



SANDY SONNENFELT

TRAINED OLIVE OIL
TASTER

Background

Sandy Sonnenfelt is originally from South Africa. She lived there until 1976 after which she moved to Israel and by 1983 she came to the United States of America. After leaving Israel to be closer with family, Sandy ended up in Oakland by pure chance. Sandy's first encounter with olive oil happened in Israel, and she wanted to keep learning about olive oils when she moved to the United States.

Connection to Olive Oil

While in Israel, Sandy fell in love with olive oil on trips to a neighboring Arab village to pick up olive for the Kibbutz kitchen. That experience not only introduced her to olive oil but also to whole new world which would change her life in the future. In California, she started working at Market Hall Foods, an acknowledged leader in the retailing of the highest quality extra virgin olive oil from California and abroad. Sandy has also judged in many local competitions including the LA International and was lucky enough to judge in Japan several years ago.



Involvement with COOC

Sandy attended the Sensory Evaluation of Olive Oil Seminar at U.C. Davis and shortly after that became a member of the COOC Taste Panel. Training to become a member of the taste panel takes a lot of time and practice. Sandy says that however strange and tough a tasting might be, it is also tremendously rewarding. She also noted that the taste panel has had a huge influence on the improved quality of California extra virgin olive oil. Her involvement in the world of olive oil continues to fascinate and she will always smell the oil on the table when dining out.



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6014 N CEDAR AVE, FRESNO, CA 93710 / (559) 278-4405



NANCY LILLY

TRAINED OLIVE OIL
TASTER

Background

Nancy Lilly, originally from Sonoma, grew up in the hills on her family's large cattle and hay ranch. She grew up watching her family grow beef cattle, dairy, wine grapes, and olives. Nancy was also a midwife to roughly 600 cows that she used to transport from Oregon to California during the winter. She loved doing that just as she loves working with olive oils.

Connection to Olive Oil

Nancy is an excellent cook and vegetable grower who grew up with olive trees in her backyard. Her mother was also a fantastic cook, therefore she was drawn to olive oil. To pursue her interest further, in 1995, she enrolled in a three-day production course at UC Davis, where she was one of around 100 participants. They engaged in activities such as touring different orchards, tasting, and meeting new people during the course. Nancy was so impressed with the training that she enrolled in a sensory evaluation course a year later, just as the sensory evaluation panel was being constituted. She thereafter became a member of the panel and took part mainly in olive oil certifications, and she served as a judge in several olive oil competitions as well.



Involvement with COOC

Nancy has been a member of the COOC Panel of Tasters since its inception in 1998 and was a founding member of the UC Davis Taste Panel. She has been a judge in a number of competitions such as the Los Angeles International Extra Virgin Olive Oil Competition and OLIVE JAPAN International Extra Virgin Olive Oil Competition which is an international competition that lasts for about 3 days and is based in Tokyo, Japan. It's a worldwide event with over 600 oils and tasters from all around the world.



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