

Basilippo Olive Oil Farm



On Monday, February 23rd, our group had the amazing experience of visiting Basilippo, an olive oil farm near Sevilla. What we thought would be a simple farm tour ended up being an engaging learning experience involving the history, production, and, of course, tasting of olive oil. Our tour guide, Isak, walked us through the history of the farm and explained how they produce their oil. He also gave us helpful information about the different types of olive oils, what they are used for, and what time of year to harvest in order to produce the highest quality oil.



Isak explained the differences between several types of olive byproducts, from extra virgin olive oil to olive pomace oil. He showed us how workers shake olives off the tree and collect them in large tarps. During his presentation, he revealed that the longer the olives are left to ripen, the less flavor their oil preserves. Even though black olives are ripe and yield significantly more oil, it is the younger green olives from which the best-tasting oil is harvested. In order for olive oil to be considered extra virgin, the entire fruit (including the pit) must be ground up by purely mechanical means without using heat or solvents. Isak explained that their oils must undergo an intense review process by a panel of specialists. Their scrutiny, under a list of international standards, describes the quality and designation of the oils they produce. Following this explanation, he left us with one warning: If you see “extra extra virgin olive oil” or “pure olive oil” in the store, run.



The highlight of the trip was most certainly the tasting at the end. We tried two types of olive oil, Arbequina and orange-infused Arbequina. Isak guided us through how to properly taste olive oil by warming the glass with our hands, smelling it first, and then taking a small sip to fully notice the flavors. The Arbequina, which is commonly used for dressing, bread, and sautéing, was smooth with a slightly peppery finish that gently hit the back of our throats. It even had a fresh tomato-like aroma. For the orange-infused Arbequina, you could immediately smell the citrus, although its flavor was subdued. It was very enjoyable on its own, even more than the regular Arbequina for some of us. Isaac explained that the infused oil is often used for desserts and dressings, and to show us, he had us try it with a small portion of chocolate ice cream. The oil perfectly complemented the sweetness of the ice cream and added a citrusy twist, demonstrating how various foods could bring out the underlying flavors within the oil.

Overall, the trip to Basilippo was both fun and educational. We learned a great deal about the history behind olive oil and the amount of care that goes into making it. Before we boarded the bus to leave, we had some time to look around the gift shop. Many of us ended up buying bottles of olive oil to bring home for our families.