

California Olive Ranch expands

By **LEN RICHARDSON**

DUE to a major land acquisition in Glenn County, California Olive Ranch will more than double its olive oil production in a single sweep.

To meet a growing consumer demand for California-produced extra virgin olive oil, California Olive Ranch — the largest olive oil producer in the United States — planted 500,000 olive trees on 883 acres of land in Artois, a small town in northern California. When the planting was completed this summer, it became the largest olive tree orchard in North America, even surpassing California Olive Ranch's home ranch, which is comprised of 483 acres and more than 300,000 trees.

This orchard expansion translates into the potential to annually produce more than 260,000 gallons of olive oil, doubling production.

Demand surge

"The California olive oil industry is growing by leaps and bounds with no end in sight,"



OLIVE VINEYARD: California Olive Ranch introduced the super-high-density planting system that results in trees being planted closely together, much like a grape vineyard.

Key Points

- California Olive Ranch plants 500,000 trees on 883 acres.
- Between 10,000 and 15,000 trees were planted per day.
- It is the largest olive tree orchard in North America.

says Alan Greene, vice president of sales and marketing for California Olive Ranch.

"Demand for California olive oils is surging among chefs and consumers alike. Sales numbers are growing dramatically every year, and this latest ex-

pansion enables us to be strategically positioned to meet future demand. Once these trees have matured, California Olive Ranch's oil production will skyrocket," Greene adds.

10,000 trees per day

Once the newly acquired land was leveled and prepared, planting was completed within 30 to 45 days. To accomplish this, between 10,000 and 15,000 trees were planted per day. Each tree stood about 12 to 18 inches tall when planted but will grow to more than 6 feet, 6 inches in just one year.

In 1999, California Olive Ranch introduced the U.S. olive oil industry to the super-high-density planting system, which results in the trees being planted closely together, much like a grape vineyard. Using this approach, trees are planted in hedgerows and trained to grow in a trellis style so over-the-row machines can harvest the olives quickly and efficiently.

The SHD planting system results in significantly more olive trees per acre — 675 trees compared with 120 trees using traditional planting and spacing. This means easier tree management because of trees topped at 6 feet, 6 inches; lightning-quick mechanical harvesting at fewer than three seconds per tree; and quicker deliveries of fresh olives to the mill.

Three signature varieties will be planted on the new land in Artois: Arbequina, Arbosana and Koroneiki. The soil's type, quality and drainage determines the variety's location.

Award-winning oil

In addition to its size and innovative approach, California Olive Ranch is a leader when it

comes to producing award-winning, great-tasting, high-quality extra virgin olive oils, as evidenced with two recent showings at major international olive oil tastings.

At the 2006 International Olive Oil Competition in Los Angeles, California Olive Ranch's "Miller's Blend" received the Best of Show honor in the medium-intensity category. Other honors from that competition for California Olive Ranch included a gold medal for its Koroneiki variety and silver medals for each of the other varieties that include its Arbequina, Arbosana and Estate Reserve Blend.

At the 2006 Huiles du Monde (Oils of the World) competition in Aix en Provence in the south of France, California Olive Ranch's Arbosana was awarded a gold medal in its category.

Now that California Olive Ranch has planted the nation's largest olive orchard, company executives continue to search for extra acres in the San Joaquin Valley for another orchard and possibly a new mill.

Learn more at www.californiaoliveranch.com.



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