

How to choose the very best olive oil

luxurylifestylemag.co.uk/food-and-drink/how-to-choose-the-very-best-olive-oil/

By LLM Reporters

September 10, 2021



Olive trees grow to the most delightfully knotty shapes and evoke drawings by the illustrator Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) – you almost expect to discover fairies living beneath their gnarled limbs. An olive tree, likely to have been planted by Muslims in the 9th century, has recently been awarded a national prize of the ‘Best Monumental Olive Tree’ in Spain. The olive tree grows in the Sóller Valley in Mallorca and measures over 6.5 metres. It is a remarkable 1,000 years old and still produces 120 kg of olives per year. That these tiny fruits have remained popular for centuries speaks volumes.

Health benefits

Olives are high in vitamin E and other powerful antioxidants. The olive leaf is also reputed to aid in reducing inflammation in the body and boosting the immune system and can be used to make an infusion. The levels and quality of natural, health-promoting polyphenols found in olive oil is closely related to the process of olive milling and further processing which can vary enormously.

Olive oil fraud

The very nature of the health benefits from olive oil as a cornerstone of the Mediterranean diet means its economic value makes it a popular target of fraud. Practices include dilution using inferior vegetable oils, mislabelling with false declarations, and unauthorized enhancements such as added colouring and flavouring. Supporting screening tools and vigorous analytical methods are constantly being developed in an attempt to remain one step ahead of fraudsters. In the meantime, how can you be sure of what you’re buying?

Top tips for buying authentic olive oil products



To find an olive oil that flawlessly complements your flavour preferences, olive oil tasting is something you should explore

It is not simply a matter of ensuring a good return on investment but about taking steps to ensure we consume the best quality food possible for our own and our families' health, as evidenced by studies on the impact of 'food products' as opposed to real food on health and wellbeing. While none of the following approaches offer a 100% guarantee, they are a step in the right direction.

Traceability

Buy direct from the grower where possible. Olives grown by small, independent farmers are traded in bulk much like other counterfeited foods such as coffee beans, honey and spices. Small growers around the world without the resources to sell and market their product lose their personal integrity in the massive bulk volumes of food traded.

Buy authenticated oils

Check the label for the geographical location of the olive farm for an indication of quality. Many olive growing countries and regions have their own authenticated status such as the "Denomination of Origin" regulated in accordance with the EEU policies. In the US, the Californian Olive Oil Council (COOC) provides olive oil grade certification.

Choose oil labeled 'Extra Virgin' (EVOO)

This is pure 100% olive juice extracted without any heat or chemical means. Oils labelled 'pure' or 'light' oil, 'olive oil' and 'olive pomace oil' have been subject to chemical refinement or heat treatment.



The Hunter and Gather range includes a very tasty herby 100% Olive Oil Greek dressing

Check for a harvest date

Use oils within 18 months maximum from when fruits were picked. Once opened, use promptly. Don't leave the bottle at the back of the kitchen cupboard as an afterthought. Consuming rancid oils is not good for health reasons and also diminishes in flavour.

Buy olive oil in small quantities

A larger bottle might seem a bargain, but once opened the quality and benefits will begin to deteriorate.

Always check the label and, if necessary, ask questions before buying. "The devil is truly in the details, which is why so many of those details are often not even disclosed. If a brand is not forthcoming with information, it should set off a red flag," says Sarah Vachon, founder of Citizens of Soil. The company sources small-batch, artisan products. A specialist importer allows you to experience oils normally only enjoyed by the grower's family and local community.

Review: three samples



When buying coffee, honey and wine, single-estate products are the industry-standard for traceability and olive oil is no different. There are many varieties of olives and in the same way certain grape varieties in wine appeal to our individual palates, the type of olives used for oils will determine your own preference. Olives gathered early in the season produce notes of grass, artichoke or the raw earthy smell of green tomatoes. All plants are influenced by the soil and conditions in which they grow from wine grapes to cocoa beans, and olives, to produce unique aromas and flavours.

I tasted three Extra Virgin Olive Oils starting with a moderately priced bottle available at a major supermarket as well as two single estate oils, one harvested almost a year ago and one produced within a month.

Puglian Extra Virgin Olive Oil



Puglian Extra Virgin Olive Oil is authenticated P.D.O. Terra Di Bari Castle Del Monte. The label displays an 'operator code' and a bottle number for traceability, and a 'Crop' date of 2019/20 but no indication of the harvest month. The oil has a light colour and a mild grassy aroma with only a slight peppery after-taste. Of the three oils tried, this one was the 'oldest' in terms of harvesting and I would expect that to impact on the nose and palate. Aldi, £3.79, 500ml. aldi.co.uk

Single Estate Extra Virgin Olive Oil by Citizens of Soil



In this case the EVOO is a limited release of just 1,410 bottles. The oil is produced from 100% Lianolia variety grown in limestone hills in the village of Dafnes in Crete by the Amargiotakis family. Harvested in November 2020 and produced unfiltered cold extracted method with minimal intervention. The colour is a vibrant green. On the nose it has a strong fruity freshness and the intense pungent flavours are green apple and smooth creamy avocado. The taste quickly develops a surprising peppery kick that tingles on the tongue, indicating a high concentrate of Oleocanthal, the health-giving phenolic compound. Citizens of Soil produce regular lab reports on the quality of their EVOO. Price £17.50 (500ml). [citizensofsoil.com](https://www.citizensofsoil.com)

Lunaio Limited Edition Cold Extracted Organic Extra Virgin Oil



Lunaio Limited Edition Cold Extracted Organic Extra Virgin Oil is produced at the Podere Virnone farm in Tuscany. The label confirms it is a certified organic oil with a harvest date of July 2021 when the varietal Olivastra Seggianese olives were stone-milled in the traditional way. The oil has a pretty, light yellow colour and a fresh smell of green tomatoes. On the tongue it is deliciously soft and smooth at first sip followed by a peppery spice which spreads over the tongue. Available from Seggiano, an online shop offering a range of Italian foods from authentic producers. Price £8.20, 250ml. [seggiano.com](https://www.seggiano.com)

Using oils in cooking



Your flavour preferences and the types of foods you enjoy eating will greatly influence which olive oil you should be buying

A good way to incorporate olive oil into your diet is to add a splash to a morning fat coffee or smoothie blend, or simply drink a healthy shot daily. Use for light to moderate cooking methods, such as roasted tomatoes with olive oil pesto, or drizzle over soups and casseroles before eating. The single estate oils are perfect too for marinating or dipping sourdough bread. And, of course, olive oil is the star in salad dressings.

Pair a quality olive oil with equally good ingredients such as the organic Rosé Balsamic Vinegar from Seggiano to create a special vinaigrette. Price £8.20 (250ml).

If pushed for time, maintain standards with a ready-made dressing. Not all salad dressings on the market are made equal. The Hunter and Gather range includes a very tasty herby 100% Olive Oil Greek dressing. Their equally good Ranch Olive Oil dressing includes Himalayan salt, nutritional yeast and British free range egg yolks. A delicious Limited Edition 100% Olive Oil Mayonnaise is sugar, grain, dairy, seed oil, and additive free. It is as close to a creamy homemade mayo as you can get with a sharp citrus flavour. Price, £4.99 (175gm). All products use recyclable glass bottles and jars rather than plastic. £4.49 (250ml).

Tags: [best olive oil](#) [olive oil](#) [olive oils](#)

You Might Also Like



[How to plan the perfect cocktail party.](#)

By [LLM Reporters](#)



Restaurant Review: Chotto Matte, Frith Street, Soho in London
By Georgie Bentley-Buckle



Coffee: The facts and health benefits of one of the world's favourite drinks
By LLM Reporters



Regent Street luxury from morning until night
By Donna Martin



Recipe: Chorizo-stuffed rabbit saddle with scallops and chilled sweetcorn sauce by
Michelin-starred chef Paul Welburn
By LLM Reporters



Gordon & MacPhail introduces the world's oldest single malt Scotch whisky.
By LLM Reporters



Restaurant Review: Mono in Edinburgh, Scotland
By LLM Reporters



Restaurant Review: La Bodega Negra, Soho in London
By Georgie Bentley-Buckle