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Carme Ruscalleda Can't Imagine Cooking Without Olive Oil

POSTED ON MAY 05 2011 | CATEGORIZED IN: COMPETITIONS

By Julie Butler

Olive Oil Times Contributor | Reporting from Barcelona

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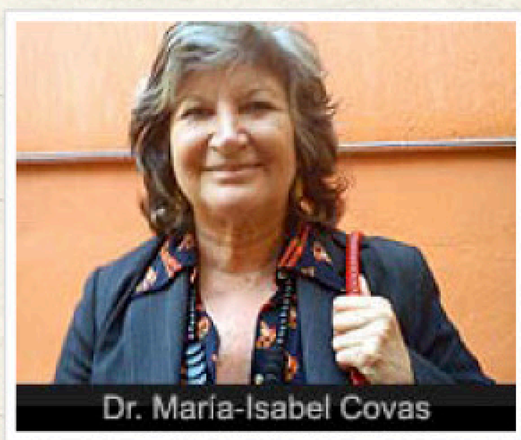
The only female chef in the world to earn six Michelin stars, Carme Ruscalleda was in the spotlight this week for her promotion of extra virgin olive oil, winning one of four new Catalan Olive Oil Denominations of Origin ("DOP") prizes.

Recognizing outstanding efforts to increase awareness and use of EVOO – a ke plank of Catalan cuisine – the awards were a joint initiative of Catalonia's 5 DOPs – Siurana, Les Garrigues, Terra Alta, Baix Ebre-Montsià and Empordà


Dr. María-Isabel Covas

The award ceremony in Barcelona saw the prize for research go to Dr. María-Isabel Covas, Head of the Cardiovascular Risk and Nutrition Research Group at the IMIM-Research Institute, Hospital del Mar, in Barcelona. Covas won the research prize for her team's work on the health benefits of extra virgin olive oil, which was pivotal to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) approval last month for the claim that "consumption of olive oil polyphenols contributes to the protection of blood lipids from oxidative damage."

The Catalan Pharmacy Board was awarded the prize for an organization, institution or group. They promoted a "Healthy Breakfasts" campaign in primary schools in Tarragona, which raised awareness of the link between nutrition and health. The initiative encouraged consumption of the traditional home-prepared baguette – drizzled with olive oil – instead of the bakery-bought goods that today's busy parents increasingly give their children.

The late, world-renowned chef Santi Santamaria won the prize for promoting use of Catalan EVOO, related products and local producers. He was the owner-founder of one of Spain's top restaurants, Can Fabes (three Michelin stars), and known for his avant-garde interpretation of traditional Catalan cuisine. Santamaria died in Singapore, in another of his restaurants, in February, and was represented yesterday by his son, Pau Santamaria, himself a chef.

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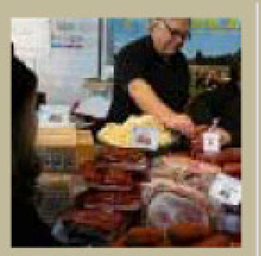
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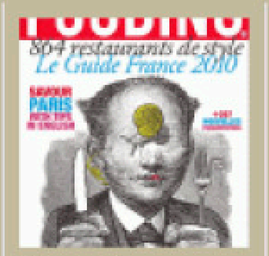
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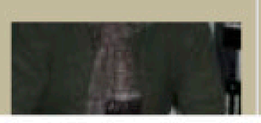

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Ruscalleda was unable to attend in person but wrote some words shared by her son Raül Balam i Ruscalleda, who with his mother heads the restaurant Moments at Barcelona's Mandarin Oriental hotel. Ruscalleda said that she could not imagine a restaurant without olive oil, it was so integral to food preparation.

The Catalan Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Food and the Environment, Josep Maria Pelegrí, said while widely used by them, not enough Catalans appreciated the high quality of locally-produced olive oil, which was actually "the best in the world."

The Post-Awards Tapas:

SIURANA DOP: Catalonian-style pizza of escalivada (roasted vegetables), anchovies and EVOO

LES GARRIGUES: Bruschetta with cherry tomato, vinegared anchovies, tuna, olives and EVOO

EMPORDÀ: lobster tail, potato and EVOO

BAIX EBRE-MONTSIÀ: skewers of grilled octopus and EVOO

TERRA ALTA: small endive salad cups with orange, codfish and EVOO

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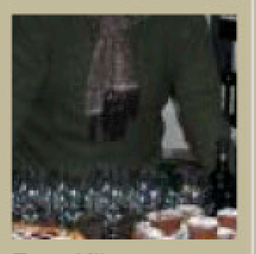

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