

Family has bottle for oil production

NEW RAPESEED PRODUCT SOUGHT BY SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS

A Perthshire farming family is crushing, bottling and marketing rapeseed oil direct from the field after hatching an innovative diversification project which followed months of research.

The Cameron family, who run a 400-acre mixed arable and livestock unit at Ferneyfold Farm, Madderty, near Crieff, are delighted with the local support for their new product which is now sought after by a range of local shops and restaurants.

David Cameron and his wife, Elizabeth, have grown oilseed rape on the farm for more than 25 years and, with the innovative drive of daughter Margaret and husband Mark Bush, they are now producing Summer Harvest rapeseed oil.

Mr Bush previously worked as an IT consultant in London on the trading floor of an investment bank. He started researching the potential market for Scottish rapeseed oil after marrying Margaret.

He added: "I've always loved cooking and had heard of rapeseed oil being used as an alternative to olive oil. When we started to research a bit further we discovered the huge health benefits of

rapeseed oil which is only 6% saturated fat, compared with olive oil which is typically 14% and butter at 59%.

"Coupled with the drive for locally-produced food and lowering food miles, we felt there could be real potential for rapeseed oil from Perthshire."

Rapeseed oil also has naturally-occurring Vitamin E, an antioxidant, and is a good source of omega three, six and nine. The oil has a deep golden colour and fresh, light nutty taste. It can be used in salad dressings, salsas and marinades as well as for stir-frying and baking. With a higher burning point than olive oil, it is also good for roasting.

The family has developed its own website - www.summerharvestoils.co.uk - on which it features its recipes using the oil.

The first batch of oil was made using one tonne of rapeseed crushed from a 65-acre field at Ferneyfold.



OILMEN: David Cameron and Mark Bush with the Summer Harvest rapeseed oil

Mr Cameron said: "We had previously been attending Perth Farmers' Market where we sold potatoes and that really made us aware of the public demand for locally-grown food and gave us the confidence to take the rapeseed oil idea forward."

The first batch was a real learning curve, with the moisture content of the oilseed rape proving a crucial

component in successful crushing. "Oilseed rape has always performed very well in Scotland, with the longer daylight hours a factor in this, and it seems the growing conditions also result in better tasting rapeseed oil. The taste will vary slightly each year depending on the growing and harvest conditions which gives the oil a really distinctive character."

A further three tonnes of oilseed rape have been crushed this summer and, with demand continuing to grow, the family are now looking at developing a range of oils, including infusions with Scottish-grown garlic and herbs. They are also looking at investing in their own on-farm crusher to make the oil as a contractor does the pressing for them.