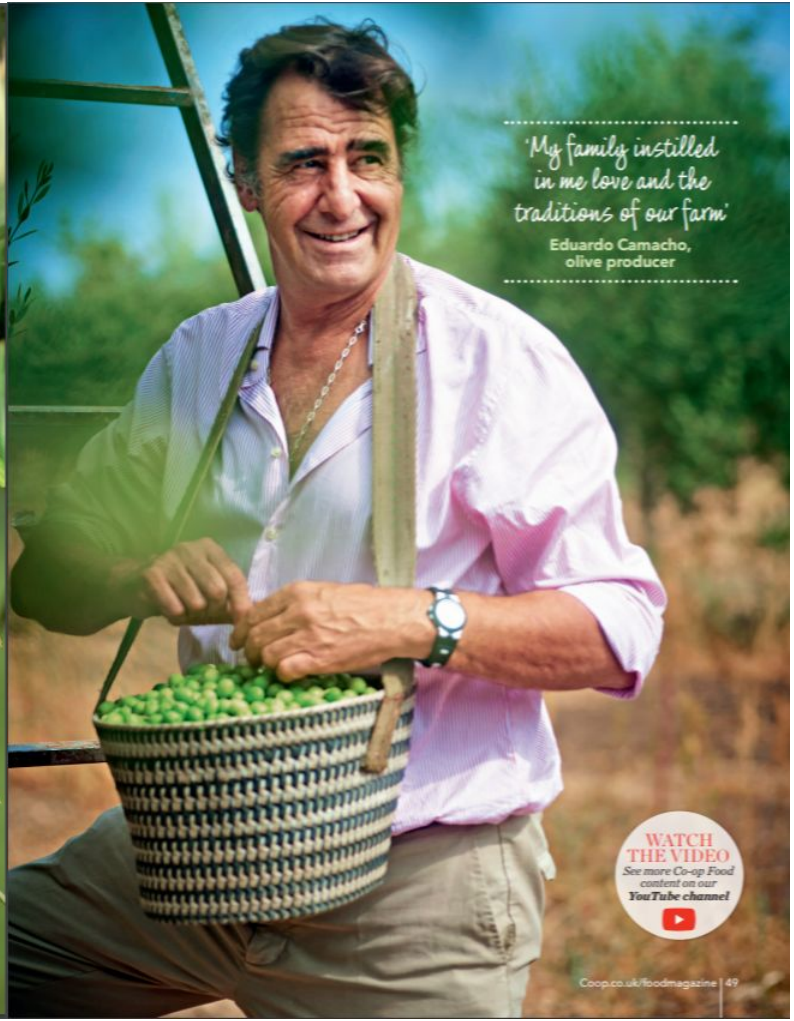
Like father, like son

Eduardo Camacho's olive groves have been in his family for centuries. With Father's Day coming up, we meet the father-and-son team behind Co-op's delicious olives



Eduardo Camacho is thinking. His face, browned by years of Spanish summers, is wrinkled with concentration. I've asked him what makes his olives taste so good, but there's no easy answer. The groves in Seville, where he grows olives for Co-op, have been in his family for hundreds of years. It's this history, he says, that makes the fruit so special.

'I'm one of a long line of Eduardos,' he tells me. 'The farm has been passed down from father to son through at least seven generations, and we have all been named Eduardo. It may be even longer than that, but the records were destroyed during the Spanish Civil War. There is ancient history in the family's blood,' he adds, pressing a hand to his heart.

As the farm passes through the generations, each Eduardo manages it on behalf of the family. Eduardo Senior's six sisters all share in the profits, while Eduardo Junior, who is 25, is learning management and preparing to take over from his father. The rich history of Eduardo's farm and the legacy he will pass down means he and his son share a close bond.

'Since I was young, I was raised in a very strong family environment,' Eduardo tells me. 'And with my son, I have the typical father-son relationship. Sometimes I'm very proud of him, and sometimes I want to kill him!

'It's a difficult road he's on, but he's always proposing alternatives or ideas that are more modern than mine. He's a good worker and very aware of the social responsibility we have towards our workers.'

'The thing I love most about my father is the love he has for the farm,' Eduardo Junior says. 'We may have different opinions, but I've learnt a lot from him. I've been taught that family is a fundamental pillar in life – they're the people who will always be by your side.'

A FAMILY AFFAIR

As well as a long line of Camachos living off the land, the farm has supported workers in the local community for generations. Juan Castilla Mulero is the farm's foreman, and also part of the history of these groves.

'Juan's family's link to our farm goes back as far as mine,' Eduardo explains, as Juan leans a ladder against a tree and begins to prune it. 'We have five workers here year-round and all are members of Juan's family. We have 50 extra helpers during the harvest who live locally, and some are from Juan's extended family too.'

The farm blends its generations of expert knowledge with modern ideas to protect both the quality of the olives and the farm's importance to the local community.

'I could automate everything. Harvesting by hand is romantic, but costly,' Eduardo says. 'However, I think we have a moral obligation to our workers and to families like Juan's who have been with us for centuries. We're also responsible for managing the environment for future generations, so we're experimenting with ways to grow more olives.'

Clockwise from top left: Eduardo and Eduardo Junior; farm foreman Juan Castilla Mulero; family time. Above: look out for these packs in your local Co-op

OLIVE LIFE

With regular pruning, new trees are ready for harvesting after around seven years. If part of a tree dies, Eduardo's workers will graft on a variety of olive more likely to thrive – so his trees can grow up to three varieties at once.

During the harvest – a six-week window between September and November – the olives are carefully stripped from the branches by hand.

'We harvest around 1,000 kilos per hectare,' Eduardo says. 'Our soil is full of iron and it is this, along with sunshine and water, that helps make our olives so delicious.'

Once harvested, the olives are taken to the packing plant, where they're pitted by an impressive-looking machine that can destone 36 olives a second. To help with sustainability, the stones are ground down into oil, which is used to grease the machinery or sold on. The olives are sorted by size and quality, then shipped to stores across the world – including your local Co-op.

It's heartening to know that the olives we'll be sharing this summer across the UK have such a wealth of history, care and passion behind them. As Eduardo's family gathers round a wooden table to share fresh bread, tortillas and gleaming bowlfuls of green olives, it feels like the Spanish idyll made real. The love and history shared between the people around the table is tangible.

'My family instilled in me love and the traditions of our farm,' Eduardo says. 'We're a close family, and share our joys and worries. My son has to choose his path, but I would be proud if he continued with the family tradition.'

> 'The thing I love most about my father is the love he has for the farm'
>
> Eduardo Junior

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BAKED COD WITH OLIVES & CHORIZO

This vibrant dish sings with Mediterranean flavour.

Feeds 4 ● Ready in 40 mins

500g Co-op baby potatoes, halved (quartered if large)
1 ½ tbsp Co-op olive oil
1 onion, sliced
70g Co-op chorizo, diced
10g Co-op flat leaf parsley, stalks finely chopped, leaves roughly chopped
100g Co-op trio mixed olives, drained
225g Co-op piccolo tomatoes, halved
1 vegetable stock pot
500g jar Co-op tomato & garlic pasta sauce
2 x 240g packs Co-op skinless cod fillets
1 lemon, cut into wedges
Salad leaves (optional)

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/Gas 6. Put the potatoes in a large pan of water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 mins, then drain.
2 Meanwhile, heat half the oil in an ovenproof frying pan and cook the onion for 5 mins, stirring regularly. Add the chorizo and parsley stalks and cook for another 2 mins.
3 Add the olives, tomatoes, stock pot and pasta sauce. Swill the jar with 150ml water and add to the pan. Stir to dissolve the stock pot, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 15 mins.
4 Stir through half the parsley leaves, then nestle the cod fillets into the tomato sauce. Transfer to the oven and bake for 10 mins, uncovered.
5 Meanwhile, heat the rest of the oil in a large frying pan and sauté the potatoes for 15 mins, until golden.
6 Take the pan out of the oven, sprinkle the remaining parsley on top and season with black pepper. Serve with the lemon wedges and potatoes, and some salad leaves on the side, if you like.

Approx per serving

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1534kJ 403kcal	16.9g	3.4g	17.5g	3.18g
21%	Low 22%	Low 17%	Low 14%	High 53%

% of an adult's reference intake. Carbohydrates per serving 34g