

The Sacramento Bee

# BUSINESS



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The UC Davis dean of biological sciences, Kenneth Burtis, in red tie, and visiting Japanese professor Masashi Kawaichi, wearing glasses, sample varieties of olive oil made from the university's abundant olive trees. The project produces a profit and helps remove a hazard to bicyclists.



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Sal Genito, the UC Davis head of building and grounds, greets visitors Wednesday at the debut of the university's 2007 olive oil production. Genito came up with the idea to make oil from the trees on campus.

## Olive: \$80,000 profit seen

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a little research. He found that harvesting the olives and pressing them into a high-end oil would more than pay for itself and keep the pathways clean in the bargain.

Some of UCD's olives are removed from trees with a mechanical harvester, which grabs a limb and shakes it. Others get whacked from the branches with long rakes. Tarps spread on the ground collect the fruit.

Genito's first harvest, in the fall of 2004, yielded about 80 gallons. The 2007 vintage unveiled Wednesday is about 10 times that size. It comes in three blends with distinctive tastes — from mild to pungent — that reflect the variety of trees grown

on campus.

The campus is also marketing, for the first time, a UC Davis wine vinegar made from cabernet sauvignon grapes from Napa Valley.

At \$12 to \$15 for a quarter-liter bottle, the olive oil aims for the premium market. Last year, the 6,500-bottle vintage sold out in four months. This year's oil is available at the UC Davis campus bookstore and online at [oliveoil.ucdavis.edu](http://oliveoil.ucdavis.edu).

The oil is expected to yield \$80,000 in profit, which will be used to support the new UC Davis Olive Center, founded in January to foster research on olives and olive oil.

Call The Bee's Jim Downing, (916) 321-1065.

## TASTE OF SUCCESS

**UCD celebrates another year of turning its olive mess into a moneymaker**

By Jim Downing  
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In a moment of frustration four years ago, UC Davis grounds chief Sal Genito hit on the idea of turning a landscaping problem into a gourmet olive oil.

On Wednesday, the campus toasted his imagination during a celebration launching the fourth vintage of UC Davis Olive Oil — by far the largest yet.

"It's great to know that the olives you've

been cussing all these years are going to a good use," said Dave Emery, a University of California, Davis, student health center employee standing in line to purchase some of the 12,000 golden-hued bottles.

The idea to press oil from the fruit of the university's 1,500 olive trees struck Genito after being called to the scene of a bicycle accident alongside Russell Boulevard.

"There were smashed olives everywhere," Genito recalled. "I said, 'Wait a minute. That smells like olive oil!'"

At the time, Genito was spending a good chunk of his campus budget cleaning up dropped olives. If left to slime the campus pathways, they created a hazard for cyclists and a liability risk for the university.

Genito, who describes himself as "100 percent Italian" and a lifelong olive oil lover, did

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UC Davis Olive Oil, from \$12 to \$15, is available on campus and online.