

LIFE | FOOD



THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL

Oil is pressed from olives harvested at The Resort at Pelican Hill.

Pelican Hill celebrates olives in a bigger way

Italian-inspired fall fest that takes advantage of the resort's unexpected harvest expands to three days.

In the fall of 2010, landscapers at The Resort at Pelican Hill approached resort Managing Director Giuseppe Lama with a head-scratching conundrum.

Green olives were peppering the resort's cobblestone walkways. More than 700 mature olive trees on the 500-acre seaside resort, planted purely for aesthetic reasons, were suddenly bearing fruit.

"We had olives everywhere," said Lama, who grew up in a town near Bologna, Italy.

He knew exactly what to do. "I was inspired, so we decided to celebrate," Lama said.

That year, the Newport Beach resort harvested and pressed the olives, making their first batch of "Pelican Hill" olive oil.

"The biggest surprise was the quality of the olive oil. It was unbelievably unique and spicy," Pelican Hill Executive Chef Jean-Pierre Du-bray said.

In 2011, the resort turned the harvest event into a one-day affair with olive pressing, live music, entertainers and seasonally inspired foods. This year, the festivities have grown larger, expanding to a three-day autumn festival open to the public Friday through Sunday. (Previously, activities were restricted to resort guests.)

The biggest celebration is Saturday's Italian-style street fair.

Lama, who launched his hospitality career working at the legendary Villa D'Este hotel in Northern Italy, said the festival is meant to duplicate traditional celebrations held each year in villages across Italy.

"We want to bring to Southern California a sense of renaissance like in Italy," said Lama, a key ambassador of the lavish, Mediterranean-influenced resort. "They (guests) will come in here and say, 'This is unbelievable.' It will make them feel like they are back in Tuscany."

From noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, the



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FESTIVAL

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resort will offer music, olive pressing demonstrations, street painting artists and Italian flag twirlers. The latter performers are being flown in from Italy, where flags represent a family's heritage. Lama's family flag, for example, shows that he comes from a family of blade makers.

Visitors also will be treated to Italian food, and olive oil and cheese tastings prepared by resort chefs and artisanal cooks. The entry fee for the Saturday event is \$75 for adults and \$35 for children. The Friday and Sunday events are dinner and brunch featuring entertainment.

Besides the three-day Festa dell'Autunno festival, the resort is celebrating its fruit-bearing olive trees in other ways: olive-inspired spa services and olive oil tasting menus at each of its three restaurants - Andrea, Pelican Grill and Coliseum Pool & Grill.

Through November, the resort



JEBB HARRIS, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

A native of Italy, Resort at Pelican Hill Managing Director Giuseppe Lama knew just what to do when the property's olive trees started bearing fruit.

is offering a free "Art & Olives" tour every Friday at 4 p.m. During the hourlong walking tour, guests will learn about the resort's collection of plein-air paintings, Andrea Palladian architecture and mature olive trees. The tour ends with olive tastings in the resort's

Caffe shop.

The Resort at Pelican Hill is at 22701 Pelican Hill Road South in Newport Coast.

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Pelican Hill olive event

History: The Resort at Pelican Hill boasts more than 725 olive trees from central and Northern California. The Italian-style resort planted the trees throughout the 500-acre property for aesthetic purposes. When the trees began producing olives, the resort celebrated the harvest with an annual festival.

What: This year, the festival has expanded to a three-day event open to the public Friday through Sunday. For a full schedule of events, go to pelicanhill.com/Festa.

Types of olives: The resort has three varieties of trees: Sevillano, Manzanillo and Mission. More than 700 trees are Manzanillo, one of the most widely used olive varieties. It is known for its distinctive, fruity flavor. About 25 century-old Sevillano trees are also on the grounds, as well as a handful of Mission trees.

Does the resort use the olive oil? Yes. It's used in signature dishes throughout the year, as supplies allow. The oil will be sold in the resort's lobby Caffe shop after Festa dell'Autunno and throughout the year. Cost: \$32 for a 375 ml bottle.



The resort has more than 700 olive trees, which were planted for landscaping - not for produce.

Source: The Resort at Pelican Hill