

UpBeat® Bravi, Bariani!

The point is: we met the Bariani's. In spite of warnings to stay clear of the farm.

We can't allow the public to drop by, their son Sebastian said firmly, we'd never get any work done.

He was right, of course. Yet in a bold move for these two timid Montana souls, we traipsed all over the Sacramento countryside to find their olive orchard. We had to—we were on a mission. Had a "Made in Montana" huckleberry-print potholder and a jar of Viki's jam to give them. Gifts. Our way of thanking them for their oil. Besides, we felt a sense of camaraderie with the Bariani's from years of putting their familiar dark green bottle on our table. Why, we were practically related!

Just GO! I said nervously to Wonder Man as we paused at the foot of their driveway. We'll shove the gifts in their hands and split. Hah.

The Health Of It All

Most people call it olive oil. We call it medicine. And there is only one brand we will buy: Bariani. Just exactly why do we go out of our way—and pay more for Bariani than we would, say, Wesson or Crisco?

It's like this: A lifetime of interest in the natural food movement has given us a bit of a "leg up" on healthy eating; a near-crazed relative who endorses everything organic put us over the edge. We've refitted our dinner plates over these past many years and are happier because of it. Sure, there's a morass of conflicting information, and claims aplenty. Yet years of reading, listening, and trial/error have certainly proven that we are following a good path. The path we try to follow? Food as medicine. Enter olive oil.

I cringe (I really do: I cringe) that in days gone by I've cooked many a meal with hydrogenated, trans, or rancid fats. Yup. Kept margarine in the house and used it. Fried food in oil that

smelled bad, and thought nothing of it. Spent more than my share of shekels on make-the-kid-happy gimmicks at the fast food joint. And just what does every single report I read nowadays tell me? Bad for you, baby!

Don't heat oils to smoking point, the experts say. Never breathe the smoke of burning oil, the report reads. From the standpoint of health, the best fats are the monounsaturated ones found in nuts, seeds, avocados, and olives. Enter Bariani Olive Oil.

We've been buying Bariani through the mail for years. A television endorsement prompted our first order, and we've been hooked since. Let me tell you about this unique product, and the amazing family that produces it:

Angelo and Santa Bariani sold their business in Italy and moved to the Sacramento area several years ago, four sons in tow. (Four sons, I might add, who are all now accomplished and degree'd.) Seems the property they bought had some olive trees, and, missing the oil of home, the family began to produce enough for themselves and friends. The rest, yup, is history. What is so special about this history? The oil is good. Not to mention: never touched by either pesticide or heat, pressed in the time-worn method that olive oil has been produced for eons, and loaded with antioxidants. Pure, unfiltered, unrefined. Healthy. Is it any wonder we wanted to thank them, what with being in their neighborhood and all?

Salute!

Feeling completely foolish, Sebastian's warning pricking our senses, we stood outside the Bariani home. I touched the hard knob of an immature olive, and stared long at its tree: so this is how they grow... Enrico Bariani appeared. His mother, Santa, appeared. We fumbled through our little presentation, and, well, showed the gifts into her hands. She responded with grace, in spite of the fact that two

blustering imbeciles stood in her front yard...and before we could say *pasta primavera* we were ushered into her home.

The Bariani's were effusive in their welcome. Santa poured thick espresso in tiny cups, her skin radiant enough for a Dove commercial. Angelo's smile illuminated the room like landing lights on a 747. Second-son Enrico (can you spell hunk?) showed us the production plant, the six-ton granite crushing wheels (From "Eataly," he said, with his father's smile.) He touched an old, wooden press. It belonged to my grandfather, he said, as if in prayer.

We do this slowly, the way of the Romans, but with electricity. The olives are hand-picked, not shaken from the trees. This helps retain purity of flavor. Here is where the water comes in so the olives don't get too hot, heat is bad for oil...production begins at 4 AM and I go to sleep at 10 at night; this year we will not stop, demand is great. Our first press was 4 gallons in 1987...

It was not an enormous, automated factory. It was Bariani Olive Oil, the little production company that could. It would be easy to fret over the possibility of too much fame, too much success...too much work for this charming family (it's the oil of choice for the Ritz-Carlton in Japan, for crying-out-loud)...yet how necessary it seems to know there are still pockets of resistance to the fast-dash and bland flavors of modern-day food production.

No kidding, Bariani Olive Oil is more than salad dressing, even more than "medicine": Bariani Olive Oil is dedication to excellence, to quality, and to tradition...even to a grandfather who can be reverently "touched" daily.

It would be folly to expect our food suppliers to subscribe to such dedication—there are too many of us, and our lives insist on convenience (yes, even the convenience of fast food now and again). But aren't we lucky to happen across Santa and Angelo and their four sons on a tree-filled patch of land in Sacramento County? I say we are, and I lift my jigger of oil to salute them. Bravi, Bariani!



by Cynthia Yates

BARIANI

Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Stone Cracked

First Cold Press

Unfiltered

Unheated



Extra Virgin Olive Oil

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Since this is the first time in nearly twenty years of press that *UpBeat* has endorsed anything, I may as well throw in a favorite recipe. The taste is so intoxicating, we are tempted to eat our salad fast in order to slurp leftover dressing:

Salad Dressing

1 cup Bariani olive oil

1 cup each: lemon juice (not concentrate!), Bragg's Liquid Amino (find in health food store), water (not chlorinated, please...yech!)

1 tsp garlic powder

1 tsp (or to taste; we opt for a lot of turmeric): turmeric, curry (puli-leeze use fresh spice, not the stuff that's been on the shelf for, like, a kajillion years)

Shake in jar, serve on salad. Drool. Store in cool, dark place.

*Want to meet the Bariani's yourself? Visit them at bariani.com.

Cynthia's books can be purchased locally at Electric Avenue Books in Bigfork and Christian Book Supply in Kalispell.