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Contact: Patricia Darragh, Executive Director
California Olive Oil Council
Tel: 888-718-9830

Six California Olive Oil Council Taste Panel Members Receive IOC Panel Leader Certification in Imperia, Italy

Berkeley, California-----The California Olive Oil Council (COOC) announced today that six members of its taste panel were recently certified as International Olive Council (IOC) taste panel leaders at an advanced course in Imperia, Italy. The five-day seminar focused on building the skills essential to run an effective taste panel including in-depth organoleptic evaluation of olive oil and statistical analysis of the data collected by a taste panel.

“We are exceedingly proud of our six certified taste panel leaders,” said Patricia Darragh, COOC Executive Director. “Nancy Ash, Bruce Golino, Louie Gonzalez, Arden Kremer, Xavier Marques, and Dean Wilkinson have exhibited not only a great deal of technical proficiency but also strong leadership qualities and we look forward to expanding the taste panel with them.”

Founded in 1996, the COOC taste panel serves as the certification body for the Council’s extra virgin certification program. The panel, which is comprised of nearly 25 members, certified 188 California oils in 2005, up 32% from 2004. “The seal program is growing and we now have a depth of leadership to handle the taste panel’s heightened activities,” Darragh added. Since the United States currently does not have a monitoring or standards system in place, the seal program provides a guarantee of authenticity to consumers and retailers.

The COOC extra virgin certification program requires that members submit their olive oils for both chemical and organoleptic evaluation. Oils that are pressed from 100 percent California olives, containing 0.5 percent or less of free fatty acids, that are free of defects, and have the positive attributes required for extra virgin designation, are awarded the COOC Certified Extra Virgin Seal. Recipients can display the Seal on their products to assure consumers of the oil’s authenticity and quality.

“The COOC has extensive programs to educate consumers and provide our members with an objective measurement of their oil based on internationally accepted standards,” Darragh stated, “Both the California olive oil industry and the COOC’s membership have grown substantially in the past few years, an indication of the importance of California extra virgin olive oils within the market, now and in the future.”

About the California Olive Oil Council

The COOC was founded in 1992. The Council’s mission is to encourage the production and marketing of world class California extra virgin olive oil. For additional information on the COOC and the Extra Virgin Certification Program, please visit www.cooc.com.