



Arrivederci Greytown: Award-winner Odell Sugrue is heading to Italy to learn the secrets of the Tuscan masters of olive oil making.

Picture: PHIL REID

Off to get the good oil on olives

■ GREYTOWN
ELLEN DAVIES

WAIRARAPA olive grower Odell Sugrue has already taken the local industry by storm and is now heading to Italy to learn the art of olive growing from the experts.

Ms Sugrue left yesterday to spend a month "living and breathing olives" on a Tuscan olive grove. She has been chosen to represent The Olive Press, a Wairarapa company which owns a \$380,000 Italian olive press.

"I'm being sent over by them to learn more about Tuscan harvest and to work with a master of oil, to learn about the finer

details of pressing olive oil," said Ms Sugrue, whose own olive grove, Stone Valley in Greytown, was named the supreme winner at the Wairarapa Olive Oil Awards at the weekend.

The burgeoning New Zealand olive oil industry had taken the Italians by storm, she said.

"Two of the shareholders [of The Olive Press] are Tuscan and they were amazed at how well New Zealand oil is going. They wanted to get in behind the industry and support it."

New Zealand olive oil was different to traditional olive oil because of the cool climate, producing a fruitier flavour, she said.

"With each year we are continually surprised with how

well New Zealand oils are going. New Zealand wine averages the highest per litre export dollar throughout the world and I think our oil will follow in that category."

Producing olive oil was more difficult than most people thought, Ms Sugrue said.

"It's a little bit like learning how to make wine — you just think you squash the damn fruit, but it's a heck of a lot more complicated than that.

"We want to achieve a product that has had minimal intervention."

The Italian masters will teach her about the processing of fruit, harvest ripeness, blending procedures and storage.