

Bella Balsamic chases the crush for quality

By Melanie Wiseman

If “chasing the crush” isn’t currently part of your vocabulary, Jeremy and Rebecca Berlin are ready to give you a crash course on how it will change your life.

The Berlins opened Bella Balsamic and The Pressed Olive, a specialty store located at 555 Main St. in Grand Junction, in September 2014.

“Ninety-five percent of people

who walk through the door have no idea what we’re doing here,” Jeremy said. “So we educate them, and the more they learn about how good our products are, they leave with a bottle and become return customers.”

Having traveled Europe extensively, Jeremy knows what good balsamic vinegars and extra virgin olive oils tasted like, but couldn’t find them in the U.S. While visiting a friend, the Berlins checked out a great little oil and vinegar shop in Prescott, Arizona and were hooked.

They became a distributor franchise for Veronica Foods, also known as

Jeremy and Rebecca Berlin enjoy educating customers on the health benefits of vinegars and olive oils.



Delizia Olive Oil, one of the first importers of extra virgin olive oil into America.

The Berlins opened their first store in Punta Gorda, Florida four years ago. With its success, they decided to open a second store. Downtown Grand Junction had the perfect appeal, in part, because Jeremy has family here.

Olive oil fraud

“There has been a lot of publicity about the olive oil fraud in America because there are no FDA regulations,” Rebecca said. “A lot of what you get in the grocery store is really soy, canola or other mixes with just a tiny bit of extra virgin added, yet they label it extra virgin. The California Olive Oil Council out of Davis University found 85 percent of extra virgin olive oils carried in supermarkets were not extra virgin olive oil or even olive oil at all.”

Years ago Jeremy bought olive oil from Sam’s Club by the gallon.

“Everyone said it was so good for you but my cholesterol shot up to 320,” he said. “Then we got into this business and it dropped 100 points.”

According to the Berlins, their olive oils are all natural with the highest health benefits.

“True balsamic vinegar is aged in wood barrels from four to 18 years and it’s going to be a live food with pre- and pro-biotic digestive enzymes,” Rebecca said.

The Berlins recommend reading “Extra Virginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil” by Tom Mueller.

“There’s a whole olive oil mafia, olive oil ‘drug trade,’ money and murders and all kinds of intrigue and craziness,” Rebecca said. “Mueller actually followed ships that would leave port loaded with soybean oil and their manifest would say extra virgin olive oil.”

To ensure authenticity and quality, the Berlins parent company requires farmers own the land and trees, and olives are picked green and cold pressed within four to six hours for the highest nutritional value. Extensive taste test and chemistry analyses follow, and the entire oil batch is purchased only if it gets a good report.

"We can take any of our products and have the ability to find out the specific farm they were raised on," Jeremy said. "Ours is a single source product: one olive oil, one farmer, one press. Once you try our products and see what a difference they make in your health and how you feel, you will never go back to grocery store products again."

Chasing the crush

Northern and southern hemisphere groves allow for fresh pressings twice a year. In the past, olives were pressed in Europe just once a year. Then olive trees were taken to places like Spain, Australia, Argentina and California about 75 years ago, in order to get two crushings a year.

"We chase the crush," Jeremy said. "Where the freshest olives are, that's where we go."

To the Berlins, freshness trumps origin.

"Following the crush from hemisphere to hemisphere allows us to offer you the freshest, healthiest, highest quality product year round," Rebecca said. "Every one of our bottles has the crushed date on it."

The health benefits

Extra virgin olive oil has become a legendary culinary oil with health benefits that are hard to match.

"Real extra virgin olive oil actually takes the plaque right out of your arteries," Jeremy said. "The more robust and flavorful the oil, the better it is for you."

See for yourself and learn more by stopping by Bella Balsamic & The Pressed Olive in downtown Grand Junction or call 581-6703. ■



Health benefits of extra-virgin olive oil include:

- Nine different categories of polyphenols (antioxidants) and more than two dozen anti-inflammatory nutrients.
- Decreases total blood cholesterol
- Decreases blood pressure
- Decrease oxidative stress in the blood
- Decreases blood platelet clumping
- Decreases LDL
- Increases bone formation
- Increases cognitive benefits
- Increases fat loss
- Contains cancer fighting benefits

Bella Balsamic vinegar health benefits include:

- Contains pre- and probiotics that aid digestion
- Helps cure heartburn and chronic reflux
- High in cancer-fighting antioxidants
- A natural appetite suppressant
- Reduces cholesterol
- Helps retard osteoporosis.
- Amino acids slow the effects of aging
- Reduces the severity and frequency of headaches and migraines
- Soothes bug bites
- Helps relieve asthma, allergies, sinus pressure and infection
- Reduces inflammation and relieves arthritis

