

NEWSLETTER
Issue 96 - November 2021



Notes from the Chair:

Greetings to all Oliveti members and an end of year message from the Chair.

The mad Christmas season is rapidly approaching, and I hope this missive finds you all well with plenty of flower on your olive trees and a bumper harvest in the offing. There seems to be light at the end of the long dark Covid tunnel and we look to be getting back to some sort of normality next year. Hurrah!!! We all, including Oliveti, have been in hibernation for the last 3 months but we are hopeful that come the New Year, we will be finally able to have our planned Field Day at Kath & Greg Scopas' place at Hoteo North, Wellsford. Date to be advised.

As you are probably aware we had to create a work around this year to get the Oliveti Olive Awards judging underway. Originally planned to be held in Wellsford meant our Auckland based judges were unable to participate so we decided to shift the operation to Auckland. Ban Najim Aldin kindly agreed to transport all the Oil entries and tasting paraphernalia down to Murray Thoms whose property is in Kumeu and in the Auckland area. Murray and Alwin had kindly offered to have the awards judging at their place so that when Auckland went to Level 3.2 the judges (who all live in Auckland region) agreed that they would be able to carry out the judging. This was held last Saturday 13th. November in what Murray describes as atrocious weather conditions with rain and driving wind. A 1.0m separation was still required so the judging team was at the 11th hour, moved from the planned outdoor area to Murray's large garage after a frantic emptying of gear. So, with some quick thinking and organising on Murray's part, the judging to got underway at 9:00am with great support from members Les Woodhams and Derek Holland with Alwin assisting as chief glass washer. A big thank you to Murray and Alwin and to our Secretary Pauline and to those committee members that assisted.

Attached are the results and we can all be very proud of the standard of oil that we at Oliveti produce. Also attached is a commentary from Chief Judge - Laurence Eyres. Congratulations to all those members who received Gold, Silver and Bronze and a special congratulation to **Leon Narbey** who produced the top overall oil winning **Best In Show** and will receives the lovely hand-carved olive wood trophy. This will be particularly significant for Leon as this very cherished trophy was originally designed by Leon's late wife Anita.

We look forward to seeing you all again soon and being able to handout the Awards certificates at the next Field day which is now rescheduled for early in the New Year

Well, that's all from me. Stay safe.

Regards - John Pearson (Chairperson)
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2021 OLIVETI OLIVE OIL AWARD RESULTS

Class 1 – Single Varietal – Delicate

Brand Name	Member	Varietal	Award	
Oruaiti River Olives	Ewen Hutchinson	Pendolino	Gold	Best in Class
Oruaiti River Olives	Ewen Hutchinson	Leccino	Silver	
Vernazoni Olive Oil	Murray Thoms	J5	Silver	
Dali	Ross Vitiner	Frantoio	Bronze	

Class 3 – Single Varietal – Medium

Brand Name	Member	Varietal	Award	
River Estate	Barry Wade	Frantoio	Gold	Best in Class
Estuary Olives	W & P Young	Koroneiki	Silver	
Oruaiti River Olives	Ewen Hutchinson	Frantoio	Silver	
River Estate	Barry Wade	Picual	Silver	
Dali	Ross Vitiner	Coupage- Leccino	Bronze	

Class 4 – Blended Varietal – Medium

Brand Name	Member	Varietal	Award	
Narbey Olive Oil	Leon Narbey	Frantoio J5 Leccino Pendolino Leccino	Gold	Best in Class
River Estate	Barry Wade	Frantoio	Gold	
X-Cell Gourmet Olive Oil	David Penney	Frantoio J5 J2 Koroneiki	Gold	
The Good Oil	John & Claire Pearson	Frantoio Ascolano	Silver	
Duck Creek Road Olive Oil	Derek Holland	Frantoio J5	Silver	
Manu Korihi	D & B Raines	J5 Frantoio J5 Frantoio	Silver	
Olives on Porter	Ban Guy Audiss Les & Kay	Picholene Koroneiki	Silver	
Kaipara Flats Olive Grove	Woodhams	Frantoio Leccino Mission	Silver	
Estuary Olives	W & P Young	Chemlali	Silver	

Class 5 – Single Varietal – Intense

Brand Name	Member	Varietal	Award	
Oruaiti River Olives	Ewen Hutchinson	J5	Gold	Best in Class
Dali	Ross Vitiner	Koroneiki	Silver	
Dali	Ross Vitiner	Picual	Silver	

Class 6 – Blended Varietal – Intense

Brand Name	Member	Varietal	Award	
Puketi Olive Farm	Peter Crelinsten	J5 Koroneiki	Bronze	Best in Class

Class 5 – Flavoured

Brand Name	Member	Varietal	Award	
Vernazoni Olive Oil	Murray Thoms	J5 Fused Lemon Lime	Silver	Best in Class

The Oliveti annual olive oil judging - 2021

Comments by Chief Judge - Laurence Eyres

My three colleagues Mike, Nigel, Geoff and I, approached this year's testing with some apprehension as Auckland was still in level 3 restrictions. We all arrived fully vaccinated wearing masks which had to be somewhat removed to slurp oil.

Due to the restrictions, we gathered in the rain at Murray and Alwin Thoms' lovely property in Kumeu. It was originally intended to hold the tasting around the lovely outdoor BBQ area, but in spite of the rain, we found ourselves in the spacious and airy garage with all the doors open.



Despite the makeshift arrangements due to the weather, we were all well looked after by the Oliveti team with 3 stewards on hand to serve, Murray doing the administration and record keeping and Alwin slaving away inside the house to clean the tasting glasses.

All the oils this year were of a consistent high standard. Firstly, there were no rejects, no oils without an award and all the oils would have been a delight in anybody's kitchen.

In total there were 6 Golds, 14 Silver and 3 bronze medals awarded.

All silver medal winners were of a high standard and many bordered on being awarded a gold medal. One could ask why were the judges so tough and not award more gold medals? The oils were generally of a mild flavour with even the ones in the intense category being soft and pleasant. We think a lot of NZ consumers will prefer these gentle oils.

So, this situation of the majority of the oils receiving silver medals and the winners receiving gold indicates a continuing and significant improvement to the credit of all producers. The improvement is probably due to better orchard management combined with a more rigorous approach to hygiene and quality in pressing. It was great to taste these oils and to see the progress that the industry is making

The flavoured olive oil (Citrus) was also very good, subtle and obviously prepared with good quality oil. In past years some flavoured oils have been disappointing, having a variety of less appealing or occasionally unpleasant flavours. This year the oil was true to the citrus flavour. All in all, this was a very satisfactory tasting day and the judges were happy with the results and we hope Oliveti are happy with the outcomes. We greatly appreciated the general hospitality and the delicious lunch supplied by Nigel from his café Crave.

The Oliveti judging was then followed by the team from the Royal Easter Show Olive Oil Awards and their oils were also of a typical high quality.

Your Oliveti judging Team for 2021

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Flavour and Taste



This article from "The Olive Oil Source" provides an interesting insight into the factors affecting the Aroma Flavour and Taste of Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

Is it possible to identify one chemical in olive oil that indicates good or bad taste?

The exact chemistry of olive oil flavour still puzzles researchers, and a lot of research is being conducted on the subject. The few facts below barely scratch the surface! In some foods, some strong flavours are comprised of a single compound. For instance, the simple chemical cinnamaldehyde imparts a strong smell of cinnamon. It would be nice to identify a single chemical that could predict good or bad taste such as this in olive oil; we would have no need for tasters but could just do a simple test. Unfortunately, there are thousands of chemical compounds in olive oil and the interaction of hundreds of these probably contribute to flavour.

NATURALLY OCCURRING AROMA COMPOUNDS IN EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

The unique and delicate flavour of quality extra virgin olive oil is related to the presence of a large number of chemical compounds.

Aldehydes, alcohols, esters, hydrocarbons, ketones, furans, and other compounds have been identified by gas chromatography and mass spectrometry in good-quality olive oil.

Over one hundred such compounds have been identified which, as a whole, contribute to the distinctive organoleptic characteristics which make extra virgin olive oil so unique.

These tastes and fragrances derive from compounds like hexanal (green, grassy), trans-2-hexenal (green, bitter), and 1-hexanol and 3-methylbutan-1-ol, which are the major volatile compounds of olive oil. Many of these flavour compounds decompose if temperatures during milling are too high.

Phenolic compounds have a significant effect on olive oil flavour. There is a good correlation between aroma and flavour of olive oil and its polyphenol content. Hydroxytyrosol, tyrosol, caffeic acid, coumaric acid, and p-hydroxybenzoic acid influence mostly the sensory characteristics of olive oil. Various off-flavour compounds are formed by oxidation, which may be initiated in the olive fruit. Pentanal, hexanal, octanal, and nonanal are the major compounds formed in oxidized olive oil, but 2-pentenal and 2-heptenal are mainly responsible for the off-flavour.

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We are often asked whether the component in olive oil that is peppery and sometimes makes people cough is oleic acid. It is not. Different olive oils with the same amount of oleic acid may be quite peppery or not all. Many studies have been done to try to predict a flavour profile based on the oil's chemistry. In "The Handbook of Olive Oil" by Harwood and Arapicio, they cite studies done by the authors that show that aglycons are responsible for the bitter and pungent sensory attribute, as well as tyrosol and possibly alpha-tocopherol. The phenols are related to astringent attributes. It is probably the combination of bitterness and astringency that causes a person to cough.

An interesting, related fact: Gary Beauchamp and other chemists published a September 1, 2005 article in Nature that shows that oleocanthal, the pungent compound in some oils which creates a stinging sensation in the throat, has similar properties to anti-inflammatory compounds such as ibuprofen.

WHAT DETERMINES WHETHER THESE COMPOUNDS ARE PRESENT?

Many factors influence the presence of these compounds, in particular:

- The care that went into growing, harvesting, and extracting the oil. If the olives are stored, and not milled promptly, volatile flavour components, such as aldehydes and esters, decrease. Various methods to increase the yield, such as heating the paste, also result in a loss of flavour compounds.
- The storing conditions and the age of the oil. With age, the flavour and aroma of the oil decrease, especially if not stored in dark and cool conditions in a well-sealed container.
- The maturity of the olives at harvest time. The highest concentration of volatile components appears at the optimal maturity stage of fruit. The maturity of the fruit also affects the polyphenol content of the olive.
- The variety of olives.
- The weather such as the amount of rain, freezing conditions, or heat.
- The location of the orchard. There can be significant changes in the flavour components in olive oil obtained from the same oil cultivar grown in different areas.



TASTING ADVICE

If a picture is worth 1,000 words, then how many words is a taste worth? In order

to appreciate the range of flavours in olive oils, one must go beyond reading about oil and be willing to experience the act of tasting it.

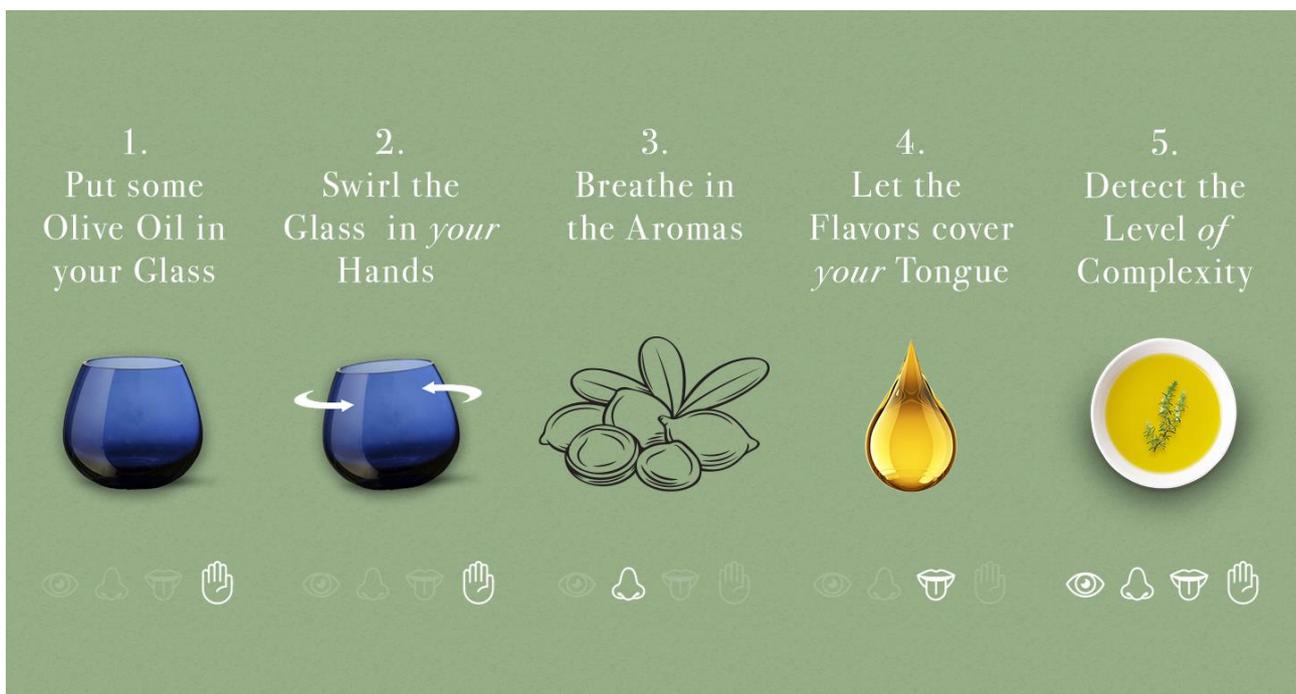
Flavours in olive oil are determined by a wide range of factors including the type of olive (varietal), ripeness at harvest, growing conditions (climate, soil type), crop maintenance (irrigation, pest control), handling of fruit from tree to mill, and the milling process itself. For example, oil made from predominantly unripe (green) olives contain flavours described as grassy, artichoke, or tomato leaf, whereas riper olives tend to yield softer flavours often described as buttery, floral, or tropical.

The above descriptions are associated with good olive oil quality, but trained tasters also learn to identify negative characteristics. Flavour defects in olive oil are associated with problems with the olive fruit (olive fly, frozen conditions), improper handling of olives during harvest (dirt, wet fruit, prolonged storage prior to milling), certain milling conditions (unsanitary equipment, excessive heat), and improper or prolonged storage after milling (oxidation). An oil that is determined to have flavour defects is not of genuine extra virgin quality; according to the International Olive Council extra virgin oils must meet both chemical and organoleptic (flavour) standards that include the absence of flavour defects.

The first step in learning how to taste olive oil is to understand how our senses work. Perception of flavour relies on both our senses of taste and smell. The ability to taste is quite limited; receptors on our tongue can only discern sweet, salt, sour, bitter, and umami (the flavour of protein). All other information that we think of as flavour is actually perceived by smelling food through the back of our nostrils (retro-nasally) while it is in our mouths. To illustrate this fact, think about how little flavour we perceive when we have a cold – this is because one cannot smell food retro-nasally when one's nose is stuffed up.

TASTING

When tasting olive oil, much of the oil's characteristics are perceived through the sense of smell. Though most people enjoy olive oil with other foods, the following steps allow us to focus on the olive oil's flavour without distraction:



- Pour a small amount of oil (about 1 tablespoon) into a small tapered (wine) glass.
- Hold the glass in one hand and use your other hand to cover the glass while swirling the oil to release its aroma.
- Uncover the glass and inhale deeply from the top of the glass. Think about whether the aroma is mild or strong. You may want to write down descriptions of the aromas that you detect at this point.
- Next you slurp the oil; this is done by sipping a small amount of oil into your mouth while “sipping” some air as well. (When done correctly, you will make that impolite noise that would cause you to be scolded when you were a child!) Slurping emulsifies the oil with air that helps to spread it throughout your mouth - giving you the chance to savour every nuance of flavour with just a small sip of oil.
- Finish by swallowing the oil and noticing if it leaves a stinging sensation in your throat.

Each of the above actions focuses our attention on a specific positive attribute in the oil. First, we evaluate the olive fruit aroma (fruitiness) by inhaling from the glass. When the oil is in our mouths, we further evaluate the aroma retro-nasally as well as determine amount of bitterness on our tongues. Lastly, we determine the intensity of the oil’s pungency in our throats as we swallow it.

Perhaps you noticed that the oil’s colour is not addressed during sensory assessment. The reason is that contrary to the common belief that golden oil is mild and dark green oil is robust, colour is NOT an indicator of either the oil’s flavour or quality. In fact, in scientific assessments, we sample from specially designed blue glasses that obscure the colour of the oil. Tasting from a dark glass prevents us from having preconceptions about the flavour of the oil before we actually smell or taste it.

TRY THIS EXERCISE

Once you are comfortable with the above tasting method, try the following exercise. Select three oils labelled as extra virgin, including an inexpensive imported brand from the supermarket. In between samples, clean your palate by eating a small piece of tart, green apple (preferably Granny Smith) and then rinsing your mouth with water. Consider the following as you evaluate each sample:

- Is the aroma pleasant or unpleasant?
- Is the aroma mild, strong, or somewhere in the middle (we’ll call that medium)? When assessing the second and third oils, note if the aroma’s intensity is weaker or stronger than the previous sample.
- Note 3 words (or phrases) that describe the aroma.
- Is the oil bitter, which is primarily sensed towards the back of the tongue? Would you describe the bitterness as mild, medium or strong? Is the intensity of the bitterness in balance with the intensity of the aroma?
- When you swallow the oil, how does it feel in your throat? Did the oil leave a mild impression, or did it sting your throat or make you cough? Is the intensity of the oil’s pungency in balance with the oil’s aroma and bitterness?

When you have completed the above exercise, take a few moments to review your notes. What were the characteristics that you enjoyed the most? Were there any characteristics that you didn't enjoy? How did the supermarket brand compare to the other oils? Even without an experienced taster sharing their thoughts about the oils with you, there is much you can learn by tasting olive oils on your own. Using this same tasting method, you can sample another set of oils on another day, and still be able to compare your responses to the first set; this is how we build our personal olive oil "vocabulary". You will begin to recognize flavours and may even discover which varieties produce the flavours you prefer. You will learn to compare the level of intensity for fruity aroma, bitterness and pungency, and will begin to identify oils as mild, medium and robust (intense). It's a good idea to organize your tasting notes in a binder so you can review your past tasting experiences with new ones.

Worldwide over 1,000 varieties of olives are grown, which should give consumers a wide range of flavour possibilities. Taste is personal, so not everyone will agree on which varieties, and other factors, produce the best oil. However, tasting oils in a methodical fashion will help to educate your palate, and you will be able to select oils with flavour characteristics that you enjoy and enhance your meals.

SOURCES

A.K. Kiritsakis: Flavor Components of Olive Oil -- A Review, Department of Food Technology, School of Food Technology and Nutrition, Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Thessaloniki, Sindos Thessaloniki, Greece.

John Harwood and Ramón Aparicio: Handbook of Olive Oil, Analysis and Properties.

Journal of the American Oil Chemist Society 75, 673 681 (1998)

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The Categories of Olive Oil

**Most prefixes attached to "olive oil" are meaningless.
The few that really matter are described below.**

By Daniel Dawson - OLIVE OIL TIMES - Nov. 3, 2021

The ambiguity in the term "olive oil" has long confused consumers and enriched the world of disingenuous actors. To the uninitiated, *olive oil* is all-encompassing. It comes in \$40 bottles from boutique specialty stores in the world's most cosmopolitan cities. Meanwhile, five-liter tins gather dust on deli floors in sleepy towns.

Thousands of kilometers away, drums, totes and flexitanks — emblazoned with the same two words — travel across the oceans on massive container ships. To add to the confusion, in most supermarket aisles *olive oil* is usually combined with a series of prefixes.

These range from the extravagant (ultra-premium) to the mundane (pure) to the truly cryptic (polyphenol-rich).

But what do these prefixes actually mean? The short answer: nothing.

Who gets to define what olive oil is?

The only olive oil prefixes to which consumers should pay any attention are those laid out by the five major olive oil regulating authorities: the Codex Alimentarius, International Olive Council (IOC), European Union, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Australian authorities.

There are many other national authorities that have formally legislated olive oil standards and grades too, but they largely follow the groundwork laid by the five aforementioned regulators.

As with rules governing most foods, the first technical definitions of olive oil were laid out by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in the Codex Alimentarius.

Originally, the Codex Alimentarius defined four separate olive oil grades: olive oil, virgin olive oil, refined olive oil and refined olive-pomace oil. Most regulatory authorities worldwide have based their own olive oil standards and grades on these original four.



How is olive oil defined?

From the four grades of olive oil laid out in the Codex Alimentarius, nine different categories of olive oil and olive-pomace oil are defined by the IOC.

However, in the European Union, which is responsible for more than three-quarters of global production, this figure drops to eight.

These categories fall into three separate groups:

- Virgin oils for consumption;
- Blended or refined olive oil and pomace oil and virgin olive oils fit for consumption;
- Olive oil not fit for consumption

While there is broad agreement internationally about the different olive oil categories, their definitions change based on where the olive oil is produced. However, it is important to note that olive oil labels must accurately reflect the appropriate category in the country where the oil will be sold.

Virgin oils

Virgin olive oils are obtained solely by mechanical or other physical means under thermal conditions that do not alter the chemical composition of the oil. The only treatment that the olives and oil undergo are washing, decantation, centrifugation and filtration.

1. Extra virgin olive oil

The Codex Alimentarius, IOC, the USDA and Australian authorities define extra virgin olive as having an excellent flavor and odor with the median of defects – the median score of one of the 12 olive oil defects, which is perceived with the greatest intensity – as zero and the median of fruitiness above zero. EVOO also has a free fatty acid content expressed as oleic acid less than 0.8 grams per 100 grams.

While most governments around the world adhere to the standards set out in the Codex Alimentarius, the definition for extra virgin olive oil is more strict in California, which permits a free fatty acid content expressed as oleic acid less than 0.5 grams per 100 grams. However, the organoleptic requirements remain the same.

2. Virgin olive oil

The Codex Alimentarius, IOC and E.U. define virgin olive oil as having a reasonably good flavor and odor with the median of defects between zero and 3.5, with the median of fruitiness attribute above zero. The free fatty acid content, expressed as oleic acid, is less than two grams per 100 grams.

The USDA and Australian authorities have slightly stricter organoleptic requirements, with the median of defects between zero and 2.5 with the median of fruitiness attribute above zero. The free fatty acid content remains the same.

3. Ordinary virgin olive oil

The Codex Alimentarius, IOC and Australian authorities define ordinary virgin olive oil as having a median of defects between 3.5 and six, with a median of fruitiness above zero. The free fatty acid content, expressed as oleic acid, must be less than 3.3 grams per 100 grams.

Ordinary virgin olive oil is not very common as it may only be sold directly to consumers in countries where the category is recognized.

Blended of refined olive oil and olive pomace oil and virgin olive oils fit for consumption

4. Refined olive oil blended with virgin olive oils (olive oil, in the U.S.)

The Codex Alimentarius, E.U., IOC, Australian authorities and USDA define this category of olive oil as comprising a blend of refined olive oil with virgin olive oils fit for consumption.

The final blend of the two has a free acidity, expressed as oleic acid, of less than one gram per 100 grams. Its organoleptic characteristics correspond to virgin olive oil but may vary depending on individual regulations in each country.

5. Olive pomace oil composed of refined olive-pomace oils and virgin olive oils

Olive pomace oil is obtained by extracting the last remaining droplets of oil from olives that have already been mechanically transformed. The process usually

involves chemically extracting the oil with powerful solvents before evaporating these out of the final product and deodorizing the resulting oil.

The Codex Alimentarius, E.U., IOC and USDA define olive pomace oil as comprising a blend of refined olive pomace oil and virgin olive oils fit for consumption. Free fatty acid content must be less than one gram per 100 grams.

In Australia, authorities have slightly more strict requirements, also requiring olive pomace oils to have the same organoleptic standards as virgin olive oil, a median of defects less than or equal to 2.5.

Olive oil not fit for human consumption

6. Lampante virgin olive oil

The Codex Alimentarius and IOC broadly define lampante virgin olive oil as an olive oil obtained solely by mechanical methods that is not fit for human consumption. Its free fatty acid content, expressed as oleic acid, is more than 3.3 grams per 100 grams. Its organoleptic characteristics also have a median of defects greater than six and a median of fruitiness of zero. These types of oils are typically sent to be refined and then blended.

However, the USDA and Australian authorities have a slightly stricter definition for lampante virgin olive oil. They define the product as having a median of defects between 2.5 and 6 or a median of defects less than or equal to 2.5 with a median of fruitiness of zero. Free fatty acid content, expressed as oleic acid, must be less than two grams per 100 grams.

The E.U. has very similar rules to the USDA and Australia, only differing in that the median of defects must be above 3.5 or the median of defects must be less than or equal to 2.5 with a fruitiness of zero.

7. Refined olive oil

The Codex Alimentarius, E.U., IOC, Australian authorities and USDA define refined olive oil as having been obtained from virgin olive oils using refining methods that do not alter the initial glyceridic structure, esters comprising glycerol and fatty acids. The free fatty acid content, expressed as oleic acid, is less than 0.3 grams per 100 grams.

8. Crude olive pomace oil

The Codex Alimentarius, E.U., IOC and USDA define crude olive pomace oil as the product obtained by extracting the last remaining droplets of oil from olives that have already been mechanically transformed. The process usually involves chemically extracting the oil with powerful solvents before evaporating these out of the final product and deodorizing the resulting oil.

9. Refined olive pomace oil

The Codex Alimentarius, E.U., IOC and USDA define refined olive pomace oil as being obtained from crude olive pomace oil using methods that do not lead to alterations in the initial glyceridic structure. It has a free fatty acidity, expressed as oleic acid, of not more than 0.3 grams per 100 grams.

The main takeaways

Shopping for olive oil should not be as hard as it is. Really, most consumers are in the market for either an extra virgin, virgin or refined olive oil blended with virgin olive oil.

When shopping for olive oil, pay no heed to the myriad prefixes adorning ornate labels. Simply pay attention to the terms "virgin" and "extra virgin." Any other prefixes – with the exception of "organic" – are utterly meaningless (no matter what the YouTube videos say).

Extra virgin and virgin olive oils are more expensive than a blend of refined and virgin olive oils, which usually will not be labeled "refined olive oil blended with virgin olive oil."

However, any labeling description from plain "olive oil" to "pure olive oil," "light olive oil," "premium olive oil" or "fresh olive oil" is simply a blend of refined and virgin olive oils.

Caveat emptor.



THE HISTORY OF THE OLIVE

The olive was native to Asia Minor and spread from Iran, Syria and Palestine to the rest of the Mediterranean basin 6,000 years ago. It is among the oldest known cultivated trees in the world - being grown before the written language was invented. It was being grown on Crete by 3,000 BC and may have been the source of the wealth of the Minoan kingdom. Inventory logs carried by ancient Phoenician trading ships contain the first written records of olive oil, which was transported through the Mediterranean to the shores of Africa and Southern Europe. Around 2500 BC the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi introduced olive oil into law by regulating its production and trade. Olives have been found in Egyptian tombs from 2,000 years BC.



From 900 BC as the Roman Empire expands its domain throughout southern Europe it brought with it olive trees to all conquered territories. As an **important commodity**, the Romans made many **improvements in olive tree cultivation, oil extraction and storage** – and valued olive oil to such an extent that it was even accepted as payment for taxes. The decline of the Roman Empire in 500 AD brought with it a decrease in olive cultivation, thus limiting olive oil production to certain regions.

The olive trees on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem are reputed to be over 2000



Olive Trees at Gethsemane on Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, Israel

years old, still relative newcomers considering the long domestication of the olive. We don't know the exact variety of the trees on the Mount. Man has manipulated the olive tree for so many thousands of years that it is unclear what varieties came from which other varieties. Varieties in one country have been found to be identical to differently named varieties in another. Some research

is now being done using gene mapping techniques to

figure out the olive family tree. Shrub-like "feral" olives still exist in the Middle East and represent the original stock from which all other olives are descended.

Gethsemane is a Hebrew word for oil press. This implies the olive trees grown along the ridge of Mount Olives were harvested for oil used in lamps. At one time, the grove covered about 4,000 square feet. Today, there are eight knarred trees. Testing suggests they are 1,000 to 2,300 years old.

Just 900 years ago Olive groves begin to flourish once again, particularly in Italy, thanks to the merchant class who discovered that selling olive oil in local markets was an important source of income. During this time, Tuscany became a renowned region for the cultivation of olive trees. Later, during the Renaissance, Italy became the largest producer of olive oil in the world and was renowned for its rich and flavourful oils that graced the tables of nobles and royalty throughout all Europe.

From the early 1800's Olive oil made its commercial debut in the Americas as Italian and Greek immigrants demanded its import from Europe. Subsequently the olive quickly spread to both North and South America then Japan, New Zealand and Australia. Today, Olive Oil continues to grow in popularity as an important ingredient in everyday cuisines in virtually every culture thanks to its proven health benefits and nutritional properties.

There are now more than 800 million olive trees in the world today, with more being planted every day! (*New Zealand has around 400,000 according to Olives NZ 2019 census*).

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Rosemary Olive Oil Cake

By: Kim Boyce

As Kim notes, you don't need to use a specialty olive oil for this cake. But if you have one with a lot of flavour, the cake will be that much better. This is one of those recipes where I think using regular sugar is the way to go. There was plenty going on with the interplay between the rosemary, chocolate, and olive oil - and I'm not sure adding less refined brown or Muscovado sugar helps this cake any. The last note I'll make is to suggest chopping up a chocolate bar for this. It's just not going to be the same if you use uniform chocolate chips. Aim for big chunks 1/2-inch in diameter, you'll end up with all sorts of shavings and littler pieces as you are chopping, and having that mix of flecks and the big chunks is pretty great.

INGREDIENTS

- Olive oil for the pan

DRY INGREDIENTS:

- 3/4 cup / 3 oz / 80g spelt flour or whole wheat pastry flour
- 1 1/2 cups / 7.5 oz / 210 g all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup / 4 oz / 115g sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt

WET INGREDIENTS:

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup / 240 ml olive oil
- 3/4 cup / 180 ml whole milk
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 5 ounces / 140 g bittersweet chocolate (70% cacao), chopped into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons sugar for top crunch



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350F / 175C. Rub a 9 1/2-inch (24 cm) fluted tart pan, or equivalent, with olive oil (and/or line with parchment paper).
2. Sift the dry ingredients into a large bowl, pouring any bits of grain or other ingredients left in the sifter back into the bowl. Set aside.
3. In another large bowl, whisk the eggs thoroughly. Add the olive oil, milk and rosemary and whisk again. Using a spatula, fold the wet ingredients into the dry, gently mixing just until combined. Stir in 2/3 of the chocolate. Pour the batter into the pan, spreading it evenly and smoothing the top. Sprinkle with the remaining chocolate and run a fork along the length of the chocolate so that the batter envelops it. Sprinkle with the second sugar.
4. Bake for about 40 minutes, or until the top is domed, golden brown, and a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean. My cake, in the alternate pan, took closer to 50 minutes. Also, just when my cake was nearly finished baking, I decided I wanted a bit more color on top. I finished it under the broiler for a minute - which caramelized the sugar on top as well and gave it a bit of crunch. Don't walk away from the cake while it is under the broiler.
5. The cake can be eaten warm or cool from the pan, or cooled, wrapped tightly in plastic, and kept for 2-3 days.

Prep Time 10 minutes, Cook Time 50 minutes - Total Time 1 hour - Serves 8-12
 Recipe adapted from "Good to the Grain" by Kim Boyce.

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