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Humble Roots: Sebastopol's Gold Ridge Organic Farms

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By Dana Rebmann

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Aerial view of Gold Ridge Organic Farms.
Courtesy of Gold Ridge Organic Farms

“It was a total risk,” says Brooke Hazen. In 2000, only a handful of years after graduating from college, the organic farmer began transforming an 88-acre cattle ranch in Sebastopol into Gold Ridge Organic Farms.

“In the beginning, I didn’t even know if olives would do well here,” he says.

The risk paid off. Today, 13,000 olive trees—21 varieties spread across some 70 acres—thrive in the beautiful stretch of west Sonoma County. All of Gold Ridge Organic Farms’s olive oils are milled on-site within hours of harvest (typically mid-November through mid-December) for maximum freshness, flavor, and medicinal quality. High in antioxidants, the farm’s award-winning lineup ranges from estate-grown extra virgin organic olive oils to olive oils co-milled with Meyer lemon and mandarin-kumquat fruit grown on the property.

Farming plays a large role in Hazen’s success, but he is quick to credit the land’s proximity to the Pacific Ocean. The coastal fog and cooler temperatures that produce ideal growing conditions for the region’s renowned pinot noir wine grapes also create the perfect environment for cultivating olives.



Brooke Hazen
Dawn Heumann



Fresh-picked apples from the farm.
Courtesy of Gold Ridge Organic Farms

“The flavors, the textures, and the colors—all those are slowly allowed to develop over a long period of time,” says Hazen.

But it’s not just about olives. Hazen also tends to more than 12,000 apple trees, growing about 75 heirloom varieties, such as Hoople’s Antique Gold and Red Gravenstein, along with well-known favorites including Honeycrisp and Fuji. Apple harvest typically kicks off in late July and runs well into fall.

“I do tree-ripe harvest, which is rare commercially,” says Hazen. “I wait until it’s just peak-ready, and we get it straight to market right away.”



Arbequina blend extra virgin olive oil
Suzanne Becker

Then there's the olive oil soap and apple cider syrup, and don't forget the dark chocolate bar with Meyer lemon olive oil made in collaboration with nearby Volo Chocolate. In just two decades, Hazen's small organic farm has blossomed into a foodie paradise.

Gold Ridge Organic Farms offers private olive oil tastings and farm tours by appointment throughout the year, and beginning in August, the farm will host heirloom apple tastings at its Apple Barn. goldridgeorganicfarms.com.