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Olive oils sensorially evaluated at the ZHAW in Waedenswil

Golden and Silver Olive Awards for “Extra Virgin” olive oils at the 7th Olive Congress

The International Olive Congress that took place on 2 April 2008 at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) in Waedenswil, Switzerland, marked the seventh anniversary of this event. The highlight was the presentation of the Golden and Silver Olive Awards for “Extra Virgin” olive oils. Five olive oils were awarded the “Golden Olive” and eight received the “Silver Olive”. Another 17 olive oils received an “Award” for their outstanding sensory quality.

Producers, importers and retailers from eleven different countries had submitted a total of 132 “Extra Virgin” oils for consideration. The jury, the Swiss Olive Oil Panel of the ZHAW in Waedenswil, tasted the products and performed objective sensory evaluation. The awards were presented during the “7th International Olive Congress – Zurich 2008”. The Food Sensory Science Group at the ZHAW had put together a colourful programme under the heading “Olive oil – a highly complex sensory experience”, based on the human senses and the ways we perceive olive oil’s broad range of aromas and tastes. After the congress and prize-giving, the award-winning oils were available for tasting. This provided an ideal opportunity, particularly for consumers, to meet both producers and purveyors.

30 of 132 oils submitted receive awards

The evaluation of the olive oils was based on an intensity assessment (panel test) using ten criteria defined by the IOOC (International Olive Oil Council). The first step was to ensure that the oils were free from negative characteristics, which is a requirement for inclusion in the “Extra Virgin” category. In addition, the fruitiness, bitterness and piquancy of the oils were assessed, all being positive attributes of olive oil. These three attributes, together with the assessment of other positive aromas which determine an oil’s sensory complexity, provide a basis for a general impression of the harmoniousness of the oil and how long it lingers in the nose and palate, and are the deciding factors for the awards.

Of the 132 oils submitted, 59 qualified for the final round and a total of 30 oils received prizes in the “Golden Olive”, “Silver Olive” and “Award” categories. The 132 olive oils came from eleven different countries: approx. 44% were from Italy, 29% from Spain, 15% from Greece, 3% from Portugal, 2% each from Turkey and Croatia and the remainder from Australia, Israel, Argentina, Slovenia and South Africa (each approx. 1%).

The objectives: transparency and quality enhancement

At a consumer tasting at the “Gourmesse Zürich” trade fair in the Kongresshaus Zürich from 10 - 13 October 2008, the same oils will be blind tasted by end consumers and ranked by preference. The 15 favourite oils will be able to use the “OLIO 2008” mark on their labels. The objectives of the Olive Oil Award are increased transparency in the olive oil market and sustainable quality enhancement. The results serve as a scientific basis for producers, importers and retailers to make medium- and long-term improvements in the quality of “Native” olive oils. At the same time, the event provides a representative overview of the quality of olive oils on the national and international market.



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In September 2007 the Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur (ZHW), the School of Applied Psychology (HAP / IAP), the School of Social Work (HSSAZ) and the University of Applied Sciences Waedenswil (HSW) merged to form the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). With the ZHAW, the Canton of Zurich now has a multidisciplinary university of applied sciences with approx. 6000 students on the Winterthur, Zurich and Waedenswil campuses.