



Family launches new brand into olive oil market



Dressing up: Cameron Wells and Ellis Gilbert launch Olio

By Cobi Jacobs

A new family-run olive oil brand, rooted in Greek heritage, has launched in local stores and online. Founder Cameron Wells grew up in East Finchley and wanted to create a product that felt authentic and genuinely good for you.

The idea for *Oily* began when he noticed that few of his friends or family members could name the brand of olive oil they used. Despite it being a staple in most kitchens, many defaulted to supermarket own brands or blended oils without knowing their origins.

Oily sources its oil from the Kalamata region, using Koroneiki olives grown by local farmers whose families have cultivated the land for generations. Unlike many supermarket brands, which mix olives from various countries and harvests, Oily is a single-origin oil, meaning it has a richer flavour and

naturally higher polyphenol levels.

The business is a family effort, with Cameron working alongside his father, the managing director, and his cousin Ellis Gilbert, who leads the creative direction.

Their aim is not only to introduce better olive oil to Londoners but also to build a brand grounded in community values. In an effort to give back to the community, Oily is partnering with Finchley Foodbank, based at St Mary's Church Hall in the High Road, N2, by donating olive oil and raising funds to support their work.

That's convenient! New allotment loo on site

Plot-holders at the Fuel Land Allotments, off the High Road, N2, welcomed the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Danny Rich, to cut the ribbon and officially open their new compostable 'eco' toilet, thanks to a grant of nearly £20,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund.



Spend a penny: Mayor of Barnet Danny Rich and Finchley Charities trustee Councillor Helen Gordon with the cheque that funded the new eco-toilet behind them

Clearing, planting and maintaining the plot continues to be a joint effort, supported by many volunteers including from finance company James Hambro & Partners, who were this year back for a second time helping out.

The Fuel Land site is run and managed by The Finchley Charities. With Brigid, the plot facilitator, the charity says it is particularly proud to be working with Oak Lodge School in East Finchley, whose pupils immerse themselves in a safe, inclusive environment while working on their cultivation skills.



Shelf sufficient: Emily Spilsbury and Claire Franks at the community grocery store.

Photo Anna Hindmarch

Affordable shop tackles the rising cost of living

By Anna Hindmarsh

Shoppers are able to save up to £20 on each food shop after a charity launched a 'Community Grocery' in North Finchley, helping to tackle the rising cost of living.

The initiative is led by The Message Trust in partnership with St Barnabas Church in the High Road, N12. Customers pay £5 for a year-long membership, giving them access to multiple food shops a week starting at £5 per visit, debt advice, cooking classes and coffee mornings. Assistant manager Emily Spilsbury said the affordable shop has given customers a "different mindset" when shopping. She said: "They walk in and they have that dignity of being able to choose the items they want to purchase, and the £5 they have might as well be £20 because you can buy so much."

Costs are kept low by bulk-buying stock and selling it for zero profit. They reduce food waste by collecting supermarket donations of food that would otherwise be sent to landfill, and also take private donations from residents. Manager Claire Franks said: "We have lots of lovely people wanting to donate" and "loads of volunteers coming in. We've got a waiting list [of volunteers] which is great." Community Grocery replaced a food bank that previously operated in the church. Having previously run the food bank, Emily said the Covid pandemic put a strain on

the service, and there was a need for an initiative like this in the area. Emily said: "We couldn't keep up with the demand; we were feeding close to 400 people in two hours every week, it just wasn't feasible for us." Now, she welcomes old customers from the food bank and new shoppers. She said that, despite there being initial fear, as food would no longer be free, all customers are able to afford it and benefit from the extra services included in the membership. The North Finchley grocery is one of 33 such initiatives run by The Message Trust across the UK.

Double donate

All donations to Citizens Advice Barnet from Tuesday 2 to Tuesday 9 December will be doubled as part of the Big Give Christmas Challenge, meaning donations to the charity's Christmas appeal will go twice as far.

Citizens Advice Barnet's Christmas appeal will help to fund training and support for advice volunteers, ensuring that Citizens Advice Barnet has a steady flow of skilled advisers. Donations are accepted all year round, but during the Big Give Christmas Challenge all donations are doubled, thanks to support from the UK's leading match funding charity, Big Give.

Last year, Citizens Advice Barnet helped more than 13,000 people with their problems and 80% of those seen by advisers found a way forward.

For more information about Citizens Advice Barnet's Big Give Christmas Challenge, or to make a donation, visit: <https://barnetcab.org.uk/christmas-2025>

Hearts of Oak

YULETIDE FAYRE

Friday 19th December
9:30 AM – 11:30 AM
OAK LODGE SCHOOL
Heath View, East Finchley, N2 0 QY

Join us for a festive morning at our Yuletide Fayre!

- Handmade Gifts** – Created by our talented students as part of their enterprise projects
- Refreshments** – Enjoy seasonal treats and drinks
- Support a Great Cause** – All proceeds go to the Hearts of Oak Charity

Come along, shop for unique gifts, and celebrate the holiday spirit with us! Your support helps make a difference.

Hearts of OAK