

Umbrian olive oil – an age-old tradition

by Pamela Amato, international sales contact for Viola Olive Oil

There are many different types of Umbrian olive oil, and the various locations of the olive groves, their cultivation, harvesting and processing contribute to these differences. Viola (www.viola.it) extra virgin olive oil, for example, is emerald green in colour, it has a rich scent of grass and harmonious fruity olive taste, and these are the prestigious characteristics of Viola's particular corner of Umbria.

The sun drenched gentle hill slopes of Scandolaro, above San Eraclio, between Assisi and Spoleto, are home to the Viola groves where olives are skillfully harvested by hand to avoid bruising between the end of October and the beginning of December.

As the freshly picked olives arrive at the mill, they look sound and glossy

and give off a fresh smell and a delicate scent of green grass. After being carefully selected, the olives are defoliated and washed, then ground and cold pressed to extract the extra virgin olive oil. This is a very delicate phase and determines the final quality of the oil and, understandably, the miller's choices and experience are of fundamental importance.

So how did I, Pamela Amato, become involved with Viola and these olive oils? Although a native of Southern California, I have lived in Umbria, Foligno, for almost 37 years now and have known Marco, and used his magnificent oil for many years too. He asked me if I would be interested in being his international contact person, and here I am! My most favourite time of year is of course autumn, and the

harvest season, because I get totally wrapped up in all phases of production, and find the atmosphere and enveloping aroma at the mill, magically intoxicating.

When Marco Viola looks at his oil, I know that he believes each bottle has its own history, made up of an entire year's work which begins in the olive groves and continues through their cultivation, harvest and processing, resulting in an oil designed for customers who are very selective and able to appreciate the fragrance and taste which are the true flavour of Umbria. And when Marco walks through the olive groves, I know that he is looking out for signs of nature. He follows the cycles of the seasons with his father's eyes and repeats his gestures in a timeless ritual.

The organoleptic features of this product are unique and inimitable. In fact, Viola's success is also due to its location. Only on this land can they make such olive oil, from these olive trees, many secular, on this soil, and in this climate. Their prize olive oil is the result of a mixture of nature and knowledge obtained through the generations of family dedication and experience. Nothing happens by chance! Good results come from perseverance and the determination to achieve a goal, along with the constant pursuit of ideal conditions, which are never the same.

It is important to understand the signs nature gives us, and then process the olives accordingly to guarantee the best quality. Today, I feel that the market mainly offers many bland olive oils, with little or no distinctive character. Viola, on the other hand strives to produce extra virgin olive oil with great character and unique organoleptic features which are, in turn, an expression of this land: Umbria, the green heart of Italy, and Marco Viola is sure that this is a winning formula.

Viola traditional extra virgin olive oil

Made with Moraiole, Frantoio and Leccino olives; green in colour with a tinge of gold; medium fruity and slightly pungent in taste with an aroma of olives with a scent of grass.

Viola Il Sincero

Made with Moraiole olives; rich green in colour; rich fruity olive taste, typical of this variety with an intense scent of olives.

Viola Colleruita DOP

First harvest and pressing of Moraiole, Frantoio and Leccino olives; rich green in colour; medium/intensely fruity, a harmonious balance of bitterness and pungency with an aroma of olives with a scent of grass.

Viola Imprivio

Made with Frantoio and Leccino olives; green in colour with a tinge of gold; slightly bitter and pungent with a delicate scent of olives. This is a new addition and dedicated to Marco's father, whose handprint is an integral part of the newly designed label. 

www.papa.org.uk

Umbria

A recipe for Pizza al Formaggio V (Cheese bread)

Taken from the book *Classic Food of Northern Italy* by Anna Del Conte, ISBN 1-86205-652-8, Pavilion (www.chrysalisbooks.com) £12.99.

Serves 8 to 10 as an accompaniment to an antipasto

Ingredients

30g fresh yeast	2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
350g white flour, preferably Italian 00	1 tsp salt
2 large eggs	freshly ground black pepper (optional)
45g freshly grated Parmesan	60g provolone, cut into 1cm cubes
45g freshly grated Pecorino	50g gruyere, cut into 1cm cubes

Method

Put the yeast in a bowl and add three tablespoons of warm water. Leave it for 10 minutes and then mix it until creamy.

Measure 100g of the flour and place it in a mound on the work surface. Make a well, pour in the yeast and knead to make a ball of dough. Place the dough in a bowl, cover with a heavy linen towel and leave in a warm corner of the kitchen. In one hour the dough will have doubled in size.

Break the eggs into a bowl and mix in the grated cheeses. Put the remaining flour on the work surface, make a well and pour the oil into it. Add the salt, optional pepper and the risen dough ball. Knead to incorporate, while adding the egg and cheese mixture. Add enough warm water (about three to four tablespoons) until you can form a ball. The dough should be soft. Incorporate the little cubes of cheese. (You can use a food processor for all of this.) Now knead the dough for about 10 minutes – if you can! Shape the dough into a neat ball.

Brush an 18cm cake tin with olive oil and place the dough in it. Cover with the towel and leave for 2 hours in the warm.

Heat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. Bake the bread for 20 minutes, then turn the oven down to 180°C/gas mark 4 and bake for a further 20 minutes, until the bread sounds hollow when you tap it on the base. Place on the wire rack to cool a little before serving.



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BEACON FOODS LIMITED
Unit 2 Beacon Enterprise Park, Brecon, Powys LD3 8BT, Wales.
Tel: 01874 622577 Fax: 01874 622123
Email: sales@beaconfoods.co.uk Website: www.beaconfoods.co.uk

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