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California State Fair's Olive Oil Competition: A Historic Surge in Entries Sets the Stage for 2024

SACRAMENTO — The California State Fair Commercial Extra Virgin Olive Oil Competition is gearing up for an exceptional 2023-2024 season, showcasing a record-breaking 197 entries, the most it's seen in its ten years. This substantial increase, a 45% rise from last year, showcases the passion and hard work of olive oil producers across California.

"Seeing such a high number of entries this year demonstrates the dynamic progress and the strong commitment of our state's olive oil community," said Tom Martinez, CEO of California State Fair & Cal Expo. "It's clear evidence of their dedication to crafting top-notch products and their continuous push for innovation."

The event will take place on March 8th at Cal Expo, where a team of 15 expert sensory judges will carefully assess entries from all over California. The producers are competing for the highly regarded Best of Show Golden Bear Trophy, a mark of excellence that has been raising the bar for the competition for eight years.

This year's competition has been organized to represent the full range of California's olive oils. The Extra Virgin Olive Oil Monovarietal Show will sort entries into delicate, medium, or robust classes, to honor the distinct nature of each type. The Extra Virgin Olive Oil Blend Show will highlight the unique growing conditions across California's olive orchards, and the Flavored Olive Oil Show introduces an element of inventiveness with flavors that include citrus zest and the spice of garlic.

The 2024 event will also see the introduction of the "Friend to the Consumer Award," an initiative that emphasizes the competition's focus on consumer education and engagement. This award will recognize the packaging that best communicates the olive oil's origins, its freshness, taste profile, and ways to use it, aiming to deepen the connection between consumers and these high-quality products.

Sue Langstaff, acclaimed for her expertise in sensory analysis, will lead the judging panel. As the Head Judge and the principal of Applied Sensory, LLC, her significant contributions, such as her



role in co-editing "Olive Oil Sensory Science" and creating The Defects Wheel® for Olive Oil, Beer, and Wine, have been critical in maintaining the competition's strict standards.

From July 12-28, the California State Fair offers a unique olive oil experience with an exhibition of award-winning oils. Visitors will have the chance to taste, learn from experts, watch cooking demonstrations, and buy premium oils from California's best producers.

With a record number of entries, expert judges, and new awards, the 2024 California State Fair Olive Oil Competition is shaping up to be an extraordinary showcase of the quality, variety, and creativity that defines California's olive oil industry.

For more information about the 2024 California Olive Oil Competition and to learn more, please visit CalExpoStateFair.com.

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