

# BRINGING THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET HOME:

*From your cart to your kitchen*

## Olive Oil 101

### OLIVE OIL

Due to its amazing flavors and textures, olive oil has been a hallmark of the healthy Mediterranean Diet for over 2,500 years and remains a staple in Mediterranean homes.

Olive oil adds vibrant flavors and textures to Mediterranean foods and is high in healthy, monounsaturated fats along with antioxidants.

### OLIVE OIL FLAVORS

Olives are the fruit of the olive tree. Soon after being picked, they're cleaned in a water bath. The olives are then crushed into a mash. This mash has three unique parts: olive solids, olive water, and olive oil. First, the olive solids are separated. Next, the olive water and oil are quickly separated to keep the olive water from changing the oil's taste and odor. Finally, the oil is bottled.

The best quality olive oils are obtained from the first pressing of the olives and are "cold pressed." This means they're not heated during the pressing process. Heating produces larger amounts of oil, but decreases important flavor and healthy compounds, including flavenols and polyphenols, unique to extra-virgin olive oil.

### OLIVE OIL GRADES

Olive oil is graded on taste, acidity level, and processing method. The table below lists the main types of olive oil in order of decreasing quality.

	DESCRIPTION	TASTE	USES
<b>EXTRA VIRGIN</b>	Highest quality oil made from first pressing with no heat or chemicals (unrefined)	Superior	Dips, salads, & drizzled over stews and fish
<b>VIRGIN</b>	Lacks perfect taste of extra-virgin but isn't refined	Good	Frying, grilling, & roasting
<b>OLIVE</b>	Blend of virgin and refined (chemically treated) oils	Lacks Flavor	When flavor isn't wanted
<b>LITE</b>	The word "lite" means the oil has been refined, NOT that it's lower in fat or calories	Lacks Flavor	When flavor isn't wanted
<b>POMACE</b>	Lowest quality made by blending virgin & pomace	Lacks Flavor	Frying and cooking



## BUYING AND STORING OLIVE OIL

The four foes of olive oil are age, heat, air, and light. When you buy olive oil, make sure it is no more than 18-months old. (Look at the bottling date on the label.) At home, store olive oil in a cool, dark place.

## SAUTEING WITH OLIVE OIL

There's no better way to bring out the flavor of vegetables and seafood than sautéing. It's an easy, healthy way to prepare your favorite dishes. To sauté, pour olive oil cold into a skillet or sauté pan and heat over low heat. When the oil is heated through, add the food item. Stir, toss, or turn until cooked and enjoy!

## FRYING WITH OLIVE OIL

Frying foods in olive oil leaves food less greasy and crunchier than frying them in other fats. Even better, foods have less fat and cholesterol and saturated fat than foods fried in other fats. Choose virgin oil or olive oil, since the heat removes the fruity flavor characteristic to more expensive extra-virgin olive oils.

Here are some tips when frying with olive oil:

- ✓ Deep fry at 350 to 365 °F, and heat the oil slowly.
- ✓ Use enough oil to properly cover foods.
- ✓ Avoid putting too much food in the oil at once.
- ✓ Place food on wire racks after cooking to drain excess fat.

## BAKING WITH OLIVE OIL

Baking with olive oil, instead of butter, reduces the amount of cholesterol and saturated fat in your favorite recipes. Olive oil produces lighter-tasting breads, brownies, biscotti, and cakes.

Even more good news – You need less olive oil than butter when baking.

The chart on the right shows how much olive oil you need when substituting for butter during baking.

BUTTER	OLIVE OIL
1 tsp	3/4 tsp
2 tsp	1 1/2 tsp
1 Tbsp	2 1/4 tsp
2 Tbsp	1 1/2 Tbsp
1/4 cup	3 Tbsp
1/3 cup	1/4 cup
1/2 cup	1/4 cup & 1 Tbsp
2/3 cup	1/2 cup
3/4 cup	1/2 cup & 1 Tbsp
1 cup	3/4 cup

