

## **TasteBook™ Round 5- Appreciating Picual extra virgin olive oil sensory experience**

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### **Introduction:**

TasteBook™ is a sensory training initiative by providing a platform to the participants from different levels of judging expertise to have a learning experience. TasteBook™ round 5 explored the sensory attributes and varietal nuances of Picual- a variety loved by some but a quandary for others. Picual olives are the most commonly grown olive today for olive oil production, with production centred in the Spanish province of Jaén. Picual trees are estimated to account for 25% of all olive oil production in the world- used as a single variety and blended. This variety is a very hardy one that adapts to a variety of climatic and soil conditions including salinity, excess soil moisture and cold. Picual olives are medium in size, ovoid shape and slightly asymmetrical. It is early bearing with fruit ripening early- naturally very high in oil content (20-27% by weight) especially when harvested later in the season. Picual oil has a high oleic acid content and high stability and as a result it is resistant to rancidity and oxidation. Australian early picked Picual (from green/turning colour olives) oil has high levels of polyphenols (300-700ppm) with dark green vegetal and tomato stalk/leaf characters. Late picked Picual oil (from purple/black olives) is sweeter and less pungent with more tropical and characters. The Picual oil is very complex in its sensory attributes as its characteristics changes throughout the ripening stage and depending on what stage the olives are harvested, the sensory experience will be versatile- hence it was the ideal candidate for this round's in-depth varietal experience.

### **Samples and Methodology:**

The TasteBook™ round 5 was successfully introduced in August 2019 and concluded within two months. A total of four Picual EVOO samples were sent to participants within Australia and abroad (South Africa, New Zealand and USA); the details about the samples are in Table 1.

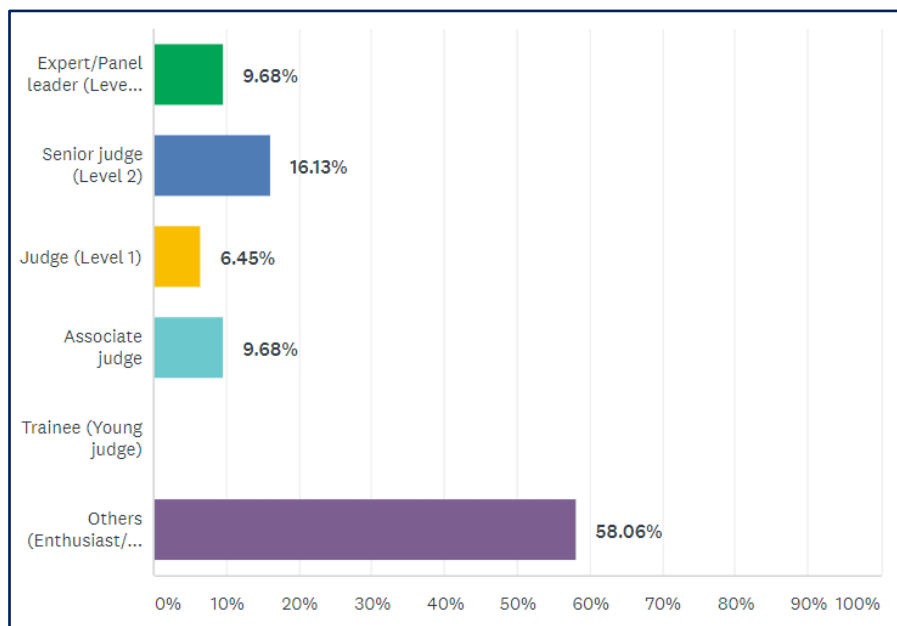
**Table 1:** Picual EVOO samples- Round 5:



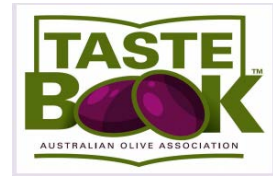
Samples	Description
5A	Grassy Spur EVOO South Gippsland Picual (Victoria), 2018 Australian International Olive Awards (AIOA) Gold medal winner; best before June 2020
5B	Waipara Grove North Canterbury EVOO Picual (New Zealand), 2018 Olives NZ Gold medal winner; best before June 2020
5C	Boundary Bend EVOO Picual (Victoria), 2019 Gold medal winner in Olive Japan International competition, best before May 2021
5D	Otway Olives Picual EVOO Maluka Estate (Victoria)- Limite Release, 2018 AIOA Silver medal winner, 2018 Sydney Royal Gold medal winner, 2018 Gold Golden Olives; best before Oct 2020

## Results and Discussion:

A total of 31 participants from national and international arena took part in the current round of the TasteBook™ program. The “judging experience” of EVOO of the participants is presented in Figure 1- which reflects a large number of participants are still the olive oil enthusiasts or the producers who would like to understand how to describe well Picual. The level of participation from the judges from different levels for EVOO is encouraging (Figure 1A). More participation is required for young judges in the future rounds of TasteBook™; although it is positive to see enthusiasts/beginners and olive producers are taking active interests in learning and participating from the TasteBook™ program (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Judging experience on EVOO- Participants' self-reporting feedback**



Every participant was asked to taste four samples of Picual olive oil in this round and describe aroma, flavour and mouthfeel attributes with minimum 3-4 descriptors. One of the learning intentions of this round of TasteBook™ is to provide a platform for the participants to experience the varietal nuances and diverse sensory attributes of Picual oil. To visualise better how each sample was perceived and described by the participants (irrespective of their own experience), a comparative analysis of 4 different “word cloud” was developed to summarise the feedback (Figure 2). To read the word clouds easily, one has to identify the “size” of the words mentioned inside the cloud- the bigger the size of the descriptor, the more frequent that particular descriptor is repeated within participants’ feedback for each sample. To make it reading easier, all three attributes of aroma, flavour and mouthfeel for each sample were combined together and represented as one word cloud.

All the four Picual samples won one or more awards this year or last year- that was one important consideration while selecting the oils for this round. Sample 5B was the only one from NZ and the oil was characterised by fresh green aroma on the nose, green tomato and grassy, balanced fresh flavour following through to the palate, with complex fruity notes, mild bitterness and pungency, leaving a light buttery aftertaste, peppery mouthfeel and short finish. All the oils used in this round have more than a year when the samples sent to the participants, except for sample 5C, which has best before date of almost another 2 years. As sample 5C is very fresh in relation to its harvest and processing time (April 2019), it was interesting to see how the participants described the aroma, taste and mouthfeel. One of the main attributes that participants consistently agree on sample 5C was its freshness- in its aroma and flavour. There were commonalities in sensory attributes across the 4 samples- all of them were characterised by the green aroma (consisting of grass, green tomato), the banana note was prevalent in the aroma and followed through to the palate (although not strong enough). The balance between medium to intense bitterness and pungency are the determining factors for how the oils left a lingering aftertaste in the palate- some participants do not like the lingering bitterness or pungency or both.

For this round, an individual report will be sent to every participant, so that they can compare their notes and responses to the final report.

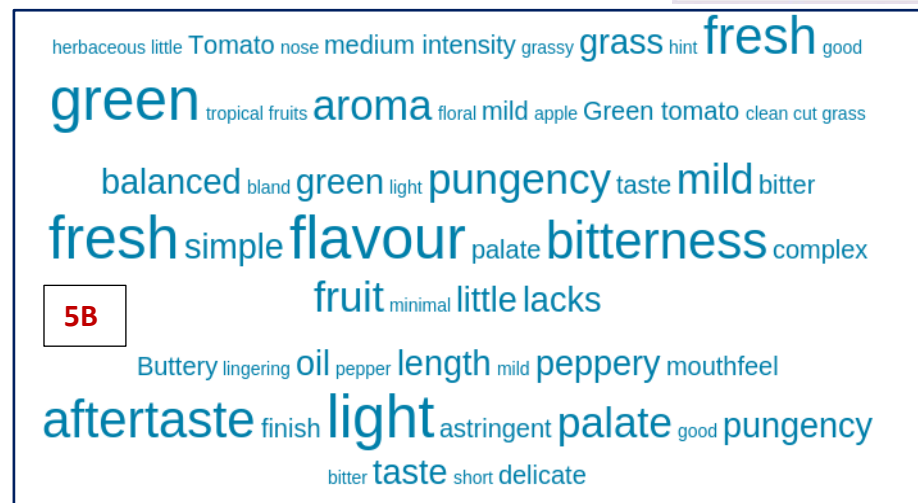
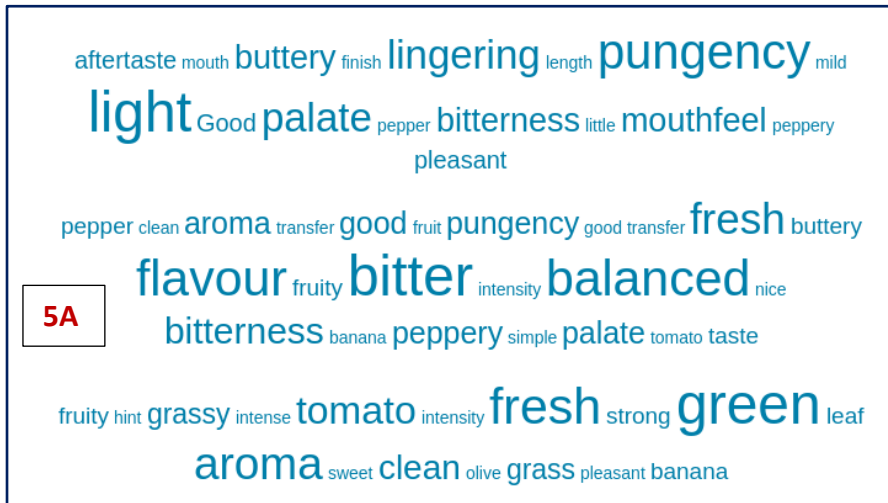
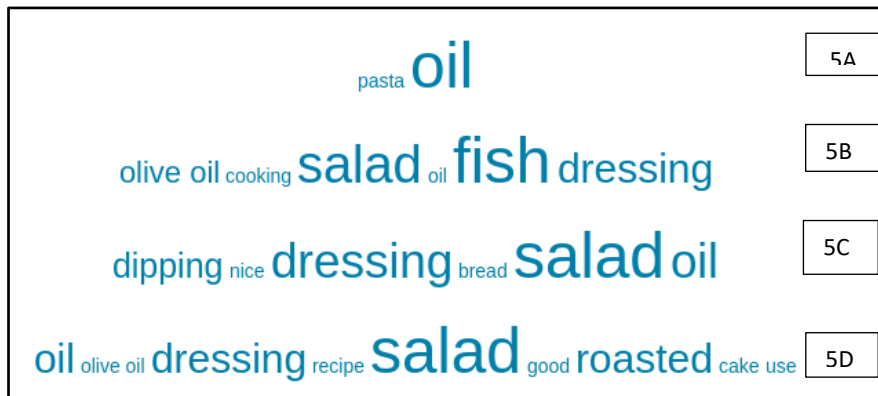


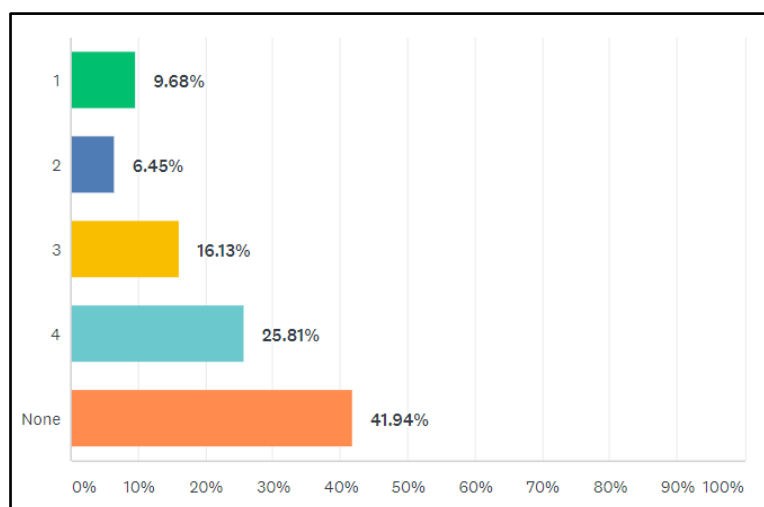
Figure 2: Four samples of Picual extra virgin olive oil (5A to 5D) – Sensory Descriptors

When asked about identifying some ways and recipes to use individual Picual oil, The resulting word cloud is very interesting (Figure 3). Sample 5A from Grassy Spur was chosen to be used as “oil”; whereas rest of the oil samples (5B- 5D) had been selected for various usage and recipes. It was great to see the diverse usage of Picual oil depending on the strength of the olive oil flavour, aroma and mouthfeel and how those attributes made the participants think to choose the best way to use them (Figure 3).

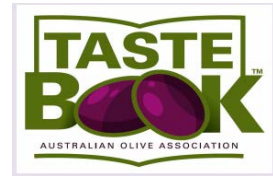


**Figure 3:** Appropriate recipe suggestions for 4 Picual samples

It is evident from the Figure 4 that, almost 42% of total participants never took part in any of the previous TasteBook™ rounds; whereas 26% have participated in all 4 rounds. It is great to see the increased participation from the new members, a significant percentage of them actually have attended one or more National TasteBook™ workshops happening around various states in Australia over the past few months. It is pertinent to continue the training as participation in these online rounds will help the participants from any stage of their judging experience to build their sensory skills and continue updating their knowledge and vocabulary. The numbers of descriptors written by the participants irrespective of their judging experience showed an agreement among them for individual oil and this agreement can be considered as an accomplishment for this program.



**Figure 4:** Sample TB-5C Picual - Descriptors



## **Learning from Round 5 and future recommendation:**

The round 5 of TasteBook™ program has received many positive feedbacks from the participants about the learning intention, judging criteria, and the training notes provided with the samples. There are a couple of important learnings from this round- the most important one is about the sample presentation and transport. 6 participants confirmed that their one or more oil samples leaked, so this is definitely something that needs to be looked at in detail. As the next round of tasting is focussing on table olives, so it is important to check the lid and the sealing process. There is also a suggestion about including a “Live” could understand and learn how to taste oils and describe them. This feedback is very positive and this will be used before doing the TasteBook™ round 6 with Kalamata olives- to ensure every participant will get a presentation and video link where the sensory researcher can present how to taste and describe table olives.

The unique opportunity to taste 4 different Picual varieties from different groves was one of the highlights mentioned by many participants and they have enjoyed the comparative tasting. Most of the participants have recommended to receive the full report with their own results so they can compare their scores against everyone and to see how they performed. As a result, the full report will be sent to every participant with their individual report to ensure they have something to compare to for their own learning. Approximately 94% participants would love to come back to the next rounds and that is considered a huge success of this training program.

## **Acknowledgement:**

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