

TOP IN THE SHOPS

The second Best Brands Survey shows that the big names are still the best sellers. MICHAEL LANE drills down into the responses from FFD's retailer readership for a more detailed picture.

Oils & Vinegars

- 1st Seggiano
- 2nd Deli-cious
- 3rd Olives Et Al
- 4th Womersley

Last year's top two traded places, with Seggiano's extra virgin olive oil and aged balsamic vinegar edging on-tap specialist Deli-cious's flavoured balsamics and oils. Olives Et Al's own-branded olive oil bagged third place, and fruit vinegar specialist Womersley was fourth, with specific mentions of its raspberry vinegar, which was named one of the Top 50 Foods in the UK & Ireland in Great Taste 2012. What these results don't show is the popularity of rapeseed oil, which would have taken top spot if the votes for the many different brands were combined. The list of producers – including Great Ness, Farringtons, Summer Harvest and Gold from the Wold – reflect the truly regional nature of this product.



INTERVIEW

David Harrison, co-founder, Seggiano

There's not much to making good olive oil, says Seggiano's David Harrison. It's about "good olives, picking them at the right time, milling them correctly and storing them correctly."

The Seggianese olives – a variety found on the Tuscan farm Harrison and partner Peri Eagleton have owned for nearly 30 years – just happen to be very good.

This "very delicate, creamy, nutty oil", produced from their own olives and those of neighbouring farms, is the foundation of the Seggiano brand first established in 1994. He points out that some of

the oil's appeal to the British consumer is its lack of bitterness even during the early harvest.

Harrison himself is still involved at every step of the production process from the harvesting of the trees (some are 1,000 years old) using 40ft ladders through to putting the corks in the bottles. Not only does this close relationship with the source guarantee retailers high levels of provenance and quality but it also gets them a good deal. That stands for the oil, the firm's lauded balsamic vinegars and a host of Italian products, which it now supplies direct to the UK trade.

"We can offer a quality oil at a lower price. Rather than it being on the shelf for £20 it's on there for £11," says Harrison, adding: "When I'm talking to an Italian I'm not just talking in Italian I'm talking as a farmer and producer."

While Harrison acknowledges that, these days, price is everything, that does not mean he will compromise.

Even the tiniest ingredient is checked with suppliers so that labelling will be correct and a product will taste as good as it can.

"You could take any one of our products in any category and that will be the best in the category. Our customers, both punters and shopkeepers know that we've always put ethics and integrity at the top of the list."