HISTORY OF THE OLIVE

The olive is native to Asia Minor and spread from Iran, Syria and Palestine to the rest of the Mediterranean basin 6,000 years ago. It is among the oldest known cultivated trees in the world - being grown before the written language was invented. The Phoenicians spread the olive to the Mediterranean shores of Africa and Southern Europe. Olives have been found in Egyptian tombs from 2,000 years BC. The olive culture was spread to the early Greeks then Romans. As the Romans extended their domain they brought the olive with them.

MYTHOLOGY

Athens is named for the Goddess Athena who brought the olive to the Greeks as a gift. Zeus had promised to give Attica to the god or goddess who made the most useful invention. Athena’s gift of the olive, useful for light, heat, food, medicine and perfume was picked as a more peaceful invention than Poseidon’s horse - touted as a rapid and powerful instrument of war. Athena planted the original olive tree on a rocky hill that we know today as the Acropolis. Today the olive tree that grows there today is said to have come from the original roots. Olives subsequently spread throughout Syria and Palestine to the rest of the Mediterranean basin 6,000 years ago.

Northland, like the rest of New Zealand, has a relatively young olive industry but has a history with olives dating back to 1835 when Charles Darwin mentioned in a letter he wrote about observing olives planted at Waimate North. There are olive trees in the grounds of Waitangi Treaty House which could well date back to around the 1840’s. Other known sites of early plantings include Pouto Point, Whangape, the Hokianga, Kerikeri, Snells Beach, Omaha Valley and Whangarei.

OLIVETI TASTING TRAIL

Use the map to find Oliveti members’ groves on our Olive Oil Tasting Trail. Contact the growers for information about visiting times, market days and venues. Visit their olive groves and experience the unique micro-climates that olives grow in. You will be welcome to sample premium oils and oil related products all of which will be available for purchase.

EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Everywhere in the world, by definition, extra virgin olive oil must be an entirely natural product. It is the oil obtained from olives that have been processed mechanically. Nothing may be added and neither heat nor chemicals may be used at any stage of the process. These are the criteria for Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

OLIVE OIL - AROMA AND FLAVOUR

Tasting Extra Virgin Olive Oils

We use both our nose and mouth when tasting. Firstly, the aroma (smell) is assessed, followed by the flavour, to evaluate the overall intensity and persistence. Our noses can tell us a great deal about oils. Fresh oils will usually have a more intense smell than those that are ageing and tiring. The smell should be predominantly of olive fruitiness, very pleasant and enticing. It may also be associated with other familiar smells, for example other fruits (apples, tropical fruits), grass, salad leaves, vegetables, herbs and fresh nuts.

There is no mention of colour, this is because when tasting, colour is not an indicator of quality, oil with an intense green colour will not necessarily taste better or rate more highly than a golden oil. For this reason, sensory panels and competition judges taste the oils in blue glasses so that all oils will look the same.
Most Important - please phone before calling on most olive groves and to clarify which markets they attend and on what days. Most olive presses in this area operate only from April 1st to end May.

Oruaiti Olive Estate - 2884B SH10, Mangonui RD1, 0494. Ph: 021 032 9744 - Must phone first. info@oruaiti-estate.nz www.oruaiti-estate.nz

Puketi Olive Farm - 207B Pungaere Rd, Kerikeri 0295. Ph: (09) 401 6104 Mb: 021 174 0134 ta_peter@hotmail.com

Evergreen Olive Press - at THE OLD PACKHOUSE MARKET - 505 Kerikeri Rd. Every Saturday 8am - 1.30pm. Ph: 021 119 1634 (or weekdays (09) 946 6215 for the grove) Must phone first. www.evergreenolives.co.nz

Olive Oil Group - 24C Riddell Rd, Kerikeri 0230. Mb: 021 407 076 or Ph: (09) 407 1023 Must phone first. sales@thebaygourmet.co.nz www.thebaygourmet.co.nz

Pataua Olive Grove - 28 Mahanga Rd, Pataua South. Ph: (09) 436 2365 Mb: 027 408 3944 - Must phone first.

Olives On The Hill - 435 King Rd, Mangawhai Heads. Ph: (09) 945 0890 Must phone first. www.olivesonthehill.co.nz

Duck Creek Road Olive Oil - 53 Duck Creek Rd, RD2 Warkworth. Mb: 021 269 1238 Ph: (09) 422 3634 www.duckcreekoliveoil.co.nz

Olives On Porter - 274 Porter Rd, Paparoa. Ph: 021 269 9991 banaldin@xtra.co.nz Also at Birkenhead Artisan Market 3rd Saturday of month 9 - 1pm.

Arapiak Olive Grove - 241D Heatley Rd, Whakapirau. Mb: 021 959 203 or Ph: (09) 431 8909 - Must phone first. info@arapiak.co.nz

Estuary Olives - 297 Heatley Rd, Whakapirau. Mb: 027 288 0462 wpy@xtra.co.nz Also at Maungaturoto Market 3.30pm-6pm 1st Friday of the month.

River Estate - 150 Wades Rd, Whitford. Ph: (09) 530 9180 Mb: 021 139 0103 www.riverestate.co.nz

LA CIGALE FRENCH MARKET
St Georges Bay Rd, Parnell Auckland City every Saturday 8.00 - 1pm.

CLEVEDON FARMERS MARKET
Clevedon A&P Showgrounds every Sunday 8.30 - 1pm.