

Ecology, innovation, technology, quality, family ... these are some of the concepts that your project encompasses, how would you define yourself from the point of view of the farmer?

As farmers we have acquired a great environmental awareness

The biodynamic agriculture of which these olives are fruit entails a philosophy of life. It is a higher step in organic farming. The prevention measures, land care and soil protection, the way to control pests, harvest time... are determining factors for the organoleptic features, composition and quality of food.

Biodynamics could also be called an “organic Plus” agriculture. This is a model able to answer the great challenges that the agricultural sector is already facing: scarcer rainfall, more degraded soils due to abuse and neglect and a demand for higher quality food as well as long-term sustainability.

Our management practices are intended to restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony. We consider that our role in nature must be proactive, thus Cortijo el Puerto is committed to biodiversity. The prime objective is always to encourage healthy conditions for life: soil fertility, plant and animal health, and product quality” By understanding soils and ecosystem interactions, we produce food in a healthier way and with higher quality. Over time, it implies strong cost savings, noticeable expansion of recycling and much more self-sufficiency (green & circular economy) and, above all, plant health, from the soil to the ripening of the olive and that is a guarantee of quality.

Who founded the company? And in what year? Elaborate on the founding family’s history if you’re able.

Cortijo el Puerto is a family owned company. The Family De la Torre Liébana acquired Ingeoliva SL in July 2012, pursuing our dream: to create a sustainable agricultural ecosystem. We aspired to recover the traditional values of rural life, to build a community where flora and fauna live in perfect harmony to produce organic food of high nutritional value. We do take advantage of both experience and innovation in tilling the land, while still being respectful to the environment.

Was producing high quality olive oil always the goal of your company? If no, when did the focus turn towards quality?

Absolutely. Quality, Ecology and Innovation are core elements of this Project. Our commitment to sustainable quality and innovation have also materialized in the certification of our management system with the Une-en-ISO 9001:2015 and UNE 166002:2014 whose requirements guarantee both aspects and encourage us to continuous improvement and Process optimization. We are also granted with the *INNOVATIVE SME certificate*. Cortijo el Puerto/IngeOliva considers R & D as its basis and part of its DNA, a feature that identifies us and allows us to position the brand as a benchmark in environmentally-friendly agricultural production, through the creation and support of balanced ecosystems. We are also Organic and Biodynamic (Demeter) Certified.

What is the history of the area around the estate (cities, land, people)? For example, were there historic battles? Are there famous festivals or other events? What other crops is the area well known for?

Lora del Río is located on the right bank of the Guadalquivir River, towards the east of the city of Seville.

It has abundant archaeological remains from the Bronze Age, and the Romans were established at the end of the 3rd century BC. in the region and with the name of Axati turned to Lora in a great center producer-exporter of olive oil. In Arab times the castle is fortified and the walls are built, receiving the name of Al-Lawra (hence, his name, Lora). Fernando III of Castile the conquest in the middle of the XIII century, concretely in the year 1247, donating it immediately to the Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem or of Malta.

The twentieth century is the turning point in the history of Lora, it is the century of transformations. It is the century where the recovery becomes more echo, because the term had products such as olive groves, vines, holm oaks, orange trees, fruit trees, cereals, fallow, etc.

Who picks the olives? Are they local?

Our project requires a human team committed to a green philosophy that will add value to traditional agriculture. Our group of local workers, comprised of a foreman and a team of laborers (The "Green Crew") help to nourish the land and produce flavoursome organically grown food, in healthy environment. On the other hand, our passion and desire to "empathize" with nature, as well as our commitment to the excellence quality of our olive oil and almonds, leads us to select the best advisers, technicians, researchers and nursery companies in the sector.

What do you find most fulfilling about producing olive oil?

Perhaps the knowledge that you are offering a food of quality and so healthy, while you collaborate with the environmental balance

What is the main challenge you face as a producer of high-quality olive oil?

The biggest challenge is to produce 100% Organic & Biodynamic oil of the highest quality and at a correct and affordable price.

Do you find it hard to access the international market / sell your products abroad?

We are a young company and it is difficult to be known in the international market and spread our global project that combines ecology, innovation and maximum quality but we trust in our project and our product. Little by little, the media is interested, the awards abound and we are finding our place.

What would you say to foreigners who has never tried olive oil before?

Try the difference, get to know it and you'll love it. I will encourage them to taste this delicious and healthy olive juice.

What is your greatest inspiration?

Nature

What is your fondest memory of the harvest season?

The Moon, the sounds of night, the breeze and the smell of olives

How many olive trees do you have today?

120.000 (ca. one hundred twenty thousand)

How many olive varieties do you have? What is the oldest olive variety on the land?

What is the newest? How old is the oldest tree?

Eleven (11). The oldest, Arbequina (7), the newest, Oliana.

We also support olive biodiversity, each one with their own distinctive and particular qualities: Arbequina, Arbosana, Picual, Picudo, Chiquitita, Manzanilla Cacereña, Koroneiki, Hojiblanca, Cornicabra, Royeta and Oliana

How many meters above sea level are the olives grown?

34 m.

What sustainable practices do you use on the land (and in the mill)?

All!!!, we are organic!!!

Our dream at Cortijo el Puerto: create an agricultural community where living beings exist in perfect harmony! A sustainable farm where flora and fauna coexist to produce organic food of high nutritional value: oil, almond, etc. Reckoning and perceiving *Biodiversity* as a vital element of *sustainable agriculture*.

We promote biodiversity and soil quality. Soil and health are the foundation for all agriculture and natural plant communities at Cortijo El Puerto and also a basic indicator of sustainable land management. We have more than one hundred thousand shrubs in the Farm's perimeter. Vegetation cover fulfills four objectives:

- First, it covers 100% of the surface of the farm, nourishing the soil
- Second, staggered flowering: we have chosen flowers that bloom throughout the year, in order to help the farm's fauna
- Third, it promotes biodiversity
- Fourth, it attracts outside wildlife and avoid contamination of neighbouring farms.

We are also experts in building sustainable habitats. We have "five-star hotels" for insects; friendly plant covers where mammals and birds can enjoy their "favourite menu" at ecological "restaurants" (for example nectar and pollen; hives for *Bombus terrestris* bumblebees; nest boxes and natural refuges for birds; mobile poultry houses; donkey and cattle stables; breeding ponds for amphibians, ducks and other aquatic species.

Some animal species live there all year round, such as owls, billiard birds, hares, partridges or quail; these all cohabit, increasing the natural balance and biodiversity at Cortijo El Puerto. The “native” avifauna (birds, mammals, reptiles, insects) increases and is related to the area. In addition we have invited native Utrera hens, donkeys in danger of extinction, and Merino sheep to live with us on the farm, not forgetting the ducks, geese and other aquatic species that share our ponds. Biodiversity is the Master key at Cortijo El Puerto!

How does the local terroir affect the quality or taste of the oil you produce?

Well, higher-quality soil does indeed produce more tasty and nutritious olives. Many factors affect the balance between the different flavors in EVOO and thus contribute to the final taste. It is very complex.

How much work went into the land to make it possible to plant trees?

Lots, in different ways and everyday!!!

Over the course of the year, what do you do to protect the quality (maintain integrity) of the olive?

Appropriate Organic methods for the cultivation, harvesting and processing of olives and early and biological control of diseases and pest, mainly

Do you have an agrotourism? How can a guest book a stay with you?

Of course, we have agrotourism, ecotourism and oil tourism. The usual way of contact is via telephone or by email to info@cortijoelpuerto.com. On-demand visits are prepared for individuals or groups.

Typically, when is the first day of harvest?

during the first or second week of October. With quality as a premise, only the olives in perfect condition are harvested, during October and transported in boxes, maintaining low temperatures throughout the process and quickly milled with cold extraction technique.

The extra virgin olive oil or EVOO differs from the refined one by the lack of chemical processes; thus, it has no flaws and its organoleptic properties (colour, aroma and flavour) are unaltered.

What do you do with the pomace?

Composting

What was the worst harvest you ever experienced? How did you recover?

We are lucky, we have no bad memories yet.

What is the easiest olive to harvest? What is the hardest? Why?

Arbequina the easiest, Picudo was the hardest. Picudo, in fact, constituted an innovation project by successfully adapting it to the hedgerow system and was also considered the best in the world in its variety last year.

This variety was unsuitable for hedgerow because of their vigor. In addition, Picudo has a difficult detachment, especially in its early stage and pre-ripening, which is precisely the one that interests to give an oil of excellent quality. Therefore it is necessary to release it in green at the beginning of the season when fruit is difficult to collect, to which is added the complication of high temperatures in this area (Andalusia) at the beginning of the season.

Picudo is called "Lince del olivar" (lynx of the olive grove) due to its rare and minority nature and the abandonment of this specialty given its difficulty, being in danger of extinction, in favour of varieties of easier collection, and despite the potential of the Picudo in the quality of its oils. We got it!

What color are the olives when picked?

Green and green turning to purple.

If you had to describe the harvest season in one word, what would it be?

Exciting

If any, what technological advancements have you made in the last 10 years?

Many!!!, Innovation is a key feature in precision farming. We are also certified R&D and Innovative SME. And always organic.

Any insight you can give us into your plans for the next 5 years? Plant new cultivars? Make new brands/blends? Goals?

We will see, but always quality, innovation and ecology as core elements.

Do you use livestock as part of your operation?

Of course, Cortijo el Puerto's commitment to biodiversity and ecology encompasses both flora and fauna, therefore we are organic certified in both Agriculture and Livestock.

Our commitment to biodiversity and the circular economy makes us work in multiple aspects and scenarios. Everything is related in this food chain to make work the ecosystems: vegetation cover that offer greater resistance to wind and water and slow down soil erosion, herds of sheep that graze and manure the land, analysis and study of pollen levels and promote pollinators to predict crops. We work on this circular economy which makes the ecosystem thrive and be sustainable and healthy, fruits like olives are ultimately the product of all this.

Here you can find donkeys, hens, sheeps, all of them are part of the team!

What else do you produce besides olive oil?

Almonds, Eggs, Oranges/Lemons

Do you have any high-quality videos?

Please google youtube Cortijo el Puerto. For Media: <https://www.cortijoelpuerto.com/hemeroteca/> and also have a look to our blog: <https://www.cortijoelpuerto.com/en/blog/> and to the shop <https://tienda.cortijoelpuerto.com/gb/>