

# Forbes

## This Sonoma County Tasting Experience Will Blow Your Mind

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[Leslie Kelly](#)

Guess what? We're not even talking about wine. Let's take a trip to the gorgeous Gold Ridge Organic Farms near Sebastopol.



Gold Ridge Organic Farms in Sonoma County offers tastings of olive oil produced on the property.

Leslie Kelly

## Ag roots run deep

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Sure, Sonoma is best known for its **world-class wines**, but this vast county is home to all sorts of farms and ranches. There's even a cheese trail map.

While rolling through the region, I recently stopped at Gold Ridge Organic Farms for an olive oil tasting. That's right. This beautiful property is home to acres of olive trees, as well as apple orchards. Quite an intriguing combo, but one that founder Brooke Hazen was sure would work when he settled in the area in 2001.

### PROMOTED

He was convinced that the sandy loam soils on rolling hills and coastal breezes would offer provide prime conditions for farming. He planted 70 acres of olives, 16 acres of heirloom apples, a variety of citrus fruits, and English lavender.

More than 20 years later, his vision is bearing fruit in the most delicious way. And visitors are invited to taste exactly what that kind of thoughtful stewardship of the land means.



Olives are harvested in the late fall at Gold Ridge Organic Farms in Sonoma County. Shortly after ...

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## Are we in Italy?

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Shortly after arriving at Gold Ridge Organic Farms, our group is invited to take a walk among the trees producing various types of olives including Arbequina and Picholine.

The fruit is plucked from the trees during late fall. The olives land on cloth tarps arranged under the trees and are then loaded into bins, where leaves are removed by hand-operated blowers.

Small bins are loaded into larger bins, similar to traditional grape harvests that have already taken place at nearby vineyards. Shortly after harvest, those olives are gently milled using a state-of-the-art press to create deeply flavored olive oils that would be right at home in Tuscany.



Olives harvested at Gold Ridge Organic Farms in Sonoma County are pressed into award-winning oils. ...

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## Tasting those award-winning oils

After a tour, visitors are invited to take a seat and taste through the lineup of olive oils. The setup is a lot like a wine tasting.

There are palate-cleansing crackers and instructions on how to swirl a glass to catch the best possible “nose” on the golden elixir in the glass. A sheet describing each of the oils offers descriptions on what you might experience when sipping.



Gold Ridge Organic Farms in Sonoma County offers a special tasting of its lineup of award-winning ...  
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For instance, the Tuscan blend “is bright and shows aromas of freshly cut grass and Herbes de Provence. Flavors of green apple and pine nut with a hint of green almond.” It’s medium-bodied and is a favorite kitchen staple.

After trying each, tasters are invited to play chef by adding a bit of cider vinegar or syrup to create a different flavor profile. The exercise might be a game changer the next time you’re tasked with making the salad dressing.

With advance notice, the tasting can also include a selection of Sonoma County-crafted cheese, an assortment that included an ultra-rich Brie style from the exceptional Cowgirl Creamery.

What an outstanding experience!



Gold Ridge Organic Farms offers cheese tastings with advance reservations. The assortment focuses on ...  
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## Before you go...

Advance reservations are required for tastings and visits. [Book through Tock.](#)