



Winterhill owners Annette Schoonover and Richard Wolf proudly stand by their products in their downtown Placerville store

PLACERVILLE'S WINTERHILL *Olive Oils*

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIMBERLY HORG-WEBB

An olive grove located in the southern area of El Dorado County produces some of the highest quality olive oils in the Sierra. Winterhill Olive Oils' retail store in downtown Placerville offers customers a variety of fresh olive oils ranging from lemon-flavored to jalapeno.

Annette Schoonover and Richard Wolf bought a farm in 2003 and planted an olive orchard. The couple named the property Winterhill because it is where their winters were spent. Both of them were Lake Tahoe residents so they traveled back and forth for a couple years from Tahoe to their new farm. Schoonover and Wolf became full-time residents of Placerville in June of 2007 when Winterhill opened its doors on Main Street.

"Richard and I are living a dream come true," Schoonover said. "One thing we have discovered that 'living the dream' takes a lot of hard work. If we did not have a passion for what we do, we would not be doing it."

The olives grow every year until they are ready to harvest for pressing. The olives are pressed by a family operation in northern California. The fruit, herbs and vegetables that are added to the flavored oils are pressed with the olives. Winterhill does not enhance flavors after pressing with extracts. The flavored oils have their true flavors and retain all of their own antioxidant levels because of the direct pressing with the olives.

Schoonover says she loves all of the olive oil flavors. She uses them on a regular basis to get the various flavors she is looking for in her foods. She says olive oils can replace butter and vegetable oils in almost any dish and is healthier. Extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO) has clinically proven health benefits ranging from lowering bad cholesterol, to cancer prevention and enhancing immune systems, just to name a few.

A major part of Winterhill's business plan is to be environmentally responsible as well as a

community-oriented business that contributes to society. The couple believes in recycling so they try to give incentives to customers for their efforts. The normal prices range from \$5 to \$24 for the labeled bottles but if customers bring the bottle back to the store or bring their own bottle, a 40% discount is given out. "The refill and bulk buyers program are not only good for the consumer's pocketbook, but also great for the environment," Schoonover said.

Another reason to buy Winterhill is because a percentage of their profits are donated to area art schools for disabled children: Mother Lode Rehabilitation Enterprises and Southside Art Center. The bottles also feature disabled artists' work on their labels. "Richard and I have always been not only advocates but lovers of the creative artwork of the developmentally disabled artists," Schoonover said. "We have been collectors for years, and when it came time to do our labels it was a clear choice to display their wonderful art on our bottles."

Besides their tasty oils, customers can find products of several local artisans including unique jams and jellies, local honey, soaps, lotions, chutneys, vinegars, textiles and handcrafted wooden items. The store's motto is "Products with Passion." It sells products by other local producers who have a passion for what they do. It has a complimentary tasting bar that is always open during store hours. It also offers tastings of many of the other fine products in the store.

"When you enter the tasting room, you are immediately greeted by friendly staff and are quickly drawn to the many specialty items offered for purchase as well as the tastefully decorated décor," Placerville resident Janice Wickham said. "Winterhill offers several different olive oils, and are helpful in offering food pairings that best suit their oils." **SH**

✦ Map reference, page 104: G-4

Winterhill Olive Oils is located at 321 Main Street in Placerville. For more information visit winterhillfarms.com or phone 530.626.6369.