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## Olive oil an aphrodisiac? In Elora, they think so

**Carrie Duncan** *Special to the Star*

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ELORA—At the Village Olive Grove in Elora, Dolores Smith of [Olivar Corp.](#) could convince anyone to give olive oil a try — straight up. “Have you ever tasted olive oil?” she asks patrons of the specialty shop. Most people can truthfully answer “yes.” But what she really means is “have you ever *experienced* olive oil?”

A sophisticated taster, Smith’s taste buds have been schooled by the olive oil tasting-educators, [Savantes](#). With about 20 customers gathered in the sun-drenched backroom of the little store that abuts a ravine, she waxes on about her latest offerings.

Full Moon is an exclusive oil, only picked on one date in the calendar year. Its time window coincides with the harvest full moon (either September or October). In 2009, it was on Oct. 4 that workers at Spain’s Pago de los Baldios de San Carlos orchard set out to collect their annual crop for Full Moon. This autumn picking is early, but the producer believes it’s the green, yet ripe, Abrequina olives that enhance the flavour profile of this oil. Moreover, the olives are pressed within an hour of harvest, their liquid stored in sterilized stainless steel casks immediately to preserve their pristine fresh taste.

“Olives are a fruit. So imagine if you’ve picked a peach here in summer, right off the tree, right when it’s ready to be eaten, and you

make that into juice, right away,” explains Smith with so much zeal, that one could feel the juice of the ripe peach on the chin. “The flavour would be perfect. It’s the same thing with the olives.”

As for the effect of the full moon, Smith says there’s a little bit of folklore mixed in. One might believe that the tides and their relation to the moon impact the flavour of the harvest; another Spanish belief is that anything related to the full moon has the quality of an aphrodisiac, giving this oil an irresistible allure.

That sentiment is echoed in the sleek design of the bottle, the creation of Spanish architect Mariano Martin. The opaque black glass bottle shields the content from prying eyes (and UV rays), adding to its mystique while its sharp edges and corners provide a decidedly masculine element to the container.

A little bit of the liquid gold is poured into sampling cups. Smith encourages everyone to cradle the cup, heating the volatile elements of the oil to release the aroma. To truly experience the oil, one must inhale the aroma deeply before rolling it around the inside of the mouth. The final kiss from the oil comes as it reaches the back of the throat where the “pepper” of the oil is measured, with a slight aggravation of the membranes that causes some to cough.

A hush fell over the room as each of the workshop participants grasped their own “experience” in a cup. The silky smooth oil gave off hints of banana, strawberry and green tomato. Next, Smith served up a cracker with a smooth purée of quince paste emulsified with the oil.

The oil pairs well, not only with fruit, but chocolate too, Smith said, confessing to have made a decadent chocolate mousse with the oil.

Spanish olive oils, known for their fruity profile, make up 41 per cent of all olive oils produced in Europe. Smith aims to raise that profile, and place the Spanish oils up alongside the Italian and Greek oils that gained reverence in Canada due to immigration patterns.

Olive Oil workshops are offered every Saturday at the Village Olive Grove along with Culinary Walking Tours of Elora.

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