

MEDIA RELEASE

September 2009

Top drops from Margaret River

Margaret River is best known for its wine production but it can also boast of award-winning olive oils.

Alexandra Bridge Olives of Margaret River was this week named **Best WA Oil of the Show** and **Best Oil of the Show** at the Perth Royal Extra Virgin Olive Oil Competition, which was judged in August.

Of the seven gold medals awarded, six went to WA producers – Alexandra Bridge, Jackson Grove (Margaret River), Pepper Tree Grove (York), Hampton Estate (Gidgegannup), Petra Olive Oil Estate (Dunsborough) and Olio Bello (Cowaramup). The remaining gold went to Victoria.

There were 90 entrants and more than 170 entries across six classes at the ninth annual Perth Royal Extra Virgin Olive Oil Competition, with 24.4 per cent of entries awarded a gold or silver award.

Chairman of judges Richard Gawel said the relatively large number of medals awarded was testament to the overall high standard of entries.

“The gold medal oils comprised an outstanding set of diverse oils,” he said. “No single variety dominated. In fact, the gold medal oils were made from a plethora of varieties.”

Flavoured oils were exhibited for the first time this year. Mr Gawel said although they were not technically extra virgin, they had become increasingly popular with consumers probably because of their convenience.

“It is pleasing that OlivesWA has acknowledged this fact and included them amongst their extra virgin ‘cousins’,” he said.

“Producing high quality flavoured oils is by no means an easy task.”

Mr Gawel said the best flavoured oils displayed good levels of natural flavours and were considered by the judges to have a potentially wide variety of uses.

The Best Flavoured Oil of the Show was a chilli flavoured oil from Preston Valley Grove in Donnybrook.

The Best Boutique Oil of the Show was from Pepper Tree Grove, in York.

Three silver and nine bronze medals were also awarded this week in the separate OlivesWA 2009 Table Olives Competition.

Eagle Vale Olives in Chapman Valley was named **Best WA Olive for 2009** with a Queen Spain variety and Coolana Olives in Queensland was named **Best of Show 2009** for a Kalamata variety.

Olives were judged in July by a panel trained and led by Professor Stan Kailis in seven classes – Kalamata, Green Spanish Style (lye treated), Green Sicilian Style (brine treated), Flavoured or Spiced, Salt Dried or Dehydrated and Olive Pastes and Tapenades.

Organisers of the competition say there is demand from retailers and consumers for more local table olives and encourage more local growers to enter their olives in next year's competition as a means of benchmarking their olives against their peers.

Western Australia's olive industry has grown markedly in the last decade with an estimated 2.5 million trees covering around 6,000 hectares from Chapman Valley near Northampton to Albany.

The majority of production is for olive oil; exports of olive oil were \$4.0 million in 2007/08 (22 per cent of Australian exports).

The 2009 season harvest is estimated to have been the biggest so far due to being an 'on-year' - most trees had a heavy crop and production began from some of the more recent plantings. It is estimated the crop could be well above last year's estimated level of 11,760 tonnes, possibly around 15, 000 tonnes if harvesting is completed on all groves. This would produce around 2.8 to 3 million litres of oil depending on extraction rates.

Award winning olive oils will be on display at the 2009 Smoke Free Perth Royal Show at the IGA Fresh from WA Pavilion.

The Smoke Free Perth Royal Show is on from 26th September to 3rd October.

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The Smoke Free Perth Royal Show is presented by The Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia



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