

Chief Judge Paul Vossen, Santa Rosa

Paul Vossen has an MS degree from UC Davis in Horticulture (Tree Crops Production), a Certificate in Olive Oil Production from the U of Córdoba, Spain; Panel Head Certificate from the IOC; and a Certificate in Marketing from UC Berkeley. He recently retired as the UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Farm Advisor in Sonoma County after 36 years. His primary expertise is in the areas of fruit tree, berry, and specialty vegetable culture; pest control; and marketing of farm products. He helps farmers with the evaluation of their land, production costs, selection of appropriate specialty crops, cultural practices, pest control, and advises on selling their produce.

After retirement, Paul has been active in teaching olive production short courses through the UC Davis Olive Center, consulting with several olive oil producers worldwide, and sourcing olive oil for an East Coast marketing company.

His olive research focused on efficient fruit harvest for small-scale growers, olive fruit fly control, organic cultural practices, comparison of different mill equipment types, comparing oil cultivars growing in different climatic regions of California, the productive potential of the super-high-density and medium-density oil olive production systems, and the influence of tree irrigation on olive oil sensory qualities. Over the years, he coordinated 15 California Olive Oil Production Short Courses and taught 28 Olive Oil Sensory Evaluation Courses in the US and internationally to train producers, consumers, and marketers, about high-quality olive oil. He was a founder of the California Olive Oil Council, UC Davis Olive Center, and he developed the first olive oil taste panel in the USA to become recognized by the International Olive Oil Council in 2001. Paul has been the panel leader for the UCCE olive oil taste panel in Santa Rosa, CA. He serves as an olive oil judge at several US and international fairs and competitions.

As a former UC researcher and educator, he authored several peer reviewed journals, scientific, newsletter, and popular press articles. He has written chapters in the “UC Olive Production Manual”; “UC Organic Olive Production Manual”; “Aceite de Oliva Virgen: Análisis sensorial 2nd Edition”; “Handbook of Olive Oil”; and “Olive Diseases and Disorders”. Paul has experience as a consultant in Albania, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Greece, Guatemala, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Portugal, Republic of Georgia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Tunisia, and in many states of the USA. In retirement, Paul now works as a private consultant helping producers make and market the best olive oil possible.

Roger Declercq, Sonoma

Mr. Roger Declercq immigrated to the USA from Belgium in 1985 where he graduated from a culinary school. He then worked as an executive chef until he started Sonoma Gourmet with a partner in 1991, now called Sonoma Specialty Foods. (a food processing factory in Sonoma). Roger successfully completed his Olive Oil tasting / Scoring classes at UC Davis in 2018 and now sits on the Sonoma Olive Oil Sensory panel.

Alexandra Kicenik-Devarenne, Petaluma

Based in California, Alexandra Kicenik Devarenne is an international olive oil consultant, writer and educator. She has written on many aspects of olive oil for both popular and scholarly publications and is the author of the reference book *Olive Oil: A Field Guide*. An official olive oil taste panel member since 2003, she has been involved in organizing and teaching olive oil courses at domestic and international venues since 2004. She also has served variously as chair, judge and advisor at numerous olive oil competitions at home and abroad, including Olive Japan, Athena International, Australian Olive Association International, Napa Valley, Los Angeles International, California State Fair and others. Her olive oil work started with research at the University of California Cooperative Extension and although freelance since 2007, she continues to cooperate with the scientific and academic community, most recently on the planning committee for the Yale Olive Institute. She is co-founder and CEO of Extra Virgin Alliance (EVA) an international trade association dedicated to olive oil quality. EVA works to inform the trade and consumers about olive oil, to connect consumers and quality extra virgin olive oil producers, and to celebrate the rich culture and culinary use of this extraordinary food.

Franco Dunn, Healdsburg

Franco Dunn has been a professional chef for Italian food for thirty-five years. He has been on various olive oil panels for fourteen years and has judged numerous olive oil competitions.

Fran Gage, San Francisco

Fran Gage owned the critically acclaimed bakery, Fran Gage Pâtisserie Française, in San Francisco for ten years. She closed the bakery following a fire in 1995 and began writing about food, including articles for both local and national food publications. In addition, she has written six books. Her latest book, *The New American Olive Oil, Profiles of Producers and 75 Recipes*, is the first book to focus on America's artisanal olive oil producers. It includes recipes, tips for choosing and storing extra-virgin olive oils, understanding the basic types of olive oils, and even how to host an olive oil tasting.

She has been a member of the California Olive Oil Council's taste panel since 2003 and was a member of the UC Davis panel when it was operating. She is also a judge at various olive oil competitions, including the LA competition.

John Hadley, Forestville

John Hadley graduated in 1994 from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo earning a BS in Horticulture. He started pursuing his passion for olives and olive oil in 1998. In 1998, he became one of the original COOC taste panel members. He currently works with Merchants and Millers tending to all things in regard to olives and olive oil. In his non "extra-virgin" time, he spends his time gardening and surfing.

Arden Kremer, Sonoma

Arden Kremer has been tasting olive oil since 1997 when she participated in a three-day U.C. Davis Extension class in the Sensory Evaluation of Olive Oil. Having scored extremely well on sensory tests, she trained for several years and became a member of the first olive oil taste panel in the United States.

In 2005, Arden went to Imperia, Italy, for a weeklong seminar at the University of Imperia run by the O.N.A.O.O. (Organizzazione Nazionale Assaggiatori Olio di Oliva), which trained her to become a taste panel leader.

At present, Arden serves on three olive oil taste panels: the first-in-the-nation California Olive Oil Council Taste Panel, the recently-formed U.C. Davis Taste Panel, and the U.C. Cooperative Extension Olive Oil Research Panel headed by Paul Vossen. She also serves as a judge for numerous olive oil competitions.

Arden and her husband Philip Coturri own Enterprise Vineyards, Inc. a vineyard management business specializing in organic and biodynamic viticulture. In 1995 they imported 10,000 olive trees from Tuscany and have been producing oil under the Sixteen 600 label since 2001.

Michael Laukert, St. Helena

Michael is a chef, editor, author and specialty food consultant dedicated to his craft with over 25 years of experience. Since graduating from the prestigious Culinary Institute of America 1991, he made the Napa Valley home and began to establish his culinary foundation at Tra Vigne restaurant.

Michael has consulted for numerous restaurants and food producers helping them conceive, produce and market specialty foods products. Michael has worked on and developed over 200 specialty food items. Specialty food brands that I have been responsible for include: Michael Chiarello - Napastyle, Consorzio and Olio Santo. Jacques Pepin - Jacques Pepin specialty foods. Thomas Keller - EVO brand. Iron Chef Cat Cora's - CCQ restaurant. Kevin Fortun - Fortun Finishing Sauces and Finishing Touch Soups and Lorenza Pasetti of Volpi Foods - Un Mondo salami.

Michael developed and wrote recipes for his first book, "Authentic Volpi" - Today's Delicious Foods made in Harmony with Old World traditions. In addition, worked alongside Michael Chiarello creating Live Fire, Bottega, At Home and Tra Vigne cookbooks.

Michael also served as the Culinary Director for over 175 episodes of the Emmy award winning Napastyle television series on PBS, Fine Living and Food Network.

Michael is founder of Foodwurkz Consulting, dedicated to the specialty food and restaurant industry. Michael is the culinary director for Fortun Finishing Touch Sauces and Soups. Michael is currently executive chef, estate manager and editor at Hundred Acre / One True Vine, LLC. The first issue of One True Vine a Journal of Food, Wine, Life was released in December 2012.

Nancy Lilly, Sonoma

Nancy Lilly, a Sonoma native, grows wine grapes and olives, is a professional olive oil taster and is a docent at the Bouverie Preserve in Glen Ellen and Board member for its parent organization, Audubon Canyon Ranch. She lives on the family ranch in Sonoma with husband, Tony.

Julie Menge, Sacramento

Julie Menge, a research and development chemist. Her background includes biochemical and field research at Texas A&M; Department of Soil and Crop Sciences/Texas Ag Extension Service. She also tasted olive oil with UC Davis to improve the quality and standards of US produced olive oil. Menge is a founding member of all California internationally certified olive oil taste panels.

Deborah Rogers, Glen Ellen

Bio Coming Soon

Sandy Sonnenfelt, Oakland

Sandy Sonnenfelt is South African born based in California. She is a member of the California Olive Oil Council Taste Panel as well the UC Extension Research Panel. Sandy was also a member of the now disbanded UC Davis Taste Panel.

Over the years she has judged in many competitions and is involved in educating both chefs and the general public on the virtues of extra virgin olive oil.

As the Prepared Foods and Pasta Program Director for Market Hall Foods, a Bay Area specialty food retailer, Sandy was responsible for introducing only California extra virgin olive oil to all the company's kitchens. Working for Market Hall Foods has afforded her the opportunity to taste olive oil from all around the world. She regards herself as an olive oil missionary.