


Extra Virgin Olive Oil Makes You Happy

Listening to the stories of those who have joined the growing ranks of high-quality producers, I realized that achievement of their objectives often corresponds to a self-realization.

By YLENIA GRANITTO on February 26, 2018
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 Claudia Pompilj and her son Simone at the monumental Olivo di Macciano (Photo by Franco Prevignano)

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 Claudia Pompilj and his son Simone during their first harvest (Photo by Franco Prevignano)

“I had just completed my very first harvest, when the chef, Filippo Artioli, made me taste the oil of a superb producer from Umbria, [Decimi](#). I was enthralled with the possibility of creating excellence, and I thought to myself: ‘Maybe one day I’ll also make a great extra virgin olive oil.’”

The following season she jumped in and, relying on her professional background, she developed the communication strategy for her new product from the 160-hectar (395-acre) farm in Giano dell’Umbria. Arable land and forest flank 10 hectares (25 acres) of native [olive varieties](#), including Frantoio, Leccino, Moraiolo and Sanfelice, used to produce the PDO Umbria Colli Martani, and others such as a rare Tendellone.

“Since we previously sold the olive grove products wholesale, I wanted to make a qualitative leap starting from EVOO,” Pompilj explained. “I began from what I knew best, that is the image creation, and I took the next steps humbly and eager to learn.” In the company name, the “gold” comes from the country products used in the past like a currency, while Giano is not only the place but also the Italian translation of Janus, the two-faced Greek god of beginnings and transitions, doorways between the past and the future. Through this concept, she recognized herself and her father, whose profiles now compose the brand. “My almost 9-year-old son Simone already collaborates with me, explaining to customers the features of our oils and how to taste them,” she noted.

“I usually don’t like to expose myself, but I’ve put my all into this new life plan. In my previous job I worked a lot, and that’s what I do now, but in a completely different way,” she concluded while we were tasting the exquisite Basilio, named after her uncle who was a Cardinal, evoked by a vivid red label.

A story of a life changed through EVOO also happened in Bologna. [Olieria](#) is an olive oil store recently opened by Fabio Giurgola, a former sales representative at a large pharmaceutical firm. “It was a steady and well-paid job with many benefits, but it was not exactly what I woke up happy for in the morning,” he considered, adding that, during a particular moment for the company, he took his chance and left it. “I was reborn an olive oil shop owner and taster,” he continued, smiling. “This is the best way to describe my path because if at 46 you decide that what you did for twenty years, and seemed to be an established pattern, is not for you anymore, it’s like a reincarnation.”

This change also involved his wife and two daughters. “Paradoxically, I had a lot of free time before, but the difference is that, while now I work much more, I am much happier.” Giurgola told me. “In the morning it is a pleasure to wake up and go to take care of my extra virgin olive oils and customers.”