



Annalene's olive trees provide more than just shade.

'I've gone from being a farmer's wife to being an award-winning entrepreneur'

ANNALENE DU TOIT, 46, lives on a farm near Riebeeck Kasteel with her husband, Pieter, and their four sons, Pieter-Steph, 17, Johan, 15, Anton, 12, and Daniel, 11.

"When we got married 22 years ago, Pieter and I only planted three hectares of our 300-hectare farm with olive trees. The remainder was used for growing grapes that were sent to the local co-op.

The trees started bearing fruit after the fifth year and, two years later, I began experimenting with olives in my farmhouse kitchen, adding herbs and bottling them in Purity jars. We handed them out to friends and family, who raved about them.

By then Pieter had turned the farm into

a wine farm, Kloovenburg, as it was always his dream to become a winemaker. Since the olives had proved popular with friends, we decided to sell them with his wine.

Over the years the area planted with olive trees has grown to 30 hectares. As we planted more trees and I became more and more interested in olives, I decided to start producing olive oil and bought a small olive press. I was surprised to discover that it takes 7kg of olives to produce one litre of olive oil, which explains why olive oil is more expensive than other oils.

I'm a creative person and love trying out new ideas with olives and olive oils. I now have over 40 products, including

different-flavoured olives, olive oils, salsas and tapenades. My best seller is black olives in blackberry dressing.

We harvest 150 tons of olives a year, some of which is used in the body-care range I started in 2005. I've received a few awards for my olives, something that makes me proud. In 2004 Kloovenburg Extra Virgin Olive Oil was recognised in Italy as one of the top 15 oils worldwide and in 2008 it was voted Best South African Oil by a leading wine magazine, and in 2009 I was voted *Landbouweekblad* and Sanlam Agricultural Female Entrepreneur, as well as Absa Olive Industry Achiever of the Year. In addition, Kloovenburg Extra Virgin Olive Oil received a gold medal at the SA Olive Awards.

When I started experimenting with olives, I had no idea it would turn into a successful business. I'm pleased with my success, but when you think about it, I'm still using the fruit that's in my back yard – it's just that my back yard is bigger than most!"

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Like to try it yourself?

- ✦ Olive trees grow well in most parts of SA, in areas that have cold winters and hot summers. They'll tolerate a large range of soil conditions, and often grow in rocky, hilly areas that aren't suitable for other crops.
- ✦ To find out more about the different types of olives of SA and their uses, visit saolive.co.za