

Martha Stewart boosts their business

bachelor's degree in landscape architecture at UC-Davis.

In 1989, they purchased as an investment 30 acres located off a gravel road on the outskirts of Sacramento, and one year later, an adjacent 15-acre parcel that came with a house. An olive orchard had thrived on the latter property some 60 years earlier.

"It was a mess" when they moved in, recalls Enrico. "There were weeds everywhere, broken fences and a lot of dead wood in the trees."

The Barianis cleared and repaired the property, pruned the old orchard for greater productivity and, two years ago, planted 2,000 new trees. A U.S. flag flying high from a pole at the entrance presides over the emergent order.

The Barianis began pressing olive oil as a hobby with fruit harvested from the trees growing haphazardly on the property. They extracted a few liters using a press Angelo, a construction engineer, built by hand.

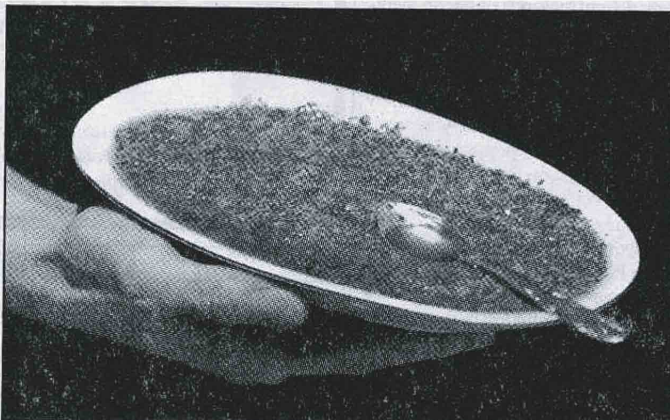
Encouraged by friends who begged for more, the family began bottling their product for sale five years ago. The maiden commercial crush produced 3,000 liters. Since then, the family has purchased a new granite olive crusher, imported from Italy, along with a press, storage and bottling facilities.

The current level of production has reached 15,000 liters, according to Enrico's conservative estimates, and demand is such that the Barianis have felt no need for paid advertising.

The Sacramento area media have covered the Barianis' successes, but the biggest publicity boon came from "Martha Stewart Living," which featured the orchard and production facilities on a television segment that ran last November at harvest time.

What appealed to Stewart was the authenticity of the product, the Barianis' use of local cultivars, their insistence on traditional methods of extraction, and the fact that family members pressed and bottled the oil themselves.

Reruns of the segment continue to generate business.



EXAMINER / JULIE STUPSKER

Family business: *At right, Enrico, left, Santa and Angelo Bariani began pressing olive oil as a hobby with fruit from the trees growing on their property. Above, Santa Bariani's recipe for Italian Salsa Verde includes olive oil, parsley, anchovies and egg.*

"It amazes us how fast you can grow if you are honest and you trust the customer," says Enrico.

The oil is sold primarily at upscale grocers throughout the Bay Area and may also be ordered directly from the Barianis. Yet Enrico contends that face-to-face contact is a cornerstone of the family's strategy that targets consumers who demand wholesome, high-quality ingredients.

"Even people from Italy are unaccustomed to unfiltered oil. At farmers markets . . . we can explain what we are doing," he says.

The personal encounters at the markets lead to good word-of-mouth, and from there, the orders pour in.

Meanwhile, the Barianis marvel not just at their success but at the customers who have helped make the family's own American dream come true.

"We've been selling the oil for five years, (taking orders) on the phone and over the Internet. We ship olive oil all over the U.S. without asking for a dime. They pay when they receive it. So far, everybody has paid. We never got a single person who didn't pay.

"Nothing like this could ever happen in Italy, nothing like this — we'd go broke."

Santa Bariani uses her family's oil in a late summer lunch.

To purchase Bariani olive oil

The farmers market prices for Bariani olive oil range from \$4 for 8.45 fluid ounces to \$50 for 4 liters.

The Barianis sell their oil at farmers markets throughout the Bay Area, including Civic Center, Alemany and Ferry Plaza markets in San Francisco as well as the Berkeley Farmers Market.

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