

Villa Pileggi: a very special olive oil

Getting to know our local businesses

By Michael O'Connor

Great changes to Australian eating habits in the post-war period brought with them many new ingredients not the least of which was olive oil.

But as John Pileggi of Gisborne's Villa Pileggi makes clear, the one superior olive oil is their Australian certified Extra Virgin Olive Oil. More, he insists that his organic-certified Villa Pileggi oil, grown and processed on his property, stands out from the rest.

Established in 1997 by John and his father Gennaro who brought the skills from Villa Pileggi in the Calabrian region of his native Italy, Villa Pileggi now has 1200 mature trees irrigated from a bore and a dam on the property.

Villa Pileggi sell their product at the Gisborne Olde Time Market on the first Sunday each month and at other regional farmers' markets. They plan shortly to open a shop on the property at 65 Leslie Road.

Olive trees take six to seven years to produce their first crop but then enjoy an indefinite life. Olives are harvested by hand between late April and late June each year. Extra Virgin oil is produced



John and Gennaro Pileggi in their Leslie Road olive grove.

from the first pressing of the fruit and only from the fruit grown on the property.

Pressing used to be by hand but is now mechanised.

John is passionate about his oil, the product of much hard hands-on work. But he also lectures in accounting during the week at Latrobe University and North Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT).

Given his extensive workload and an injury, John has had to abandon his coaching at Gisborne Tennis Club.

Villa Pileggi is very much a family concern. Gennaro and his wife Brigida are still actively involved especially at harvest time while John's wife Carmela is a key part of the team.

The Pileggi family have brought a little corner of Italy to Gisborne.