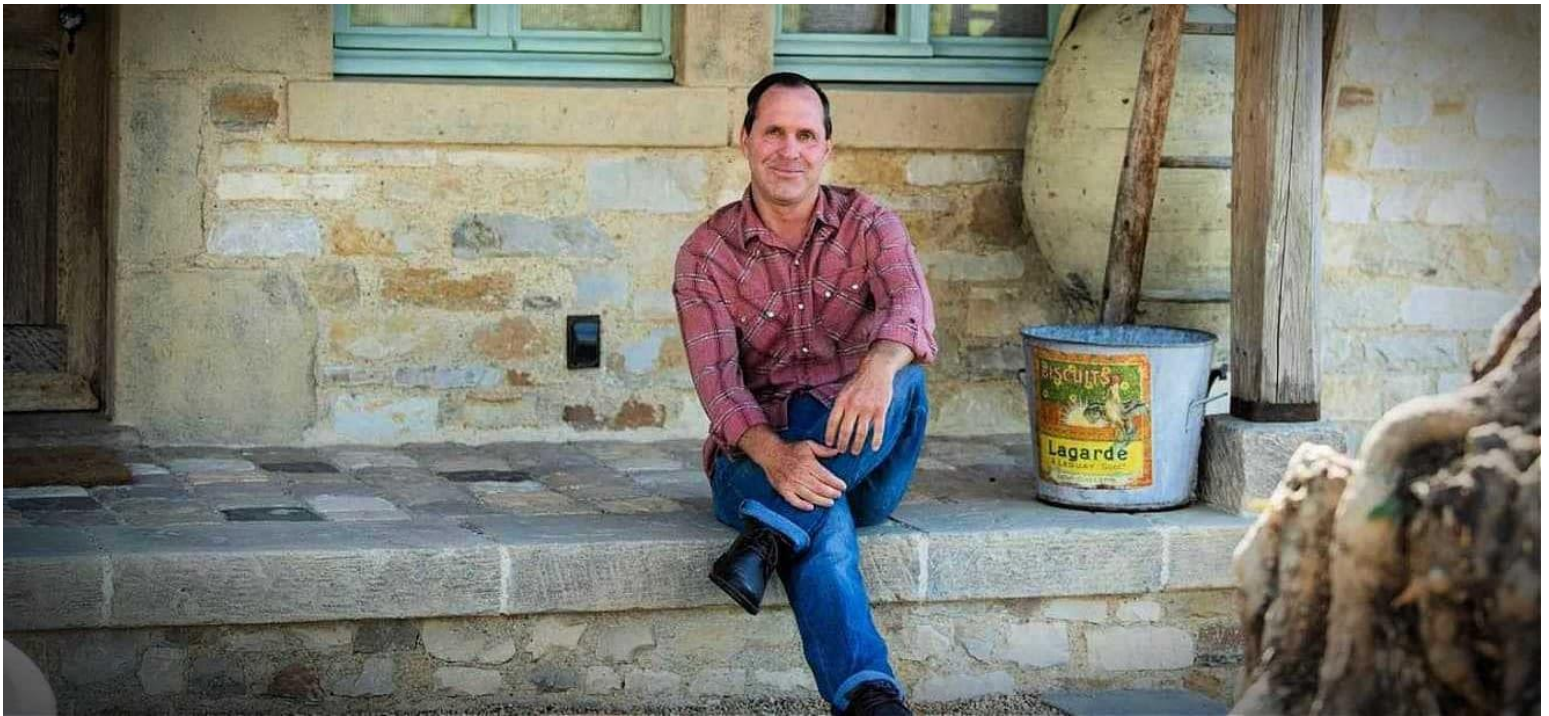


Olive Oil Times

Sustainable, Organic Production Helps One California Producer Standout

oliveoiltimes.com/world/sustainable-organic-production-helps-one-california-producer-standout/94991

June 10, 2021



Gold Ridge Organic Farms is among the California producers leading the way in sustainable and organic olive oil production methods, despite the dominance of imports in the North American market.

At the 2021 NYIOOC World Olive Oil Competition, the Northern California producer earned three Gold Awards and a Silver Award for all four of its entries.

"I was inspired by a great love affair with the grace and elegance of the olive tree. I believe it is the most beautiful of all crops to grow."- Brooke Hazen, owner, Gold Ridge Organic Farms

"It felt truly amazing [to receive these awards]," owner Brooke Hazen told Olive Oil Times. "We are so honored and grateful to receive such special appreciation for all of the hard work, time, dedication and determination that went into producing such exceptional olive oils."

“Our harvest was excellent last year,” he added. “I was able to obtain 4,500 gallons for my four signature blends from my groves in Sebastopol.”

For Hazen, these awards further validate the authenticity of his brand and the hard work it takes to achieve a quality standard that is not easy to imitate.

Gold Ridge Organic Farms is located in northern California’s West Sonoma County. Sitting approximately 80 kilometers north of San Francisco, the city of Sebastopol is a near-perfect region for olive cultivation due to the optimal soil and ideal climate.

“Our farm sits 10 miles (16 kilometers) inland from the beautiful Sonoma Coast and the Pacific Ocean,” Hazen said. “The proximity to the ocean influences our climate and our soils and makes our oils unique and lively. Our growing season is long and cool, which contributes to the high polyphenol levels in our oils.”

Growing olives organically is a crucial component of Hazen’s vision. He believes that organic cultivation yields olives that are both healthier and more flavorful. He added that his organic farming practices help create olive oils rich in flavor, taste and antioxidants.

“I was inspired by a great love affair with the grace and elegance of the olive tree. I believe it is the most beautiful of all crops to grow,” Hazen said. “It started with planting and growing olive trees and naturally expanded into pressing the olives into olive oil.”

“Olives are planted once in their lifetime,” he added. “They are known as the ‘Grandparent Tree’ because they live for many generations... The trees can live for millennia.”

In the cool coastal environment of Sebastopol, Hazen usually begins harvesting his olives in mid-November and continues until Christmas.

However, even before the harvest begins, Hazen spends plenty of time among his trees. Ensuring they receive plenty of water, nutrients and pruning improves the quality of the fruit.



After harvesting, the olives are processed at an organic mill, which was built in 2001. Hazen installed an Italian Rapanelli press, which processes the olives within a few hours after harvesting.

Hazen and his team then craft their four carefully selected blends of Italian, French and Spanish varieties, of which the producers take great pride.

“Our four olive oil blends are also unique,” he said. Gold Ridge Organic Farms earned two Gold Awards for olive oils blended from Italian varieties.



The Tuscan Blend is crafted from mostly Frantoio and Leccino olives, with a small amount of Maurino and Pendolino cultivars as well. Meanwhile, the Minerva Blend is made from Minerva, Frantoio and Maurino olives with a touch of Cerasoula and Ladoelia.

Hazen and his team also earned a Gold Award for a medium Piccholine blend, which contains Aglandau, Bouteillian, Solonenque, Grossane and Cayon olives. The producers won a Silver Award for a medium Arbequina blend, comprising Empeltre, Leccin de Seville, Hojiblanca, Picual and Manzanilla olives.

Certification is an important part of this process, and all of the company’s olive oils are certified organic by California Certified Organic Farmers and *extra virgin* by the California Olive Oil Council.

Hazen said his products stand apart from competitors as a result of a methodical production process, uniquely crafted blends and quality certifications.

Despite all the work that Hazen and his team put into each harvest, the producer sees the California olive oil sector as being prone to market trends and consumer behavior like any other industry.

According to Hazen, the availability of cheap and low-quality imported olive oils is the biggest challenge faced by the industry.

“Cheap imported oils have flooded the market, driven down prices and confused the consumers,” he said. “Most consumers have no idea what healthy fresh olive oil actually should taste and look like.”

“The Californian olive oil industry has been making attempts to change this through legal channels and lobbying,” he added.

However, Hazen said his awards from the NYIOOC World Olive Oil Competition go a long way in demonstrating to consumers what differentiates high-quality extra virgin olive oil from the rest of the pack.

“Our team is grateful for the recognition of quality,” Hazen concluded. “Farming is a difficult journey with many long days invested into raising the fruit. So, the acknowledgment feels good.”