HELP A TUSCAN OLIVE GROWER CREATE A RETAIL-READY PRODUCT



That’s me, Alex, with my two younger sons Sam and Max (Elio has moved to the frozen rainy north of Europe). This is our second Kickstarter campaign. Add my camera-shy wife, Giovanna, and we're about half the muscle behind Poggiosole, a Tuscan olive farm and swanky vacation rental which helps fund the farm. Over the past four years, we've been busy bringing many of our hundred-year-old olive trees back from a state of prolonged neglect. For this campaign, just like in 2024, our vision remains to make our farm ever more productive and self-sustaining while transforming our EVOO from a home-poured oil sold mostly to guests to a professionally packaged and certified product that can be proposed to retailers, while retaining the farm-direct option.

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY.

Amongst the roughly six hundred trees in our three olive groves are 60 saplings planted since 2023: part of an effort to reinvigorate our old-timers (younger trees are proficient pollinators).

Thanks to the tractor and mowing decks we acquired in 2024 with the help of our first campaign's backers, our gardener and master pruner Vittorio Ancillotti and I have managed to finish cleaning up 85% of Poggiosole's land and all three groves. That means hundreds of cubic meters of Spanish broom and brambles gone, grass now cut 4 to 6 times per year, and every one of our olive trees shaped and pruned yearly for maximum health and yield going forward. Our trees and their fruit now see more sun, and *we* are starting to see results. 2025's November olive harvest produced over **200 liters** of high-phenolic oil: a record (and yet, according to Vittorio, barely 20% of what the fruit from our 600 trees might eventually yield). We expect this year's early November harvest, from which most of our rewards are drawn, to be even stronger.

We've also just completed the first of two important certifications. Poggiosole's evoo is now PGI (IGP) certified, meaning its provenance is documented and guaranteed. Since olive oil is one of the most adulterated food products on the planet, this certification, which involves inspections at each year's pressing and numbered seals, is an important reassurance to folks who have never met us or come to stay with us, taste our EVOO or walk in our groves. We felt PGI certification was essential to go beyond hand-poured EVOO and get us closer to a retail-ready product. And it's exactly this transition that we're asking your help with. To grow, we need to go beyond selling hand-poured and hand-labeled EVOO (mostly) locally.



NOW WE'RE FACING TWO MAJOR STEP-CHANGES:

While we've organically farmed our trees and land for over a decade, we've decided to undertake the three-year "conversion" to *full and official* certification as an organic farm producing ***certified organic olive oil:*** really a new product for us. We've already taken the first steps with an initial inspection by a certification body called Bioagricert. During that walk-through I learned that, through mid-2029 we will be visited at least once yearly by Bioagricert inspectors who will check our soil, sprayer and tool shed for any non-conforming products or their residue. Since we already use foliar and root fertilizers that meet organic standards, we're expecting high marks on those inspections. However, every spring and fall the last several years we have also been doing a whole lot of this:



… AN END TO OUR BONFIRES …

And burning is a no-no. Bioagricert says an *organic* farm cannot burn cuttings from pruning, base-clearing or thinning tree canopies. This is because organic rules treat pruning wood as a resource to return to the land. Burning it goes against that.

Olive trees are bushes by nature, and send up astounding quantities of shoots every growing season, both within their canopies and around the base of their trunk(s). This is not a problem for the tree, but it's a problem if you want sunlight to reach, nourish

and ripen all its olives, and it's an especially gnarly problem when you must quickly pull the tree's fruit at harvest time.

So all those shoots get snipped, they get snipped twice a year, and as a result olive farmers produce an astonishing volume of relatively small-bore cuttings semi-annually: long, thin, and leafy (check out this time-lapse of Vittorio pruning a hundred-year-old *Pendolino*). Traditionally, these are piled up and burned in the cooler, wetter months. But if you don't burn your cuttings, and you've got more than fifty or so trees (again, we have six hundred), no back lot is big enough to store more than a couple years' worth. Even if you had the room, you'd be building a giant tinderbox (olive leaves are flammable, even more so when dry). It may sound trivial, but this no-burning rule will drive a **step-change** in the way we work. From next year we'll have to chip all our cuttings, which means either engaging a new contractor or buying a wood chipper.

…AND NEW PACKAGING WITH OFFICIAL, NUMBERED SEALS.



Fully compling with the requirements of organic (and our just-awarded PGI) certification will also oblige us to change not just our labeling and packaging, but how and where our EVOO is stored, packaged, and shipped from. Gone will be the

unassuming steel tins (or half-liter glass bottles) of EVOO with basic, bright yellow labels on which organoleptic details and "best by" dates are filled in by hand by me. And this is not just a matter of "looking fancier". This is a requirement we are racing to meet ahead of next month's harvest.

The full PGI (IGP) regime, which, having recently attained the certification we are now invited to meet, involves certifying newly-pressed EVOO *at the mill*, whereupon the tank containing said oil is weighed and sealed and remains at the mill: it doesn't come home with us. The PGI consortium then prints a pre-determined number of official paper seals to apply to bottles and tins which are also filled and labeled on a mechanized line *at the mill*. This means that, with luck, even a portion of the rewards from this campaign won't look quite like they do in the photos in the rewards section. Bottling and labeling at the mill with professionally-designed labels is our **second step-change**. Both the chipping and the certification-requirement of new packaging are one-time CAPEX items that will be partially funded with the proceeds of this campaign, just as pruning and our compact tractor were partially funded by our 2024 backers.

WHAT WE ARE OFFERING

This campaign’s funding goal is seventy-five hundred euros (approx US$8.4K) to help us fund the above step-changes in our farming practices and bottling / labeling. We’ve set up seven reward tiers, of which all but the first combine some of our outstanding 2025 filtered EVOO with varying quantities of fresh-pressed 2026 EVOO (and even oil from 2027, at the high-roller level) in ***new, as-yet undesigned packaging***. For tiers featuring four or more liters the new, 2026 EVOO will be split between a single liter of unfiltered and one or more liters of filtered oil. Why? Unfiltered EVOO is best enjoyed within 45 days of pressing, and is especially magical in the first three weeks after pressing (after 45 days, the solids in unfiltered oil begin to precipitate out of the oil and decompose, altering the taste). Properly stored *filtered* evoo retains its flavor for up to 30 *months*.

Our top reward tier has us host you and up to nine of your friends and / or family at Poggiosole and even join our harvest in late October 2027 if you’re game.

WHAT MAKES OUR EVOO RARE & REMARKABLE



The polyphenol content of Poggiosole evoo is reliably above 400 mg/kg and can exceed 500 mg/kg, depending on the year. This high-phenolic oil is also rich in vitamin E (over 200 mg/kg) with acidity below 0.5%. We achieve these results by root- and leaf-fertilizing our trees with organic products, by pruning them annually, by gathering olives by hand, and by pressing them *the same day* we pull them off the trees, heading to the mill each evening of our harvest. At the mill we opt for the small-batch MORI-TEM line which keeps the olive paste cooler, employs vertical malaxing tanks to limit oxidation and omits the final centrifuge typical of industrial processes.

I feel comfortable saying that you will not find a more distinctly Tuscan or more healthful olive oil at your grocer's or supermarket, save a very few specialty shops. And thanks in part to this campaign our oil will now bear a PGI seal, and be professionally bottled and therefore presentable to those same very few specialty shops: a **first** for us.

RISKS and CHALLENGES

We already have all the product required to fulfill the portion of each reward that is comprised of our 2025 evoo. And we have budgeted conservatively for rewards involving the evoo we'll be producing as the campaign wraps. The fruit on the trees outside my window as I type looks plump and unblemished; there is little risk the upcoming harvest will disappoint. There is a real risk that the new labels and PGI seals won't be ready in time, so it may be that the 2026 EVOO for this campaign will ship in our tried-and-true green tins with bright yellow labels, as shown in the photos of our rewards.

And yes, it is remotely possible that a 100-year-intensity hailstorm will decimate our 2026 harvest and that we will have to either extend shipments into 2028 or purchase oil from a neighboring farm to fulfill our higher-tier reward commitments. We would then give our backers the option of waiting for next years' harvest or receiving some of their oil from local farms that produce an evoo of a quality comparable to ours.

Either way, if we meet our funding goal, contrary to the risk that normally accompanies goods-based Kickstarter campaigns, we will NOT renege (allowing for an outside risk of revised timing) on any of our reward commitments.