



Vendor Review

Dunford Grove

April 2018

Three years ago Jocelyn Robinson and Sandy Black moved on to their idyllic, lake front property in Lowburn. There were olives on the trees and hazelnuts on the ground and they knew nothing about either.

They called the previous owner for some advice as to when the olives were ready to pick and were told it was easy peasy.

Needless to say the learning curve was incredibly steep but when we visited recently everything looked very orderly and fully under control.

They have worked incredibly hard over the past three years pruning the trees to encourage a good shape and to let light into the middle. They work to biodynamic growing principles whereby they test for organic trace elements yearly, recycle all the wood from pruning into mulch and use no sprays at all.

Organic certification would be very costly however Jocelyn and Sandy use organic principles and stopped spraying the trees when they took over. The climate at Lowburn has no humidity, minimal rainfall and very cold winters which helps greatly with keeping the bug population at bay. Their fellow, northern, olive growers have to spray every 3 weeks and after rainfall to keep the trees healthy. However the yield on their southern grove is substantially less per tree than those up north or in Europe.

Olives NZ have provided great mentoring and knowledge sharing with this intrepid pair. Sandy is a practical, fix anything kind of guy and Jocelyn has always had a large vegetable garden and ran her own very successful hospitality business for many years. They have now both put their collective forces into learning everything they can about how to grow great olives and produce award winning olive oil.

They use a mechanical harvester to harvest the 1,000 olive trees they have. The hazelnuts, all 400 trees, have to be hand picked off the ground – a true labour of love! Once the olives are harvested they are pressed within just a few hours. The oil is left to settle for a week and then racked off. All the varieties are kept separate until they are all sediment free and ready to blend. This will take several settling and racking iterations.

The blending is a complex job as Jocelyn and Sandy work towards achieving just the right flavour profile.

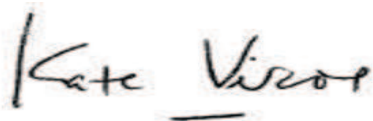
Three bottles of the new season's oil are sent to Australia to be tested. This is a rigorous analysis involving a tasting panel and chemical analysis. The oil cannot be labelled extra virgin olive oil if it has a fault.

EVO oil will keep for two years from harvesting provided if it is stored properly.

Dunford Grove, alongside their award winning EVO oil, produce a range of flavoured oils, some pickled olives and a lovely olive oil soap made from what would otherwise be wasted oil.

Their market stall is simple and effective offering tastings of oils and table olives. Here they sell their Extra Virgin Olive Oil, infused olive oils, table olives and soap, plus will happily refill clean, returned bottles with EVO oil.

Outcome: The OFMT valued very much the opportunity to undertake this review. Dunford Grove are a valued member of the market community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Vercoe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Kate Vercoe
General Manager
Otago Farmers Market