



Fairs, Competitions

American Producers Enjoy Another Good Year at NYIOOC

Despite setbacks for many in California, American producers still took home plenty of awards at this year's edition of the world's largest olive oil quality competition.

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Johnny Jantz led American producers, winning two Golds and a Silver

American olive oil producers enjoyed another excellent year at the [2019 NYIOOC World Olive Oil Competition](#), taking home 52 awards. Of these, 28 were Gold Awards and 27 were Silver.

In spite of [a tough year for many California-based producers](#), which saw springtime frosts kill olive tree blossoms and 120-degree summer days dry out many of the surviving fruits, producers still achieved a 54-percent success rate. This is the second highest one for American producers at the world's premier olive oil competition.

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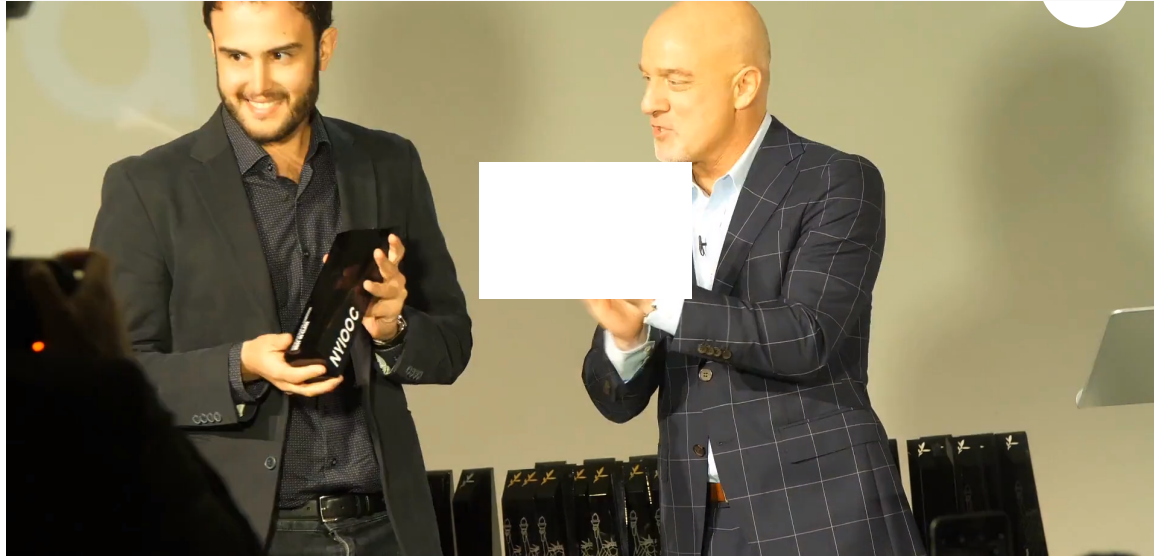
– Johnny Jantz, farm manager at Boccabella Farms

While, the vast majority of the awards were won by California producers, [two oils from Texas](#) earned Silver Awards and one oil from an Oregon-based producer, using a blend of Oregon and California-grown olives, won a Gold Award.

"I go get this fruit from California and race it up here to produce my extra virgin olive oils and there are always some questions about whether that process is really doable," Paul Durant, the master miller at [Durant Olive Mill](#), told Olive Oil Times. "These awards for me, with the fruit I source from California have always been important."

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Durant also entered an olive oil produced from only Oregon-grown olives, which did not win. He said this result disappointed him, but hopes that in the future, he will be able to win awards with his 100-percent Oregon-grown olives.



However, San Miguel, California-based [Boccabella Farms](#) enjoyed the best night of any American producer, taking home two Gold Awards and a Silver one too.

“This is the first and only time we have entered NYIOOC,” Johnny Jantz, the farm manager and chef at Boccabella Farms, told Olive Oil Times. “We were simply ecstatic, proud and humbled upon receiving the news of our awards [and] respectful of the fact that we have created a product that is now comparable to the highest quality oils from around the world.”

Jantz said that the whole team at Boccabella Farms was extremely proud of the award, especially since Boccabella only began producing olive oil a few years ago. He hopes this award brings his oil more recognition and attracts a larger customer base.

“We have consistently produced the highest quality olive oil possible since our first harvest just a short few years ago,” Jantz said. “Hopefully these accolades translate into more people enjoying, benefiting from and sharing what we now know to be a globally recognized brand that equals quality.”



Johnny Jantz and Shaana Rahman of Boccabella Farms took home three awards this year.

Located not too far away from Boccabella Farms, [San Miguel Olive Farm](#) also enjoyed a good year at the competition, winning two Gold Awards.

Richard and Myrna Meisler, the husband and wife team behind San Miguel Olive Farm, were in attendance at the awards ceremony on Friday. Meisler told Olive Oil Times that even though they have won in the past, it was very exciting to be called up to receive their awards in person.



Richard and Myrna Meisler

“We were overwhelmed with joy in winning two gold medals,” he said. “What an honor this was, Being the first producer called up by Curtis Cord to receive an award, was a fun surprise. Our hearts were beating rapidly with heartfelt emotion.”

As with many other producers in California and other parts of the olive oil world, the Meislars had to cope with California’s bad weather. The springtime freezes and heat wave caused their oil to taste a bit different than in previous years, but not lose any quality.

“With a blended oil, some varieties were heavier than others, thus producing quite a different tasting oil,” he said. “Our blend this year was more bitter, with very high total polyphenol count. The oils are not too buttery, have a lingering bitterness, medium intensity with a crescendo of a peppery finish.”

Meisler added that the two Gold Awards make marketing his olive oils as a healthy product even easier.

“The impact for this win solidifies the quality of our product,” he said. “The marketing will be very direct, being a healthful extra virgin olive oil. Our Tuscan Gold Supremo and Tuscan Gold Eleganza are certified by the best judges in the world as being extra virgin olive oil. Oils with total high polyphenols, high oleic acid are certified by the FDA for cardio health.”

About 250 miles farther south, in Long Beach, California, Joshua Mardigian celebrated a second consecutive year of winning Gold in New York. The co-founder of [Nuvo Oil](#) took home two Gold Awards this year for an early harvest and delicate blend extra virgin olive oil.



Joshua and Nathan celebrate winning again at the NYIOOC.

“Overall, [we’re] just very grateful that this year’s oils turned out to be exceptional ones,” Mardigian told Olive Oil Times. “It never hurts to come out with Gold medals at international competitions.”

He said that a combination of century-old olive trees and years of learning how to produce high-quality extra virgin olive oil are among the driving factors behind their recent success.

“We love the 125-year-old olive trees that produce our olives and we love our mill and our teachers who have helped us along our journey,” he said.

While many of the American winners at this year’s competition are fairly new arrivals to the scene, Ann and Mark Sievers, co-owners of the [Il Fiorello Olive Oil Company](#), enjoyed a seventh consecutive year of success at the NYIOOC.

Located in between the Green and Suisun Valleys of central California, the husband and wife team won a Gold Award for their Pendolino oil and a Silver Award for their blend of Italian varieties.

Sievers told Olive Oil Times that these awards serve as an acknowledgment that the Il Fiorello brand is among the best in the world, both to her existing customers and potential new customers.

“Benchmarking to the rest of the world is very important to our brand,” she said. “I want to present the best of the world to my guests. We served more than 5,000 guests last year as well as the year before. Being able to state our record of awards is important to brand identification.”

Sievers said that “very carefully strict controls” and pressing only organic olives to make her oils is what enabled Il Fiorello to achieve these two awards in a very difficult year for California producers.

“This was a very different year in California,” she said. “Most growers experienced an 80 percent reduction in crop. If our cooperative growers even harvested their olives, the quality was very poor.”