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Olio Nuovo: Gold Ridge Organic Farms

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November 22, 2023



Photo by Flying House

Each year, olive oil lovers worldwide eagerly await that special first taste of *olio nuovo*, or new olive oil, from the new harvest.

What's so special about *olio nuovo*?

Immediately after harvest, new oils are at their absolute freshest, spiciest, highest polyphenol levels and even more brilliantly hued. The sediments in *olio nuovo*—fresh from the press—haven't yet had the time to settle, nor the flavors to mellow in the bottle.

There is just a short window during which these oils can be tasted and enjoyed at their most potent, raw and unfiltered finest. This window is within a couple to a few months of harvest—depending on several factors, including the climate in the region where the olives are harvested and how an oil is stored after being pressed/before being bottled.

Wellness enthusiasts prize *olio nuovo* for its health benefits, as antioxidants and polyphenols are highest in olive oils immediately after harvest.

In Italy, *olio nuovo* is revered for its potency and is poured liberally on simple dishes and foods to highlight its flavor and character best. The release of the harvest's first new oils is also considered to signal late fall and the many events surrounding the harvest in agriculturally focused regions.

But North Bay olive oil lovers don't need to travel to Italy to taste stunningly fresh, quality *olio nuovo* made from organic olives grown in their own backyard. They only need to travel the short distance to Sebastopol in west Sonoma County, where Gold Ridge Organic Farms releases their much-awaited *olio nuovo* blends every fall between mid to late November and early to late December.

Due to the cooler temperatures in the hills of west Sonoma County, harvest occurs later in the year than in warmer climate areas such as Tuscany or California's Central Valley. This means that Gold Ridge Organic Farms' *olio nuovo* release is usually during the holiday season.

Upcoming Events

The farm is opening its gates for the olive harvest season in November and December on Fridays and Saturdays. On two upcoming Saturdays, Nov. 25 and Dec. 9, the farm is hosting tastings of their freshly pressed *olio nuovo*, along with complimentary hot mulled cider, seasonal focaccia and apple cider donuts (for purchase) made especially for the holiday season by chef Bruce Hill, featuring the farm's Honeycrisp-Fuji Apple Cider Syrup and Tuscan Blend Olive Oil.

Guests visiting the farm on days they are pressing olives can view the olive oil pressing cycle from the Farm Shop just feet from the state-of-the-art Rapanelli Oil Mill and smell the green, fresh olives in the air.

One may sample Gold Ridge Organic Farms' four award-winning estate-grown olive oils, house-made popcorn with olive oil toppings, an array of edible goods from local makers and collaborative partners, and seasonal heirloom apples and citrus from the organic orchards for sale.

A range of gift baskets, locally produced artisan goods and curated products produced by the farm, such as olive oils, vinegars, citrus shrubs and apple cider syrup, are available for purchase.

The farm will acknowledge Small Business Saturday (10am to 4pm, Saturday, Nov. 25) by serving complimentary hot mulled cider and offering apple cider donuts (for purchase), baked fresh by chef Bruce Hill.

Two weeks later, the farm hosts its Open House at the Farm Shop (10am to 4pm, Saturday, Dec. 9), which will see much of the above plus seasonal focaccia made on the farm, with a selection of olive oils and herbs from the farm. Donuts are available while supplies last. And, of course, Holidays Along the Farm Trails runs Fridays and Saturdays through Dec. 23.

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