

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

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EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Extra virgin olive oil is made simply by crushing olives and extracting the juice. It is the only cooking oil that is made without the use of chemicals and industrial refining.

Extra virgin olive oil must have no taste “defects.” It needs to have a nice flavor of fresh olives and achieve higher scores in lab tests for its chemical composition than other grades.

Since extra virgin olive oil is simply fruit juice without any additives, its quality and taste are influenced by the varieties of olives, the terroir where they were grown, and the countless decisions and production practices of a dedicated producer.

Extra virgin is the highest quality and most expensive olive oil classification. It should have no defects and a flavor of fresh olives.

In chemical terms extra virgin olive oil is described as having a free fatty acidity of not more than 0.8 grams per 100 grams and a peroxide value of less than 20 milliequivalent O₂. It must be produced entirely by mechanical means without the use of any solvents, and under temperatures that will not degrade the oil (less than 86°F, 30°C).

In order for an oil to qualify as “extra virgin” the oil must also pass both an official chemical test in a laboratory and a sensory evaluation by a trained tasting panel recognized by the International Olive Council. The olive oil must be found to be free from defects while exhibiting some fruitiness.

Olive oil tasters describe the “positive attributes” using the following terms:

- **Fruity:** Having pleasant spicy fruit flavors characteristic of fresh ripe or green olives. Ripe fruit yields oils that are milder, aromatic, buttery, and floral. Green fruit yields oils that are grassy, herbaceous, bitter, and pungent. Fruitiness also varies with the variety of olive.
- **Bitter:** Creating a mostly pleasant acrid flavor sensation on the tongue.
- **Pungent:** Creating a peppery sensation in the mouth and throat

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SHOULD OLIVE OIL BE STORED IN THE REFRIGERATOR

Storing olive oil in the refrigerator can cause condensation to form in the bottle. Condensation/water in the olive oil will turn the olive oil rancid. The best place to store the oil is in a cool, dark place such as the pantry. Always remember to keep it away from the stove and light.

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DAGS AND PPP TEST SCORES

You'll see these rating terms shown on our Ultra Premium Extra Virgin Olive Oils

DAGs Test/Score: Measures the proportion of two forms of diacylglycerol: 1,2 and 1,3. In oil freshly made from sound olives of good quality, the prevalent form of DAG is the 1,2 form where the fatty acids are bonded to a glycerol molecule in the 1 and 2 positions. The bond on the 2 position is weak and easily broken, leading to the migration of that 2 position fatty acid to the 3 position. This results in the much more stable 1,3 DAG. This makes the ration of 1,2 DAGs to the total DAG's a good indicator of the quality of the olive fruit and the processing. It is also an indicator of the age of an oil, since the migration from 1,2 to 1,3 DAGs takes place naturally

as the oil ages. Warmer storage temperatures, and higher free fatty acid levels will both accelerate this process, but DAGs are not affected by the short exposure to high heat that is characteristic of deodorizing (refining).

Not used by all oil councils or organizations yet. Australian standard is more than or equal to 35, EVA standard is more than or equal to 40. Ultra Premium Standard is more than or equal to 90.

PPP Test/Score: This test was developed to measure the degradation of chlorophyll in olive oil. This degradation of chlorophylls to pyropheophytin was found to take place at a predictable pace, making it possible to gain information about the age of an olive oil. The rate at which the degradation occurs can be accelerated by even short periods of high temperatures – such as that which is utilized during the deodorizing or soft column refining process – making it a useful indicator of the presence of deodorized olive oil as well as the age of the oil.

Not used by all oil councils or organizations yet. Australian standard is less than or equal to 17, EVA standard is less than or equal to 15, Ultra Premium standard is less than or equal to 5.

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CRUCIAL OLIVE OIL CHEMISTRY DEFINITION KEY

Oleic Acid: is a monounsaturated omega-9 fatty acid found in olive oil. Olive oil is generally higher in oleic acid than other vegetable fats. The range found in extra virgin olive oil is between 55-85%. Extra virgin olive oil high in oleic acid has greater resistance to oxidation. Generally, higher is better.

Free Fatty Acids (FFA): Based on **IIOC Standards** the maximum limit for free fatty acid in extra virgin olive oil is 0.8g per 100g or (.8%). A low FFA is desirable. Free fatty acid speaks to the condition of the fruit at the time of crush. The

higher the FFA, the greater the indication of poor quality fruit such as damaged, overripe, insect infestation, overheating during production or too much of a delay between harvest and crush. Generally, lower is better.

Peroxide Value: Based on IOOC Standards the maximum peroxide value for extra virgin olive oil is 20. A very low peroxide value is desirable. Unsaturated free fatty acids react with oxygen and form peroxides, which create a series of chain reactions that generate volatile substances responsible for a typical musty/rancid oil smell. These reactions are accelerated by high temperature, light, and oxygen exposure.

Polyphenol Count: Polyphenols are a class of antioxidants found in a variety of foods. Polyphenols such as Oleuropein, Oleocanthal, and hydroxytyrosol impart intensity connected with pepper, bitterness and other desirable flavor characteristics. Recent studies indicate that these potent phenols are responsible for many of the health benefits associated with consuming fresh, high quality extra virgin olive oil. Phenols in olive oil decrease over time or when exposed to heat, oxygen and light. Consuming fresh, well made olive oil with high polyphenol content is crucial when looking to obtain the maximum health benefit commonly associated with consuming extra virgin olive oil.

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HOW IT IS MADE

The basic procedure making olive oil has remained the same for thousands of years: harvest at the right time, crush the olives into a paste, separate solids from liquid components, and further separate the vegetable water from the oil.

Extraction methods have a direct effect on the flavor and quality of the olive oil. The stone grinding and matt pressing method is still used but has the drawback of intensive labor and lower yield compared to modern methods. Olives are crushed to paste between revolving millstones and the paste is then spread on woven mats, stacked in a press and squeezed until

the fluid component is recovered in basins underneath the press. The vegetable water sinks and the oil is skimmed off the top. The mats are emptied of the pits and skins and "re-battered" with fresh olive paste to repeat the process. This method creates a very sweet oil with slightly higher levels of acidity. The mats add a distinct flavor from the cultures that enhance with repeated use. Many traditionalists believe that this flavor is an absolute necessity to make fine olive oil but considered a defect by enthusiasts of modern president methods, proving once again that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

The most widespread method used today is the continuous method. Olives enter the mill at one end and oil comes out the other. The olives are crushed by hammer mill and the paste is pumped to a malaxer where it is warmed and mixed until the oil begins to separate. The resulting paste is pumped to a centrifuge where the solids are separated from the liquids and the vegetable water and oil are further separated in a final centrifugal process. There are many variations on this basic theme that involve less heat and less washing of the oil.

Polyphenols account for the flavor in olive oil. They are much more soluble in water than in oil, so limiting contact with water preserves the flavor of the oil. The Integral method is virtually identical to the continuous method with the notable difference being that the olive stones are removed from the flesh before the oil and water are extracted. This method has existed for thousands of years but the cost and time to manually remove the stones prior to extraction can be cost prohibitive. There is a slight loss in yield.

The Integral method produces a less bitter oil with fewer toxins and waxes as well as the added economic advantage of ending up with four valuable and marketable products instead of one: highest quality extra virgin olive oil, highly nutritious olive water, dry olive flesh for all-vegetable cattle feed, and inedible oil-bearing stones for fuel. The added benefit of this process is the elimination of processing waste which contributes to environmental degradation.

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CHOOSING THE RIGHT OLIVE OIL

When all the oils appear to be the same and have limited information on their labels, how do you select the right one? It is difficult to compare taste unless you have the opportunity to open several containers of oil at the same time, not something a consumer usually does. Because of this, the way olive is being sold and marketed is changing to meet consumer pressure for an educated choice, and the opportunity now exists at Splash of Olive for you to taste a range extra virgin olive oils, know the crush date and learn about the complete chemistry. All these factors will influence your choice.

Oil season begins in early October and extends to late February in the Northern Hemisphere and begins during April in the Southern Hemisphere extending to June in The very broad geographic region known as the Mediterranean basin is where over ninety-five percent of the production takes place. The area extends from Syria in the east to Spain and Morocco in the west. Spain is by far the world's largest producer of olives and olive oil. No two seasons in any area are identical and each producing country has different producing regions, varieties, and preferences for harvest time and style.

Many varieties alternate in productivity; a year of high productivity is often followed by a year of rest. There are as many different olive oil flavor profiles as there are olive groves with layers of variables superimposed on layers of sub-variable and any one or combination can have a profound effect on the flavor and overall characteristics of the oil. Olive oil has a highly perishable nature. It begins to soften the day it is produced and heads steadily down in intensity and brightness.

This can only be slowed by rapid harvest to milling onto storage. This makes the production of uniform, consistent, readily available, high-quality olive oil very difficult. Each producing country has a dominant variety or cultivar historically suited to its terrain, and is representative of the general "style" of the country. A somewhat experienced taster can determine the dominant variety or cultivar of the

major producing countries. Spain's dominant cultivars are the Picual, Hojiblanca, and Arbequina. For Italy it is the Coratina, in Tunisia the Chemlali, for Greece the Koroneiki, and Turkey favors the Ayvalik. When selecting an oil, search for oils by region, country and variety. Small regional mills are increasingly producing high quality oils. There is no substitute for a personal tasting experience. We encourage our customers to try as many extra virgin olive oils as they can; quality oils represent a unique taste experience impossible to duplicate in the traditional supermarket brands.

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SINGLE VARIETY AND MONO CULTIVAR

The variety or cultivar selected for planting will certainly have an effect on the overall flavor and characteristics of the oil, but the characteristics and relative merits of individual cultivars are hotly contested. Although most table fruit is unsuitable for oil production because of yield, size, and oil content there are always exceptions.

This complicated subject is woven happily and inextricably into the unique fabric of the area where each olive variety is grown negating the attitude that one cultivar is superior to the rest.

Variety in olive oil as in all things is indeed the spice of life. Each has its unique characteristics, but some differences are remarkably subtle. Some olives are more durable, while others hold up better to heat. Some are rich, soft and buttery while others are big, angular and complex. The choices are delightfully limitless. Most are not sold as single varieties, except in the regions where they are produced or at specialty import stores.

The vast majority end up being part of some generic olive oil blend marketed under any one of dozens of different brands or labels around the world. There is no substitute for personal experience. Come in and try as many olive oils as you can. When you purchase in bulk from single cultivar stocks you will be surprised and rewarded by the rich variety and quality

available at nearly the same price as branded generic olive oil.

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GLUTEN FREE STATEMENT

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the oils and balsamic vinegars supplied by Veronica Foods Company sold on this site are GLUTEN FREE Products and are produced and packaged in gluten free facilities (no products are produced or packaged in our facility which could cause gluten contamination). This statement pertains to: Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Extra Virgin Olive Oil Blends, Balsamic Vinegars

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TIMING IS EVERYTHING

The most critical decision and least understood variable in producing fine olive oil is the level of ripeness of the fruit when the olives are harvested, affecting both yield and organoleptic characteristics.

Additional factors of regional variations are harvest time, risk of frost and mill schedules. These all affect the quality of the finished product.

Theoretically, there exists an exact moment when ripeness and acidity levels are at their respective optimums. Crushing the fruit before this imaginary "moment" or peak of ripeness will translate to a lower yield and greener tasting oil. "Grassy" or greener tasting oil is the result of higher levels of chlorophyll still held in the fruit.

Crushing the fruit before it is ripe does provide one major benefit: the acidity levels are much lower in unripe fruit. Since the primary chemical test for grading olive oil focuses on the acidity level, this early harvest oil is sometimes cynically referred to as the "virgin maker." The lower yield, and bitter tasting aspects resulting from crushing olives before they are ripe can be offset by using this oil as a blending agent that serves to lower the acidity levels of oils that might not otherwise meet the chemical standard.

Early harvest olive oil can also provide a semblance or note of freshness to oils. Crushing olives that are overripe will produce olive oil that is smoother and softer in its inherent intensity and sought after fruity characteristics. The practice of letting the fruit become overripe on the tree has the significant economic benefit to the crusher of increasing the overall ratio and yield of oil to olive by weight. This also lowers the cost of the oil. The acidity level (free fatty acids or FFA's) rises as the fruit begins to decompose, increasing until it is unfit for human consumption. until it is refined, which is why there is so much refined olive oil produced.

Farmers who let their olives become overripe on the tree are rewarded economically by a very high yield. The difference in yield from early harvest oil (12% to 16% oil to olives) and late harvest yield (20% to 28%) is significant and increases in yield between 33% and 133% can be achieved.

Today the world market price that separates refined olive oil from extra virgin olive oil is less than 12%. The competing interests of yield, acidity level, and flavor profile created when the olive is crushed become the most important considerations when it comes to producing high quality extra virgin olive oil. If the fruit is crushed before it is ripe it will be excessively expensive and the oil will have a bitter less fruity chlorophyll taste. If the fruit is allowed to become too ripe then it will be unfit for consumption unless it is first refined. When either consideration of higher yield or lower acidity level becomes too dominant the cost and quality of the oil suffer. It seems fitting that a balanced approach is the most rewarding one.

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WHAT INFLUENCES OLIVE OIL GRADE?

All olive oil starts with fruit on a tree.

What happens after the fruit and the tree part company makes all the difference to the oil produced.

United States Department of Agriculture the only acceptable grade of olive oil is Virgin Olive Oil per the US Department of Agriculture. The Food and Drug Administration definition is:

Olive oil is the edible oil expressed from the sound, mature fruit of the olive tree

No recognition is given to refined or extracted oil.

The two ways to assess virgin olive are chemical and organoleptic analysis. They are both equally important although one is totally objective and the other is totally subjective. Laboratory analysis informs us of the levels of beneficial polyphenols and oleic acid, and the products of deterioration free fatty acids and peroxide. But it cannot indicate anything about the pleasure of using fresh, well produced oil. Organoleptic analysis happens in the nose and mouth of the taster, either professional or with you, our customer.

Aesthetic notes of fruity, nutty, fresh grassy, peppery, and many, many others are there in varying balance that give complexity to the oil and appeal in different ways to each person. Laboratory analysis can track down the chemical nature of those flavors and aromas, but the human sensory system is still the best organoleptic analysis device.

We recommend that you give yourself the opportunity to taste and assess many olive oils in order to educate your palate and help you find the oil that gives you the most satisfaction.

Most grading is based on the method of production and designations are a marketing tool used by producers. The terms can be confusing and sometimes intentionally misleading. Once again it is important to know as much as possible about what you choose.

Extra-virgin olive oil comes from virgin oil production only,

contains no more than 0.8% acidity, and is judged to have a superior taste. Extra Virgin olive oil accounts for less than 10% of oil in many producing countries.

Virgin olive oil is produced by the use of physical means and no chemical treatment, has an acidity less than 2%, and is judged to have a good taste. Over 50% of the oil produced in the Mediterranean area is of such poor quality that it must be refined to produce an edible product.

After these two grades come the blends of oil that are primarily refined oil and virgin Olive oil. Pure olive oil—oils labeled as Pure olive oil or Olive oil are usually a blend of refined and virgin production oil. Remember, over 50% of the oil produced in the Mediterranean area is of such poor quality that it must be refined to produce an edible product. No solvents used to extract the oil but it has been refined with the use of charcoal and other chemical and physical filters Olive oil is a blend of virgin and refined production oil, of no more than 1.5% acidity, and lacks a strong flavor. Olive-pomace oil is refined pomace olive production oil possibly blended with some virgin production oil. It is fit for consumption, but may not be described simply as olive oil. Olive-pomace oil is rarely sold at retail; it is often used for certain kinds of cooking in restaurants.

Refined olive oil is the olive oil obtained from virgin olive oils by refining methods which do not lead to alterations in the initial glyceridic structure. It has a free acidity, expressed as oleic acid, of not more than 0.3 grams per 100 grams (0.3%) and its other characteristics correspond to those fixed for this category in this standard. This is obtained by refining virgin olive oils which have a high acidity level and/or organoleptic defects which are eliminated after refining. Just like Pure Olive Oil and Virgin Olive Oil, over 50% of the oil produced in the Mediterranean must be refined to produce an edible product. Although no solvents have been used to extract the oil, it has been refined with the use of

charcoal and other chemical and physical filters. An obsolete equivalent is "pure olive oil" Pomace olive oil is extracted from the pomace using chemical solvents, mostly hexane, and by heat. Sometimes blended with some virgin production oil. It is fit for consumption, but may not be described simply as olive oil. Olive-pomace oil is rarely sold at retail; it is often used for certain kinds of cooking in restaurants. Lampante oil is not suitable as food because it is made usually from olives that are spoiled or insect infested.; the term lampante comes from olive oil's long-standing use in oil-burning lamps. Lampante oil is mostly used in the industrial market. It must be chemically refined before it can be consumed. The resulting oil, after refining, is known as A-Refined, or Refined-A olive oil. It is not, strictly speaking, "olive oil." It is used as the primary ingredient for a new product that is sold as "Pure Olive Oil.". As the United States is not a member, the IOOC retail grades have no legal meaning in that country; terms such as "extra virgin" may be used without legal restrictions.

Since 1948 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has listed four grades of olive oil based on acidity, absence of defects, odor and flavor:[20] U.S. Grade A or U.S. Fancy possesses a free fatty acid content of not more than 1.4% and is "free from defects"; U.S. Grade B or U.S. Choice possesses a free fatty acid content of not more than 2.5% and is "reasonably free from defects"; U.S. Grade C or U.S. Standard possesses a free fatty acid content of not more than 3.0% and is "fairly free from defects"; U.S. Grade D or U.S. Substandard possesses a free fatty acid content greater than 3.0% and "fails to meet the requirements of U.S. Grade C". With these diverse labeling styles and the small amount of information they provide, the best indicator of a good olive oil is obtained by tasting while keeping in mind the freshness and beneficial nutritional and antioxidant levels.

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UNDERSTANDING BALSAMIC VINEGAR (FROM THE VINEGAR INSTITUTE

Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena (Italy) is made from white and sugary Trebbiano grapes grown on the hills around Modena.

Custom demands that the grapes are harvested as late as possible to take advantage of the warmth that nature provides there. This vinegar is made from the cooked "grape must" [the juice pressed from grapes before it has fermented; new wine] matured by a long and slow vinegarization process through natural fermentation, followed by progressive concentration by aging in a series of casks made from different types of wood and without the addition of spices or flavorings.

The production of traditional Balsamic Vinegar is labor intensive and time consuming; this accounts for its high cost and limited availability.

Production of traditional Balsamic Vinegar is governed by Italian law and provides that a specific Certification Agency (Cermet) oversees all production phases, from the vineyard to the bottle. All of the product that is bottled must pass a sensory examination run by a panel of five tasting judges.

Commercial grade Balsamic Vinegar of Modena constitutes a more economical alternative to the traditional product. In the United States, products are also allowed to be labeled as Balsamic Vinegar, based on the U.S. labeling laws. These products are made from the juice of grapes, but would not carry the term "of Modena" on the label. Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena generally is found in specialty stores.

Commercial grade Balsamic Vinegar of Modena can be found in specialty stores, supermarkets, and supercenters. Commercial products are of high quality and suitable for use in marinades, vinaigrette dressings, and in making pan sauces. The product has a long shelf life and can be stored in a closed container indefinitely. Store the product at 4-30°C (39-86°F), but refrigeration is not required. Exposure to air will not harm the product, but may cause "mothering," which causes the solids to filter out. Some sedimentation is normal for a product that contains a high level of soluble solids,

but the sedimentation will disappear when the bottle is shaken.

Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena is only bottled in the distinct, bulb-shaped bottle of 100 ml. It has either a white cap (minimum age of 12 years) or gold cap (minimum age of 20 years). Salad dressings, sauces, and gravies benefit from the addition of Balsamic Vinegar. Sprinkle on cooked meat to add flavor and aroma; season salad greens, strawberries, peaches and melons; or use as an ingredient in your favorite salad dressing.

Source: The Vinegar Institute