

Olive Oil Producer's Group

Post-Harvest Debrief

January 31st, 4-6pm

MEETING AGENDA

Welcome & Introductions – Susan Ellsworth

Post-Harvest Debrief – All

- Survey Results – Rachelle Hedges

Mechanical Harvesting – Charles Crohare Sr., Susan Ellsworth

Olive Oil Symposium Debrief – Katherine Tomagin

Upcoming Olive Workshops – Rachelle Hedges

- Pruning Workshop, 2/23
- Certification Workshop?

MEETING NOTES

Welcome & Introductions

- Attendees:
 - Hohnsbeen, George
 - Walworth, Janet
 - Crohare, Charles Jr.
 - Goble, D'Aun
 - Tomajan, Kathryn
 - Reed, Charles
 - Robin (with Kathryn)
 - Ellsworth, Susan
 - Hedges, Susan

Post-Harvest Debrief

- Survey Results (see hand out)
- Discussion:
 - Some had more, others had less fly damage
 - Tip: turn off irrigation when it's over 104 degrees... Flies will die if they can't drink
 - Fruit can recover, flies can't.

- Tip: remove or incorporate fruit debris – minimizes flies in old fruit
 - Selecting a harvest date – how do you do it as a small producer?
 - In part, this depends on readiness of the fruit
 - “Squeeze” test
 - Sending fruit in for testing
 - However, this must be done multiple times throughout the growing season to assist with evaluation
 - May not be worth the effort/cost for small producers...
 - It also relies on timing of all other pieces (when are you free, when is labor available, when a slot at the mill is available, weather, etc.)
 - Especially labor!
 - Can be hard to get crews exactly when you want them
 - Land available for management / potential lease opportunity
 - Land near the Crohare’s property is currently owned by absentee landowners (Rick Hanson?) and the trees are falling into poor condition
 - May be interested in leasing the land to someone for management of trees
 - Similar other opportunities exist in the area if there was a potential grove manager prepared to step in and manage.

Mechanical Harvesting

- Charles Crohare, Jr.
 - Canopy Contact Harvester
 - Supervision and skilled crews were important to ensuring the success of this harvesting method
 - Had access to both, as the crews and equipment were from Boundary Bend (as this is where the olives were going)
 - Started harvest in November, and did run in to some weather issues as tractors could not run on muddy clay soils on certain slopes
 - Will prune differently moving forward for this new form of harvesting
- Susan Ellsworth
 - Tree shaker and prune harvester
 - Single Boom w/ pincers tree shaker (borrowed from walnut operation)
 - Grabs the tree and vibrates olives off
 - 98% of fruit removed from tree
 - Very little damage to trunks
 - Prune harvester

- Tarps are rolled out onto the ground under tree. Once olives are shaken from the tree, they fall onto tarps which are pulled back toward the prune harvester and then dumped in
 - This is automated!
- Contract mechanical harvesting is being offered to small producers for a fee by Kenny Farrar using Agromelca harvester – contact UC Davis Olive Center for contact details.

Olive Oil Symposium Debrief

- Olive Oil Commission of California
 - New body established through a state regulation
 - Funded through a fee assessed to those producing over 5,000 gallons of olive oil in California
 - Standards apply ONLY to those producing over 5,000 gallons of oil. Currently only about 12-14 producers fall under the commissions standards
 - This is not a Trade Group, and thus no money from the fees assessed can be spent on Marketing
 - Meeting the standards is not optional for those who qualify
 - No funds used for advertising (i.e. not like the Almond Board)
 - Funds can (and will) be used for research
 - Investigating whether smaller producers can voluntarily submit to these standards
- “Seller’s Market”
 - Presenters spoke about the lack of olives on the market right now, encouraged those considering olive production to plant new, especially over nut crops
- Milling Experiment Presentation by Corto
- Research re: the OOC being conducted by UC Davis
- **Kathryn Tomajan** can send anyone presentations who would like them.

Upcoming Olive Workshops – Rachelle Hedges

- Pruning Workshop, 2/23
 - Announcement sent 2/1
 - Being held at Purple Orchid Resort and Spa Olive Orchard in Livermore
- Certification & Marketing Workshop
 - Requested feedback from the group re: a meeting relating to olive oil marketing and certifications
 - Specifically:
 - New regulations & who they apply to

- Different certs and marks
- Are certs important?
 - Value of chem and sensory testing
 - Which markets care
- Targeted Marketing – effectively reaching the right markets for you
- Feedback:
 - Certifications are not of interest to most producers in the group
 - More interested in Marketing and Sales channels for SMALL producers
 - Who wants to buy small batch oil?
 - What are the best ways to retail / wholesale?
 - Price points
 - Consumer perceptions & how consumers differentiate and pick boutique olive oils
- Outcome:
 - Will look into planning a workshop that is much more focused on marketing and sales channels for small batch producers

POST-HARVEST SURVEY RESULTS

Survey results were collected from a small pool of respondents and are not statistically significant.



Most respondents harvested between **100-400 trees**.

Some harvested over 10,000 trees!



Nearly all respondents stored their oil in **temperature controlled rooms** following harvest.

Stainless steel tanks were also commonly reported.

One producer used barrels for storage!



Frantoio was the most popular varietal harvested, followed closely by Leccino and Pendolino.

Some of the other varieties listed: Maurino, Moraiolo, Arbequina, Picholine, Lucca, Mission, Taggiasca, and Koroneiki



Most producers harvested between **1-5 tons** of olives!

Some harvested just a *bit* more... 290 tons!



Hand picking into bins / buckets was the most common harvest method.

Multiple producers also used nets and poles, and harvest shakers.



Yields varied from producer to producer, ranging from just under 50 gallons to 2,000 gallons, and everywhere in between!



Most producers reported **fly damage** and **weather** as their two biggest challenges.

Other issues included labor difficulties, new methods and machinery, and fruit size.



Producers **split 50/50 for off-site vs. onsite milling**.

Milling equipment reported included an Enrossi Hammer mill, a 2.5 Phase Rapanelli Press, and an Alfa Laval 3 Phase Mill

From the Producers:

"We were pretty pleased with the Flex harvest tool we used for the first time. May buy an additional one or two for this year's harvest."

"First attempt at mechanical harvesting using a prune harvester. It worked quite well for us, need to do some cost benefit analysis for the future."

"Leccino wasn't ready as early this year as in past years, and moraiolo came off much easier than previously - ie. differential ripening required adjustment in harvest schedule."