



Pickled & Pressed Spring 2007

The flowers have been and gone for most of us so it's now watching and waiting time to see what fruit has set and 'dream on' of next year's harvest. We have all had some rain, although the run off into the dams has not been good as our poor parched pastures are still thirsty and are still soaking up any moisture. BOM is still talking about La Nina conditions continuing for the next 3 months so more rain should be coming our way – let's hope so.

We had a great day out at Gooramadda Olives on 1st December. Jos and his wife Cathy made us very welcome and spent their time showing us around the grove, their processing plant and shop. Andrew has written a summary of what we learnt.

Iain Towers has passed on his treasury duties to Kent Garland and has taken on the Vice President's mantle. Thank you to Iain for all his hard work looking after our finances.

Next year's Seminars - Rob Mitchell will shortly be sending out a questionnaire asking you what topics you would like us to cover next year. Please take the time to complete it on line and return it to him so that we can get to work on sorting out a programme and speakers.

Thank you to those who have contributed to this edition – much appreciated by me and other Members.

Irene Laing

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President's Report

Dear GSOGA Members

We are nearing Christmas and the end of the year, and it is time for a bit of stock-taking.

Well, for Irene and myself, the level of morale has gone up several notches recently. We have had quite a lot of rain at Marraweeny - to the point where the soil is genuinely damp, and the root of a Paterson's curse plant will pull out without breaking. And the fruit set looks pretty good, at least for the Frantoio; even our perverse Manzanillo may have some fruit; they have been through the stage where the fruit stems look completely bare - as though the flowers had been torn off - and now the little fruit are appearing like magic out of nothing.



Three months ago we were cursing because the wallabies - with behaviour changed by drought - were grazing down our young trees so they were just standing still. We got so frustrated that we went out and bought plastic mesh 1.2m wide to make guards for 200 trees. And the effect has been dramatic; the trees are now making strong growth in the warmth after the rain.

And, most important, we seem to have got through November without the frosts which did so much damage last year.

And thinking about things outside the grove, fifteen of us went on a bus trip up to Gooramadda Olives - the grove, processing operation and shop run by Jos and Kathy Weemaes. If you did not come on the bus, I really recommend going to see their operation. It is a very professional demonstration of how to build a good business around a small grove - by focussing on quality and selling direct to the final customer.

The GSOGA Committee is working on next year's program, but in the meantime we wish you and your family a really Happy Christmas and a Fruitful New Year.

Andrew Laing

Meet your new treasurer – Kent Garland



After several years of conscientious service to the Association, Iain Towers has passed on the treasurer's responsibilities.

My wife, Jan, and I have a small grove on the Mansfield – Euroa Road, about half way between Merton and Gooram. The grove has mostly Frantoio and Leccino cultivars and our oil is bottled and sold under the Hillcrest Estate label.

Before retiring from the hectic city life, I was involved in sales and the application of industrial control systems and pipeline products. My experience running a small business has enabled me to take on the Treasurer's tasks with some confidence, but don't be surprised if you hear me yelling for help to solve the more complex book-keeping functions.

Bus trip to Gooramadda Olives – 1st December

Here is a quick record of what we learnt from Jos at Gooramadda Olives; I have written it as a record for us - but then thought you might be interested. The most interesting bits to me were around the choice of processing machinery and the processing of table fruit. Suggest it is well worth visiting Jos and his wife Cathy and taking a tour. He runs the most professional small-scale operation we have seen. After seeing Jos's setup, I would think seriously about a press rather than a centrifuge, if I were looking to process for oil.

> Context:

Small grove - around 1000 trees - focus on maximising the margin and selling direct to the customer; mix of several varieties - Hardy's Mammoth, Kalamata, Manzanillo; prepared to buy in if necessary from

a few groves he has 'checked out' to maintain sales volumes; sells high quality oil (up to \$100 a litre from Hardy's Mammoth) and table olives

> Trees:

General impression 'look good, but no extraordinary magic'. Had used granular fertilizer. Jos has had some problems with some trees. He initially believed their lack of vigour and yield was stock or root related but after a third tissue analysis found problems due to nutrient deficiencies especially boron. He has now moved to foliar feeding. Applies irrigation via sprinklers at 75 to 100 litres per 5 days. Can control every sprinkler line, so can selectively water each olive variety throughout his groves, to cater for the different requirements for oil and table fruit production.

> Picking:

All trees are hand picked - initially using electric rotating zigzag combs, and then cleaned up by a (paid and 'mature') team with hand rakes

> Processing for Oil:

Kit consists of:

- Proper processing building - smooth epoxy floor; vermin proof, insulated and well lit with plenty of working space.
- Manual de-leafing screen
- Lifting auger with water wash
- Hammer mill
- Malaxer
- 100 litre cylindrical press basket using SS mesh separators at no more than 20 mm intervals between layers of the pulp
- Hydraulic piston press capable of exerting (from memory) 150 bar of pulp in basket
- Collector tray with high skirt to catch any sideways 'squirt' from basket
- 6 x 20 litre vertical settling tanks
- Displacing water tank to 'float' settled oil out of settling tanks into storage
- Storage tanks with floating lids and pneumatic lid seals

Comments:

- This is an Italian kit; it is 3-phase, but nothing is very big; might be possible to run it on single phase
- All numbers are guesses and approximate; may be on the small side
- The chips of pip have a vital role in acting as filter support in the meshes of the separators - to avoid the pulp being 'squeezed and squirted' out sideways
- When Jos bought the press the oil quality from this process was clearly superior to the 'modern' centrifuge process; his comment was that 'centrifuge is now OK' - but I wonder whether there is still an edge, given that he is still winning prizes
- The settling process for pressed oil is very quick - say 6 hours - compared with (say) six weeks or the use of filtration for centrifuged oil
- My impression is that an unskilled person would be likely to get good results more quickly from a press than a centrifuge.
- General sense of a 'calm, collected' process with no mess and good control of the movement of olives and oil
- The floating lid tanks avoid lots of uncertainty; no complexity and no need for nitrogen



> Processing for Table Olives:

- 100 litre vertical tubs with screw-on lids
- Barrel-handler, capable of lifting and transporting and also turning tub to horizontal
- Tubs are kept full to overflowing - with mat on top to ensure fruit is submerged
- Trays underneath tubs to collect any spills
- Rubber seal rings are removed from lids, so that tubs vent up the screw threads
- Lids have depressed centres - so that no air is trapped under lid
- Start with 8% (by mass) salt solution; reduce PH to 5 by adding vinegar; salt + low PH maintain safety
- Fermentation process maintains acidity; must avoid mould growth which raises PH
- Add 2% salt per week for four weeks to maintain salinity at minimum 7%
- Check with salinity meter - based on conductivity
- Clean scum off weekly
- Leave for a year to mature; critical test is for reduction of bitterness
- Pay for disposal of used brine
- Bottle using boiling fresh brine - for green olives (5%???)
- Bottle using boiling fermentation brine - for black olives - to emphasise blackness
- Exposing finished black olives to air before adding brine darkens them
- Check all olives visually for quality before bottling; any not perfect go for tapenade
- Cover bottled olives in jar with good quality canola; olive oil goes cloudy or waxy in the fridge; the oil excludes oxygen.

Comments:

- No changes of water - so waste water disposal is limited
- Lots of things going on in parallel - bitter compounds into solution, fermentation, salt into olives; sounds as tho' the fermentation also 'converts' some of the bitter compounds
- to maintain driving force, even though water has not been changed.
- Quicker process if temperature is higher
- This is all about discipline and sticking to the process
- Needs a salinity meter



Brief Report from Gang Gang in Mansfield – Anthony Brown



The big news for us has been the exception rainfall during November when 138mm fell – the highest total of any month since 1993. We have now nearly doubled all of last years rain for the district with a month to go!

Flower set has been impressive on all trees despite the continued presence of black scale on approximately 10% of the grove. The olive lace bug problem that we have had for nearly 3 years has disappeared and the trees affected have completely recovered.

With a la Nina climatic event in full

swing we're looking forward to continued average or above average rainfall until at least the end of autumn. And with what seems to be little prospect remaining for frost we're looking forward to a record fruit set over the coming weeks.

Anthony Brown

We have suffered from Olive Lace bug and so when I received this from Anthony I wrote to him and he came back with this -

Hi Anthony

How do you think you managed to get rid of the dreaded Olive Lace bug as it's certainly been and still is a problem for us especially on our less vigorous Manzanilla and Picual?

We keep hoping that as the trees become more healthy and vigorous that they will become more resistant to pests and diseases. We have used Py-Bo and white oil.

Any advice that I can pass on to members on how you think you got rid of your Olive Lace bug will be really appreciated. We are organic so are restricted in what we can use - Green Lacewings did not work for us.

'Well we used Hybrid Ag's organic "Bug Bane" solution with limited success. I think in the end it was the overall good health of the trees that got rid of them but the scale are proving more difficult. Also I reckon the frosts helped in 2006 when we had 45 in a row. I think the lace bug thrive on younger trees – ours are now 12 so hopefully that will be the end of them'.



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Journey to olive growing - Jill Mallamaci Myrtlevale Olives Strathbogie

Having been brought up on chops and 3 veg, and Sunday roast my introduction to olives came when I married & went to live in a small town in Calabria, in Southern Italy. The trees were very old, uncared for & grew in the family gardens outside the town. They often had worms in them so I was a bit reluctant to take a bite. The oil for everyday use was dark, strong & burnt your throat until you became accustomed to it. Of course finer oil was also used. The residue was used to make soap.

My story begins late Oct. '06 when after searching for some time for "a little piece of country". I came across Stuart Andrew's property in Strathbogie, fell in love with it and became the proud owner of 25 acres in the beautiful Strathbogie Ranges. Having always thought I'd end up in Gippsland growing lavender as old ladies do. here I was, 2 spring fed dams, a shed, complete with an army of redbacks, the envy of all who survey AND 10 acres of Olive trees - 975 of them - both table & oil.

Then came the big panic. No farm or business plan, no knowledge, no equipment, only a girlie hatchback Barina & lots of enthusiasm. With that I rang Stuart who reassured me "Don't worry" he says "You can borrow my equipment & everyone will help you". How right he was! After getting my thoughts together I joined GSOGA and enrolled in an Olive Growing course. The course was an evening one so I drove to the campus during the day to get my bearings, collected my student ID. and parking sticker to find out it was all ONLINE. Another problem no computer & little computer skills. My family came to the rescue there.

Students were required to send info about their properties for a field day and mine was chosen. I was so excited as I knew I'd learn more that day than from books. Not only had I met a new group of friends but the tutor informed me the table olives needed picking - this was May 5th. By the 7th La Famiglia from Shepparton and friends gathered and we picked 80-90 kg of table olives. The family took all they could use and we sold approx. 50 kg @ \$2.50 per kg. - my first income! Many trees hadn't fruited due to frosts last Nov. I don't know? 25th - 27th of May was decided on for the oil olives. Once again the troops rallied, E.V. Olives were booked for the processing and we started the hand picking. Expecting to harvest approx a tonne, minus what those peskie cockies had feasted on. We picked 1 tonne 275 kg but had to leave 1½ rows behind as we'd run out of time and willing hands. Lots of frivolity BBQ and a tarantella or two later we have 220L. of beautiful fresh & fruity oil. 18-19% oil content, all <1 percentage of fatty acids.

So ends our 1st. harvest and those white gatecrashers have returned to continue to party on and demolish the remainder of the crop. Next year we'll be more prepared.

A few people to thank for their support, advice and loan of equipment: Ron & Joan Turner, Iain & Allana Towers, Stuart Andrew who kept the irrigation under control until we took over in Feb. He kindly wrote the history of the grove for me and answers questions for my assignments. My partner Paul who wasn't terribly enthusiastic about the latest venture from this crazy woman, but enjoyed the harvest, & has also braved the elements of sleepovers in the shed. Those of you who have been there, done that, will appreciate that. My children who said "Go for it Mum" and lastly my Alpaca neighbours who keep me up to date with pasture maintenance & management, namely that beautiful thick carpet flourishing over the grove and paddocks. Yes, Cape Weed...

Gutsy thing to take on people have said, I think of it as a dream fulfilled, the excitement, the satisfaction, that first harvest and the planting of the last tree is never to be forgotten is it! A challenge, a learning experience, who knows what the future will bring, I know it can only be good.

PS. "To all those people who's brains I've picked over the past few months for answers for my assignments. All work completed and I think we've passed... THANK YOU!"

PPS "I might continue on with my journey to Olive growing , next chapter, next year. Fertilizing 10 acres with a barrow & buckets.....On the brighter side it rained while & after I'd spread it.

Organic Corner - Liquid fertilizer recipe – Irene Laing

I find it very difficult to make compost during the summer as the heap gets too dry. This is a good, quick way to have a year round supply of free, organically approved, liquid fertiliser and get rid of weeds you don't want like Paterson's Curse or Cape Weed and the best bit is that the plants and trees thrive on it.

Warning: As this can be a smelly process, keep it away from your house and neighbours (husband and visitors!!!).

1. Fill one third of a large container with a mixture of weeds, compost, seaweed, manure and herbs, then fill with water and put on a loose fitting lid and leave, stirring every few days.
2. After four weeks, any remaining solids can go onto the compost heap. Leave the liquid for a further two weeks to allow fermenting to complete.
3. Once offensive odours have ceased, the liquid fertiliser can be stored in sealed containers.

Dilute: 100 mL per litre of water.

Stand back and watch your veggies and trees grow – ours love it!

Olive plan virgin on brilliant by David McKenzie - Weekly Times, 19th Sept 2007

The olive industry is launching a strategy to urge Australians to buy local produce in anticipation of a major production boom. A key element will be a marketing campaign emphasising the health and quality attributes of Australian extra virgin olive oil. This will be backed by a new industry code of practice and will help ensure consistently high quality in production.

We are making this effort in anticipation of rapidly increasing production of high-quality olive oil from Australia," Australian Olive Association president Paul Miller said.

Unveiling the new strategy last week in Canberra, Mr Miller said olive oil production was forecast to more than treble in the next five to seven years – from 9,500 tonnes a year to about 30,000 tonnes – as currently plantings come on line.

This would take local production close to present levels of local consumption of about 32,000 tonnes a year, most of which is imported".

The heart of the proposed marketing campaign is a re-branding of local olive oil under the generic name Australian Extra Virgin set around a triangular logo.

Bottle labelling and tags will reflect the new look, while several new catch phrases will be used with the logo.

These include ‘Brilliant for your health and happiness’ “So healthy you can enjoy it more”, Your body needs an oil change too” and No additives, just pluses”.

Taking aim at imported produce is: “How do you like your extra virgin – local or imported?”

Also last week, Federal Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran announced a federal grant of £385,000 to help implement the industry’s new code of practice. “The money would also help to restructure the AOA which was essential to provide the leadership for the industry to keep expanding into export markets”.

Exports have been rising rapidly in recent years, especially to the US, with just under half our local production being sold into high-quality markets over the past three years.

“America’s kitchens are now using a quarter of Australia’s annual olive oil production, that’s two million litres a year,” Mr McGauran said.