

TRADER JOE'S®

{ Guide to OLIVE OIL }



Olive Oil

Olive trees have grown naturally and been cultivated widely in the Mediterranean for centuries. References to olives, the tree and the oil, are sprinkled throughout the Bible and other writings from antiquity. At one point it was used as currency. Antiquated vessels that were used to carry the oil and that bear official Roman and Cretan seals have been unearthed in every area of the region. Down through history, the importance of the oil has moved from multi-purpose heating, medicinal and culinary oil, through gourmet exclusivity, to its current acceptance as one of the best all-around oils for cooking and making salads. Olive oil continues to be highly prized for its flavor, versatility and health benefits.

The “Mediterranean Climate” (warm, sunny days with cool, ocean mist filled nights) produces the perfect growing conditions for olive trees. Although this condition can be found in other places in the world, like the South of France, Turkey, California, Arizona and New Mexico, the most sought after oils are from Italy, Spain and Greece.

Olive oil has several different grades, determined by the acid content. The most prized is extra virgin, which must contain 0 to 1 percent acidity. When the acid climbs to between 1 and 2 percent, the grade drops to virgin olive oil. At three percent acidity, oil is classified as “semi fine”. After semi fine, the next level is pure olive oil. Pure olive oil is judged not only by acidity but by its processing method and falls well below extra virgin or virgin in style, color and flavor.

Olive Oil Production

Olive oil production has a mystique that, due to the expansion of worldwide demand, producers are working to clarify. Oil origin, cold pressed or heat processed and oil blending are just a few of the questions retailers must consider in order to justify the hefty price stickers most oils carry.

Processing olive oil is a multi-step technique. Within 24 to 48 hours of picking, the olives are pressed into a paste. Next, the oil is separated from the paste by centrifugation. This also removes any naturally occurring water. This process is called cold pressing. The first pressing extracts extra virgin and virgin oils. The oil is then graded by acidity testing. Once the first press oil has been extracted from the olive paste, second and third pressings are done to produce pure, light and pumace oils. With each subsequent pressing, heat and solvents are added to extract as much of the oil as possible.

The next step in olive oil production is more complicated and a true art form. The oil maker will blend different oils to reach his ideal of color and fruit. Because oils are mixed together to achieve balance and style, judging oil by the country of origin has passed into legend. Nowadays, oils from all growing regions and countries can be blended together to produce tastes and styles that have specific uses. However, it is still true that the better the quality of the oils used in the blend, the better the finished product.

Storing Your Olive Oil

Olive oil should be used within the first year of pressing. Once opened, it is recommended to use the oil within 3 months for optimum flavor. Olive oil will become rancid if not handled properly. It does not improve with age. It is best not to purchase large amounts, unless it will be used quickly.

If you need to decant it into a smaller container, use terra cotta, green or brown glass, stainless steel or tin. These containers help to protect the oil from light. Never use a plastic container; it will impart the taste of plastic into the oil. The oil should be kept in a cool dark place, such as a pantry. Make sure your container has a very tight lid.

Refrigeration

There are two schools of thought on refrigeration. One school says do not refrigerate. Refrigeration causes condensation to form on the inner lip of the container and the water will fall back into the oil and harm the flavor. The other believes that oil containing a high amount of monounsaturated fat is highly perishable and, if kept for more than one month, needs to be refrigerated. The issue is flavor versus shelf life.

This leads us to recommend that very flavorful oils intended for dipping drizzling and salad dressing should be purchased in small amounts and kept in the pantry. Mild flavored, everyday oils used for sautéing, marinades or frying can be purchased in larger containers and refrigerated for best shelf life.

Note: Refrigeration causes the oil to become cloudy and slightly solid. It will return to its liquid state once removed from the refrigerator and placed on the counter for a few minutes.

Baking And Frying With Olive Oil

Although most of us have not given much thought to using it in place of butter or other oils in baking, olive oil can reduce the amount of cholesterol and saturated fat in many pastries and breads. Most bakers use it for traditional breads such as pizza and Focaccia. Try replacing butter in breads, cakes and other sweets. Since the conversion from butter to olive oil requires less fat, the calories from fat are reduced also. Keep in mind that this substitution will affect the texture and flavor.

Because of the monounsaturated properties and the flavor of olive oil, it is a delicious and healthy alternative to other oils for deep frying too. Deep frying is an art that can only be enhanced when olive oil is used. Frying food at the correct temperature cooks the outside instantly, forms a seal that retains the interior moisture and cooks the food by steam. Removing finished foods from the pan and draining on racks over paper towels allows excess fat to drip away for the lowest possible calories from fat.

Tips For Frying With Olive Oil

- Deep fry at 350 to 365 degrees.
- For best coverage, use at least 2 1/2 inches of oil.
- To avoid lowering the temperature of the oil during frying, do not crowd the pan.
- To eliminate as much excess fat as possible, drain fried foods on wire racks.

Butter To Olive Oil Conversion Chart

Butter/ Margarine	Olive Oil
1 teaspoon	3/4 teaspoon
1 tablespoon	2 1/4 teaspoon
2 tablespoons	1 1/2 tablespoon
1/4 cup	3 tablespoons
1/3 cup	1/4 cup
1/2 cup	1/4 cup +2 tablespoons
2/3 cup	1/2 cup
3/4 cup	1/2 cup +1 tablespoon
1 cup	3/4 cup



TASTING OILS

Olive oil tasting has become a regular event in food circles. While diehard olive oil aficionados sip it straight from small cups, looking for levels of complexity and flavors, dipping good crusty bread into top quality, highly flavorful oils can be a very pleasant way to pass the cocktail hour or warm your crowd up for a Mediterranean dinner. Each of these are distinctive tastes and will come through in extra virgin or virgin olive oils:

Fruity: Oil with “fruity taste” is reminiscent of fresh sound fruit with a very distinct olive taste.

Sweet: not sugary- a pleasant sweetish olive taste, a taste of young tender ripe fruit.

Peppery: Spicy tones that give a slightly prickly feeling to the taste buds.

Green: Green in color with a slight taste of young mown grass, not sweet.



TRADER'S JOE'S OLIVE OILS

Trader Joe's has a wide selection of olive oils from many growing regions in the world including Italy, Spain, Greece, and California. We buy the best crop available, which means we always have new oils and oil makers to explore. We look for the following characteristic in the oils we choose from these different regions:

From Italy:

Robust flavor with deep color and peppery finishes are the qualities we look for when purchasing Italian oils. These oils are blended to stand up to ripe tomatoes, roasted vegetables, meat and chewy pasta dishes.

From Spain:

Spanish oils are known for more subtle flavors with a sweet, buttery finish. This type of oil is ideal for salads, sauces and frying. This oil adds flavor to sautéed fish dishes.

From Greece:

We look for clear, fruit flavor with peppery finishes. This style of oil works well with stews, soups and steamed vegetables. Drizzle over soups and stews to enhance the flavor.

From California:

Oils from California are known for green, grassy flavors with a mild, pleasant finish. This oil is good for frying and sautéing.

New Harvest Oils

New harvest oils are first cold pressed oils that are bottled unfiltered within days of harvest. This oil is enjoyed by the harvesters and oil makers during the harvest and first crush. A simple recipe of toasted crusty bread rubbed with fresh garlic and drizzled with the new oil is one of the traditional ways to enjoy this fresh oil. Trader Joe's has contracted to bring a limited amount of this oil into our stores; the makers and origins may change from year to year.

THREE OLIVE OIL RECIPES

Bagna Calda

Bagna Calda (literally, Hot Bath) is a favorite Piedmontese dish that is great for parties. Composed of garlic, anchovies and olive oil, this lively dip works well with crudités and toasted bread. It is served hot in a fondue pot or small chafing dish.

- 1 head of garlic, peeled and chopped
- 1 1/2 cups extra virgin olive oil
- 10 anchovy filets in oil, mashed
- Fresh cracked black pepper
- Assorted seasonal raw vegetables
- 1 loaf crusty bread, toasted and cubed

Combine the olive oil and garlic in a heavy cast iron skillet. With a wooden spoon slowly stir over low heat until garlic becomes translucent, about 25 to 35 minutes. Add anchovies. Stir until the anchovies are well incorporated into the mixture. Add pepper to taste. Pour mixture into fondue pot or small chafing dish. Keep warm while serving. Serve with toasted bread and raw vegetables for dipping. Keep this dish fresh by not letting it become too warm or letting it sit for too long, or the garlic will become bitter.

Classic Green Sauce

Every Mediterranean country has a version of this olive oil and parsley sauce. In Provence bread crumbs are added to make a thick stuffing-style sauce for lamb. In Italy, mint is added to one version for lamb and left out for another version intended for other meats. The one below is based on a Greek recipe and is used on grilled, sautéed or fried fish.

- Large bunch of Italian parsley
- 1 clove of garlic
- 3/4 to one cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Place all of the ingredients into a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Drizzle over cooked fish. This sauce can be made with more garlic and less oil if desired.

Pan Roasted Vegetables

Sweet, caramelized vegetables are perfect on their own or as a side dish for grilled meat or roasted chicken. Choose ripe sound vegetables. Pick your favorite combination of four or five:

- Potatoes
- Onions
- Garlic Heads
- Red, Yellow or Green Peppers
- Carrots
- Leeks
- Zucchini
- Eggplant
- Turnips
- Parsnips
- Olive Oil to toss
- Salt and fresh cracked black pepper
- Fresh rosemary, chopped
- Fresh rosemary sprig for garnish

Cook one potato, 1/2 zucchini, turnip, parsnip, eggplant, pepper or carrot and 1/4 onion and garlic per person. Cook peppers separately or the flavor will overwhelm the other vegetables.

Slice all of the vegetables into quarters, depending on size (more slices for large vegetables such as eggplant). Place vegetables in a large mixing bowl and drizzle with olive oil. With your hands, toss vegetable to make sure all are covered evenly. Sprinkle with rosemary, salt and pepper. Place vegetables in a cast iron skillet. Do not overcrowd; use more than one skillet or prepare in batches if necessary. Bake at 400 degrees for about 50 minutes, turning from time to time.

