

Sensory Trends in the Olive Oil Market - A Swiss View

Annette Bongartz

Institute for Food and Beverage Innovation

University of Applied Sciences Zurich (ZHAW), Switzerland

Since eight years the International Olive Oil Award - Zurich (Switzerland) aims for improvement of transparency on the Swiss as well as the European / International market for "Extra Virgin Olive Oil". The annual event offers a broad overview of the particular Olive Oil quality. Every spring time - participating olive oils are evaluated and profiled by the Swiss Olive Oil Panel (SOP), a panel of olive oil experts of the "University of Applied Sciences Zurich" (ZHAW). Starting with a Pre-Test (screening), all Olive Oils undergo two sequential Panel-Tests based on the regulations of the EC (640/2008). Besides this pure classification of all participating Olive Oils as "extra virgin", the main focus lies on the sensory aroma-description and the evaluation of the attributes: "harmony" and "persistency". To do so the SOP uses a validated test procedure from the according to ISO 17025 accredited sensory laboratory of ZHAW and collects at least 8 to 10 single results for each Olive Oil. In autumn the same oils are additionally tested by consumers and ranked after popularity (in terms of overall-liking). The analysis of profiling data and consumer data together (preference mapping) provides new information about consumer preferences and the corresponding objective descriptors of olive oils. The interdependences explain why consumers like which oils respectively which objective criteria are relevant to explain the consumer preferences of olive oils. These results serve producers, importers and retailers as scientific data-base for the medium to long term quality improvement of their "Extra Virgin Olive Oils".

Since 2002 the International Olive Oil Award – Zurich (www.oliveoilaward.ch) took place eight times and has turned out to be one of the really well-known olive-oil-competitions in Europe. The huge amount of data collected over the years provides the possibility of analyzing interesting relations. The most interesting and relevant ones for example are: variances in quality of Olive Oil coming from different countries and origins, variances between conventional and labeled products (PDO, PGI, organic), variances between crop years etc.