

At the San Basilio olive grove: 2010 Harvest

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It is olive harvest time and the Sicilian countryside smells of freshly pressed olives. An intense, strong, pungent aroma that gets straight to your throat and, in my case, to the heart too. I get moved by this ancient art of turning olives into golden-green extra virgin olive oil which is the essence of Sicilian cuisine.

Every year, the first olive harvest in Italy takes place in Sicily, in the area between Ragusa and Siracusa (between Ispica, Rosolini and Pachino) which is located below the latitude of Tunis in North Africa.

Two days ago, I met my friends Francesco and Salvatore Padova at their olive grove in [San Basilio](#), Ispica, to talk about this year harvest and try to understand more about the 2010 season.



They explained that harvest time was a little delayed this year, because we had a mild summer and olives took longer to ripen. Even *moresca* olives, which are the first local variety to ripen, and certain years are ready to be picked at the end of August, were harvested later this year.

Verdese olives are not ready yet, but at San Basilio they are confident their 2010 Riserva, which is a blend of *moresca* and *verdese*, will exceed their expectations, as quality this year is very high.



They said that the 2010 production is particularly great for two main general reasons:

- trees and fruit were very healthy, luckily they did not have to withstand insect/parasite attacks or other diseases;
- the season was very dry, thus offering healthy olives with a high concentration of flavour and substances.

Obviously, quantity wise, the lack of precipitation resulted in lower yield. But as they always say, at their olive grove "quality" comes first.



News from the Castel Vetrano - Trapani area, where they get *nocellara* olives for their Due Sicilie extra virgin olive oil, a blend of *moresca* and *nocellara*, are good too as this is a year of high production in that area. I asked why and Salvatore's answer in sicilian was: "pirchi c'attocca" - "because it is their time", meaning that in the natural alternation of production, this is a year of high productivity for olive trees in that area.

Nowadays, producers employ state-of-the-art technology to make extra virgin olive oil, but fundamentally they are still referring to the principles of care for the earth, the trees and the pressing phase introduced by Basilian monks in this area centuries ago.

It is within this frame, that the Padovas this year defined and patented a new pressing system called **Fast Press**.

We all know the importance of reducing the time between picking and pressing when making a top quality extra-virgin olive oil and they have managed to reduce it to the minimum and keep it under five hours, which is well below the DOP required standards. They also came up with the name **Fast Press** and this indication will appear on the 2010 San Basilio labels.



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After our chat, my expectation for their 2010 Riserva and Due Sicilie became really high and I am now looking forward to trying both and let my guests enjoy the tasting as soon as the blends are ready. 2010 has been a fantastic year for top quality extra virgin olive oil in this corner of Sicily and this makes me happy and proud. Thanks guys for the nice chat and the amazing pictures by Joe Ray.

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Excellent post. This is the

Submitted by [Sicily Guide](#) (not verified) on 8 October 2010.

Excellent post. This is the first time I hear about Fast Press. In the north-east side of Sicily, they except a fabulous olive harvest as well.

[reply](#)

Olive Harvest

Submitted by [Anne](#) (not verified) on 12 October 2010.

I missed out by a few days on a Olive Harvest in Liguria 2008 .. they had to bring the date forward :- (something I would love to see or help in.

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