

THE RATIONALE OF BEV IV (a guide to BEV IV for the best grasping of ideas and suggestions)

The starting point is that the primary interest in a super-premium olive oil is its sensory profile.

Many claims concerning psychological, nutritional or ethical values may add interest and reinforce the preference that has been established by the sensory appreciation, as for example: vegetable, natural, organic, the biodiversity, the Mediterranean civilization and the beauty of famous landscapes, myths and symbolism, and also: no additives, no cholesterol, antioxidants, recommended for children, etc; and furthermore: environmental friendly, low carbon footprint, energy self-sufficient, and so on. But the point is: let the consumer enjoy first what he can directly perceive and experiment, then give him information so that what is good to taste becomes also good to think and to talk about.

The sensory profile is the main content of the communication to the consumer, something that can elicit his/her attention, stimulate his/her willingness to try and discover, spur his/her curiosity in origin and cultivar, and finally generate a mix of pleasure and emotions when the experience meets the expectations.

A sensory profile of a super-premium olive oil is its distinctive asset, the profile of its identity and uniqueness. The problem is not only—or, not mainly—what is the sensory profile of a super-premium oil is “per se” but what is its sensory function when the oil is combined in a dish: modify or enhance the food flavor? Combine and disappear? Likewise in combining two different colors may give rise to a new color, the same happens with flavors, with surprising effects. What happens to bitterness when you use a super-premium olive oil in—or as a condiment on top of—a *mousse au chocolat*? What to the artichoke or the tomato flavor when you use a super-premium olive oil in the simplest pasta dish? Or what happens to the flavor of a fried egg if you fry it in either just a trickle of—or generous splash of—super -premium olive oil? There is a world to be discovered by consumers and a lot to be understood by chefs and experts of the culinary art.

The consequence of such obvious, self-evident observations is revolutionary if we consider the traditional approach of the olive oil culture and policy.

It means, in the first place, that competitions based on the evaluation of sensory profiles “per se” are not very meaningful or they may be, in the worst case, misleading about the sensory functionality of the oil.

It means, in the second place, that the main consideration when planting an olive orchard or when choosing the harvesting date or when optimizing the milling process in order to make a super-premium olive oil, cannot be productivity or yield and cost. If the sensory profile is the condition of success and affection by the consumer, our approach should be reversed: we don't plan the olive oil process based on productivity considerations and accept the sensory profile as a consequence, but we think in the exact opposite way: we plan a sensory profile and take consequent decisions about the orchard and the process.

BEV IV illustrates this approach: no doubt that it will incite reactions, but it will also spur enthusiasm.

BEV IV starts with Greg Drescher and Bill Briwa presentations on the 20th afternoon. They will talk about creating a new culture of flavor discovery of super-premium olive oil by the culinary experts and their customers and the consequences in terms of culinary creativity but also in terms of business.

In the morning of September 21st, the first session of the Conference will give prominence to the sensory aspect of super-premium olive oil which is the conference's focus. In this session the speech by Erminio Monteleone will set a critical distinction between sensory characteristics and sensory functionality of a super-premium olive oil.

In the afternoon, the problems of olive cultivation and olive processing will be discussed in relation to their influence on the sensory profile.

This organization of the matters reverses the organization of traditional conferences, that usually start from the cultivation problems, then the processing and finally the product characteristics. We'll follow an opposite approach: first a presentation of the goal to be achieved in terms of sensory characteristics and then the processing decisions to meet the goal.

The full day 22nd will be devoted to the presentation of the relationship of sensory characteristics and sensory functions of super-premium olive oil. This is a totally new and exciting subject of cultural and practical developments. Chefs with their experience and creativity will establish a dialog with scientists of the food and sensory science with unexpected cross-fertilization effects as it always happens when two different cultures find a common ground for research and exchange.

Great attention will be devoted to the problems of language and to the misunderstandings between experts, chefs and the consumers in describing the sensory attributes of super-premium olive oil. Famous writers and journalists are going to participate in these debates and will convey the conference's results to the mass media and the consumers.

From many points of view BEV IV is going to be a memorable event.

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