

100% EXTRA VIRGINS

The third instalment in our series on the people who resemble their plants: the sturdy, strong, tenacious, and productive Wairarapa Olive growers.

Juno Olives By Kevin Reeve



Juno Olives is a family-owned grove, located 2.5km south of Greytown. It began in 2001 when owners Karen and Ian Juno planted 1200 trees of Tuscan, French and Spanish varieties, from mother trees traced back to their origins. Since then the pair have planted another 400 trees of Greek origin, and plan to increase their total to 2000 trees over the next two years, comprising eight varieties - Frantoio, Leccino, Pendolino, Moraiolo, Picual, Picholine, Koroneiki and Kalamata.

The grove's location in the northern Tauherenikau area, known for its free-draining stony riverbed soils, hot dry summers and cold winters, is responsible for the oil's intense flavour and green grassy look. Last year's yield was quickly snapped up through enquiries and word of mouth. This year's harvest looks promising, and all trees have fruited well.

"Our olives are hand-harvested in late May to mid-June," Karen explains. "Friends, family and neighbours come to help, and there is a lot of talking and laughter that goes along with it." The fruit is pressed on the day it is picked, to maximise the quality of the oil.

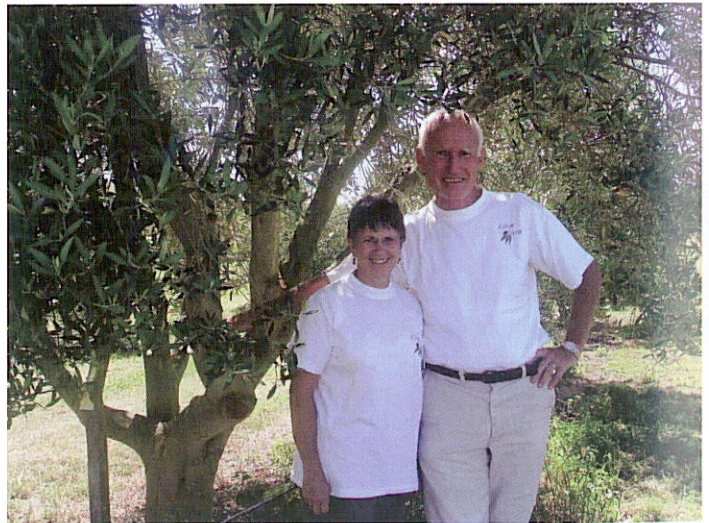
This year the Junos anticipate a harvest of up to a tonne of fruit, and hope to market single variety extra virgin olive oil and infused oils.

Karen and Ian spend most of their free time in the grove. "There is always something to do," says Ian. "We prefer to manage the grove ourselves, so for us it's hands-on, from pruning to harvesting and marketing."

In addition to the olives, this energetic couple grow organic lemons and limes with a view to using them to infuse their oil. They've set aside five acres with a view to establishing a small vineyard planted in Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling, and they offer delicious chutneys and pickled olives, available by gate sales or mail order.

Greytown is Karen's hometown, but her Lebanese heritage ensured that olives and olive oil were ever-present in her upbringing. "My grandfather always said to plant a vineyard for your children and an olive grove for your grandchildren," she smiles. "We hope to do both." Juno Olives is open on weekends 10am - 5pm or by appointment. See more : www.juno-olives.co.nz

Kilrae Olives - By Katie Farman



Rob and Margaret Irwin's involvement in establishing their award winning Kilrae Olive grove has involved some twists and turns - much like the driveway that weaves through the beautiful grounds of their Masterton property.

"It's fair to say we've had a few adventures along the way," said Rob, who jointly oversees the grove with Margaret while working part-time as a locum surgeon. "But like so many things in life, that is what makes it so enjoyable and interesting."

Growing olives was something the pair got into by default rather than design. In 1992 after deciding they'd need to remain busy in their retirement, Rob and Margaret bought six hectares of land on the outskirts of Masterton and thought long and hard what to do with it. They named the property Kilrae after the church parish in County Derry, Northern Ireland from which Rob's family originated.

The pair ran stock on it for a while, but were discouraged by 'one wicked unconfineable steer'. After trying to propagate lilies

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