

Olive Oil Marketplace receives recognition

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Members of the RiverBend Growth Association present Tim and Julie Meeks, center, with the award for Small Business of the Month for August.

ALTON — It has been a good few weeks for Tim and Julie Meeks.

The couple, owners of Alton's Olive Oil Marketplace, recently celebrated the third anniversary of their business, and on Tuesday they were surprised with the RiverBend Growth Association's Small Business of the Month award. Members of the growth association showed up at the shop, located at 108 W. Third St., to present the couple with the award.

"It's pretty neat to get this award," Tim Meeks said.

The store offers an interactive experience for customers seeking extra virgin olive oils from Greece, Italy, Morocco and Spain, among other products. Customers have the option to fill their own bottles from "fustis," stainless steel containers.

In addition to olive oils, the marketplace offers balsamic vinegars, soups, dips, pastas, seasonings and rubs, hot sauces, salsas, coffee beans, teas, kitchen gadgets, bake-ware and gifts. The marketplace stocks unique items that can't be found in "big box stores." Tim also makes pre-mixed seasonings and flavors himself to sell.

The couple attributes much of the store's success to its personalized experience — the store largely tailors its offerings to the customers who frequent it. Tim Meeks said he believes that experience helped them win the award as well.

"Winning this is based on the members picking ... but I think it's also based on the perception and the customers talking about it," he said. "We've really got a good group of customers."

The marketplace celebrated its anniversary with customer appreciation days at the end of July. RBGA Director of Member Services Joell Aguirre said the shop has contributed positively to the downtown area since its opening three years ago.

"One of the reasons they were chosen for the Small Business of the Month was the 'unique boutique' atmosphere that they brought to our community and Downtown Alton," Aguirre said.

The store's hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Tim or Julie may be contacted at 618-304-3769 or sales@oliveoilmarketplace.com

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