



Olive Notes

Serving Solano & Yolo Counties!

September 2008 - Issue 1



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Yolo County Historical Notes on Local Olive Oil production

The following is an excerpt from an article authored by R. A. Thompson, that appeared in **“Out West: A Magazine of The Old Pacific and the New,”** Vol. XVII, No. 1, July, 1902, Out West Company, Los Angeles, California, pp. 120-135.

“The Yolo olive oil factory is situated here, an enterprise of more than ordinary interest and importance. The olives are picked ripe and are immediately sun or kiln-dried; the moisture evaporates, the pit, a pulp and oils remains, the dried fruit having the appearance of a raisin. The proprietors claim to have invented the process of making oil from the dried olive, and that its advantages are the extension of the time for making oil over a year or even more if desired. The machinery in use extracts the pit and grinds the pulp in one process. The pulp is then subjected to a heavy pressure, and the expressed oil is filtered, runs into a large tank and is ready for bottling. Absolute cleanliness prevails throughout the process, and a fragrant odor pervades the filtering room. In drying, the olive loses half its weight but no oil. Forty dollars a ton is paid for green olives. A ton of the green fruit yields by the usual process thirty-five gallons of oil. A ton of dried olives yield from sixty-five to seventy gallons, so there is little or no loss of oil in the drying. The dried olive has an excellent flavor, and there is quite a demand for it, as an edible dried fruit. With some care in selecting the best varieties for drying, and with care in the process, it is possible that dried olives may become a popular food product.”

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Summation of the First Solano/Yolo Olive Oil Growers Meeting

The Solano and Yolo Counties Olive oil growers had their first meeting on August 26th. The meeting was called the “Mid-summer get together” and had a casual flare to it with time to talk and meet each other before covering a few topics of interest and discussing possible future work. The meeting was organized by UCCE farm advisors Mario Moratorio and Carolyn DeBuse with the idea creating the first steps of building working relationships between growers themselves, UC Extension, California Center for Cooperative Development and supporting industries.

The meeting was hosted by Mike and Diane Madison in their olive oil pressing room. Mike showed us his olive processing mill, an Italian made Enorossi extractor, with a throughput of 400kg/hr or 880lbs/hr, with a custom built low-speed high-torque roller mill. We also had compressed air and battery operated hand harvest aids showed to us by Butch Rhoton from Brewt Power Systems. These demonstrations were a helpful introduction to the tools of the olive trade for those growers that are new to the crop and for those who are looking for new equipment to ease harvest.

Roundtable discussions followed the demos with people introducing themselves and discussing ideas and future plans. Luis Sierra from the California Center for Cooperative Development introduced a grant that the center has received from the USDA Rural Cooperatives Development program to study the feasibility of a cooperative olive mill in the Solano and Yolo Counties. Please see the meeting announcement and join us in the continuing discussion on this project.

It was great first meeting for the local olive growers and a starting point for future cooperation in building a new local olive oil industry. Thank you to all who participated.

Local Olive Oil Producers and Oil Production Survey

Two Excel files; “Olive Oil Growers” and “Olive Oil Survey”, were attached to the email sent with the newsletter, one file contains the list of olive oil producers while the other has the results of our oil production survey.

Those of you that participated in the Mid Summer gathering at Mike Madison’s place, received a draft of the list of olive oil producers compiled by us. Thank you for making your information available and for your patience, as you waited to have the completed list emailed to you. Now you will be able to print the list with a bigger font, so you can read it!

For those of you that see the list for the first time, the list contains contact information for all the KNOWN olive oil producers in Solano and Yolo Counties and includes names of non-growers, people interested in the olive oil industry. The list is intended to facilitate the exchange of information among growers and people in the list. Although the list is not considered confidential, we would like to keep its distribution limited to the people in the list.

If you are aware of other growers unknown to us, please, let us know, so we add them to the list.

The second file contains an update of the results from our oil production survey. I realize that the worksheet is a bit cumbersome to read, but we succeeded in presenting in a concise way, all the information that you gave us. Remember that the information is still in draft form, as we hope that each one of you will send us correction and/or additions to the survey.

We would like to encourage those of you that have not sent the survey, to fill the survey attached to the email and sent it back to us. Thank you in advance.

INVITATION: Learn about and participate in an Olive Oil Mill Feasibility Study for Yolo-Solano area growers

What: Informational meeting for people interested in learning about or participating in a feasibility study for a cooperatively owned olive oil mill.

When: September 25th at 4-6 pm

Where: Mike Madison's, Yolo Bulb Ranch, 6446 Putah Creek Lane, Winters, CA

RSVP to: Luis Sierra (CCCD) at 530-297-1032 or lsierra@cccd.coop

If you can't attend and are interested in learning about the feasibility study or joining the steering committee, please call or write me.

Project Background: CA Center for Cooperative Development* received a grant from the USDA Rural Cooperatives Development program to support co-op projects in different development stages. We researched the California olive oil industry by interviewing growers, researchers and olive oil industry leaders and discovered a shortfall in building additional mills in the near future. There is a clear need for additional olive oil mills in Yolo and Solano in the very near future. Our project proposal is to complete a feasibility study for a cooperatively owned oil mill. We have secured commitments for consulting services from a financial consultant who specializes in cooperatives and has olive oil industry experience; also with Alexandra Devarenne, an experienced technical expert in all aspects of the olive oil production chain.

Join the Steering Committee: We are looking to local growers to take a leadership role in completing the feasibility study. This means providing general guidance to the consultants by providing information and feedback they need to develop an accurate report. Every potential function that a cooperative could take can be reviewed in the study, from milling for independent labels, milling for a co-op label, input supply purchasing (bottles, corks, small equipment, custom harvesting).

Meeting Topics:

- **General news and announcements for olive growers**
- **General discussion on grower needs and ideas**
- **What the feasibility study consists of**
- **Expectations from the Steering Committee, CCCD, and consultants**
- **Feasibility study timeline**
- **Post feasibility study: What follows? How long would it be until an operating mill exists in Yolo and Solano?**

***About CCCD:** The California Center for Cooperative Development is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that promotes and supports California cooperatives of all types with start-up, management, and other technical assistance. Although CCCD incorporated only a year ago most of the staff and board were previously employed or associated with the University of California at Davis Center for Cooperatives, an extension program that closed in 2004 due to budget cuts. CCCD staff has extensive community development and cooperative development experience.

Directions: Find the intersection of Putah Creek Road and Stevenson Bridge Road (road 95A); this is half way between Davis and Winters on the South side of Putah Creek. At that intersection there are three paved roads and one gravel road. Proceed east on the gravel road about 3/4 mile to the sign for #6446 (to your left, against the creek). We will meet in the olive milling building which is a red building with a metal roof.



Olive Notes



Upcoming Meeting

Solano/Yolo Olive Oil Mill Feasibility Study

Thursday, September 25, 2008

4-6 pm

Yolo Bulb Ranch

6446 Putah Creek Lane, Winters, CA



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