

2026 Central Coast Olive Oil Competition Judges



Chief Judge Deborah Rogers, Glen Ellen

Deborah Rogers has been an olive oil producer and a pioneer of the rebirth of California extra virgin olive oil since the early 1990's. She's also been instrumental in helping many others produce high quality extra virgin olive oil.

Adding to her credentials, she has been a judge at many domestic and international olive oil competitions. She is currently semi-retired but returns each harvest to help produce award winning organic extra virgin and agrumato olive oils at McEvoy Ranch.

Franco Dunn, Healdsburg

Franco Dunn was a founding member of the California Olive Oil Council tasting panel and has been tasting olive oil for twenty-two years. He was on the U.C. Davis tasting panel as well. He has been an olive oil judge for twenty years and have judged all the major California competitions at least three times. Currently, he is a retired chef.



John Hadley, Forestville

John graduated in 1994 from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo earning a BS in Horticulture. He started pursuing his passion for olives and olive oil in 1998. In 1998, he became one of the original COOC taste panel members. He currently works with Merchants and Millers tending to all things in regards to olives and olive oil. In his non "extra-virgin" time, he spends his time gardening and surfing.

Arden Kremer, Sonoma

Arden Kremer has been tasting olive oil since 1997 when she participated in a three-day U.C. Davis Extension class in the Sensory Evaluation of Olive Oil. Having scored extremely well on sensory tests, she trained for several years and became a member of the first olive oil taste panel in the United States.

In 2005, Arden went to Imperia, Italy, for a weeklong seminar at the University of Imperia run by the O.N.A.O.O. (Organizzazione Nazionale Assaggiatori Olio di Oliva), which trained her to become a taste panel leader. In October of 2019 Arden participated in a weeklong training seminar hosted by the IOC (International Olive Council) in Córdoba and Sevilla, Spain.

Arden served as a taste panel leader for the California Olive Oil Council Taste Panel from 2005 until 2022 and serves as a judge for numerous olive oil competitions.

Arden and her husband Philip Coturri own Enterprise Vineyards, Inc. a vineyard management business specializing in organic and biodynamic viticulture. In 1995 they imported 10,000 olive trees from Tuscany and have been producing oil under the Sixteen 600 label since 2001.



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Nancy Lilly, Sonoma

Nancy Lilly, a Sonoma native, grows wine grapes and olives on a windy ridge overlooking San Francisco Bay and Sonoma Valley on the family ranch with husband, Tony. She was a founding member of the COOC Taste Panel and served in that capacity for twenty-four years, and was also a founding member of the UC Davis Taste Panel. She judges several olive oil competitions each year. Her spare time is spent in local volunteer work, active travel, hiking, gardening and cooking from the garden.

Astrid Lorig, Fairfax

Astrid is an olive oil taster, producer and grower.

She started in the olive oil industry in 2014 after a wonderful family trip to Tuscany where she first tasted true Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Needless to say, she loved it! She dedicated herself to becoming a taster and joined both the COOC sensory panel and the Applied Sensory Panel in the following years.

In an effort to learn all she could about olive oil, she decided to study milling, a critical part of making olive oil. She completed the Master Milling course at UC Davis and has since worked in various olive mills during the harvest in California. This led her to work with Pablo Voitzuk a fellow panelist and wonderful miller and mentor.

As a next step, she planted a small orchard consisting of Frantoio, Coratina, Picual and Arbequina olive trees. At about the same time, she started managing and producing olive oil from my neighbor's established Frantoio trees. She now splits her time between her home in the Bay Area and the olive orchards in Butte County. Her Olive Love label was created out of the passion for making California Extra Virgin Olive Oils that expresses the unique flavor of each olive varietal and the desire to share the experience with customers.

Astrid has judged at various competitions over the years and continues to taste olive oils for certifications as well as consulting on olive oil quality during the milling season. In the future, the hope is to travel to other olive oil producing areas in the world.



Julie Poe Menge, Sacramento

Julie Poe Menge began her tasting career as an in-house taster for Dole Packaged Foods, evaluating pineapple, fruit, and packaged food products. Her background includes biochemical and field research at Texas A&M Department of Soil and Crop Sciences/Texas Ag Extension Service. In the late 90's she began tasting olive oil with UC Davis/COOC to improve the quality and standards of US produced olive oil. She has been a member of California taste panels since 1998 and continues to serve as a taste panel member, judge or head judge for olive oil competitions, and instructor of olive oil tasting classes.



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Olga Orlova, Santa Rosa

Olga Orlova is olive oil enthusiast, olive oil educator, and certified olive oil sommelier. Olga is a founder of Olica Olive Oil Company where she wears multiple hats such as an olive grower, olive miller, and sales and marketing manager. She practically knows what it takes to create an award-winning extra virgin olive oil. Her Olica extra virgin olive oils regularly receive top awards at local and International olive oil competitions. Through her custom milling and blending experience she has learnt how to craft beautiful balanced and complex extra virgin oils from a range of olive varieties grown in California.

She has been extensively tasting olive oil for quality evaluation at different tasting panels since 2013. Currently Olga is serving as an olive oil taster at Modern Olive Lab tasting panel.



Sergio Villanueva, Yolo County

With over 14 years of experience in Ranch Management in Yolo County, CA, Sergio brings an immense amount of knowledge to JDM Farms. In his tenure at the ranch, he has cultivated over 40 acres of specialty wine grapes and over 30 acres of olives organically seeing to the cultivation and maturation of the property. We specialize in creating world class, organic varieties of grapes and olives for specialty wineries and olive oil producers. As well as 380 acres of conventional farming grapes. Sergio has multiple

certifications and experience including Viticulturist at Washington State University, Olive Oil Master Miller at Fresno State. He is an Olive Oil Sensory Panelist, Applied Sensory and a judge at the Sacramento State Fair.

Glenn Weddell, Sacramento

After attaining a culinary arts degree, Glenn has served as Executive Chef for 30 years at many of Sacramento California's finest dining establishments and even the personal chef to the Maloofs, former Sacramento Kings owners. Glenn's services have been requested by many visiting celebrities from the Rolling Stones, Neil Diamond, and even President Bill Clinton. In 2007 Glenn took the Corporate Chef position curating and developing the product selection for Mani Imports, one of the largest Greek olive oil and olive importers in the USA. His work locating new food products has provided extensive travel throughout Europe. In 2012 the UC Davis Olive center focused his palate through sensory training on extra virgin olive oil followed by apprenticeship training with the California Olive Oil Council. He now serves on the Applied Sensory olive oil panel. In addition to the Central Coast Olive Oil Competition, he has judged the Good Food Awards, San Joaquin Valley Olive Oil, LA International Olive Oil, the California State Fair olive oil & wine making competitions.

Just for the love of cooking, in his spare time Glenn and his wife Maria run "Delicioso Epicurean Adventures", curating exclusive custom one of a kind dining experiences.

