of \$25 and covers the first 100 pounds. Then, at the end of the day, you get your oil back; for us, one and a half gallons."

Curiel's olive oil is nothing like any commercial oil: the pungency is unadulterated, making it a great companion to salads, appetizers or a simple piece of bread. The savor of the fruit reveals itself as the oil coats the palate, a tinge of bitterness is also present, but it quickly subsides leaving only the long-lasting fresh green flavor of the olive.

"We have used it mostly for dipping so far," says Parkinson-Morgan. Curiel also uses it in salads and gives it as gifts in cute bottles.

"The popularity of the community day in Livermore is growing," says Curiel, "but it's only one day a year, and there is such a potential with all the olive trees in the area." Curiel found another community resource, Andy Dale of the Dale Family Farm in Berkeley, who has a small press where people can book time whenever they want and press their olives.

Curiel was one of Dale's first customers with a different batch of olives and she introduced Dale to Lafayette resident Steve Richard, who was planning to harvest his olives Dec. 10. Unfortunately, the heavy rains of the previous week sent all the olives to the ground.

Parkinson-Morgan plans to start an informal database of people who have olive trees in the area to get organized for next year. If you would like to join, contact Parkinson-Morgan at j.parkinson-morgan@comcast.net. For more information about the Dale Family Farm, visit www.dalefamilyfarm.com.

The color is emerald green, the fragrance intense, and the fruity, peppery taste unique. Cold press, extra-virgin olive oil made from local fruit is nothing like you have ever tasted before, unless you had your own olive farm. Yet anyone in Lamorinda with a healthy olive tree can get their own freshly-pressed olive oil simply by bringing their harvest to a local mill. That is, if they harvest before heavy rains ruin the crop.

"I had always thought of all the olives on trees around town going to waste and what a loss that was," says Lafayette resident and natural food expert Kim Curiel, "but the question was how to turn them into olive oil. The process is a little more involved than making sauce from your own apples; you need an olive milling facility."

Curiel heard about a yearly community day at Olivina in Livermore and she decided to go with some interested friends. "We came back with three gallons of premium olive oil from the 200 pounds of olives we gleaned from trees that would never have been harvested," said Curiel, who does not have olive trees on her own land.

Jude and Graham Parkinson-Morgan went with Curiel, bringing olives from their own and others' trees, and came



Pouring olive oil in glass bottles for conservation.



Charles Crohare Jr., son of Charles Crohare Sr., who has been running the Livermore ranch since the 1950s shows the process of milling.



Kim Curiel in her kitchen ready for olive oil tasting. Photo Sophie Braccini

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA