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EUROPE



curiosities
Olive oil – excellent by nature

Portrait of the olive tree

The olive tree is a sturdy tree. Its **growth is rather slow** and **it can live and produce olives for hundreds of years**.

An important symbol

The olive tree rouses passion in those who cultivate it and those who look at it. It is a symbol of **longevity** and **eternity, peace** and **wisdom, strength**, as well as **value, fertility, light** and **purity**.

Beauty of the olive tree

Initially smooth and round when it is young, the trunk of the olive tree becomes gnarled and rough as it gets older. The olive tree is **beautiful all year round**. It stays **green throughout the seasons**. Its dimensions and forms vary according to the varieties. Its **leaves** are **narrow, oblong** and **two-tone** (dark green on one side and silvery on the other).

The 4 major periods in the life of an olive tree

YOUTH
1 to 7 years



PRODUCTION
7 to 35 years



ADULTHOOD
35 to 150 years



SENESCENCE
beyond 150 years



did you know?

Along with cereals and grapevines, olive trees are part of the Mediterranean triad, providing the basis of the Mediterranean diet since Antiquity.

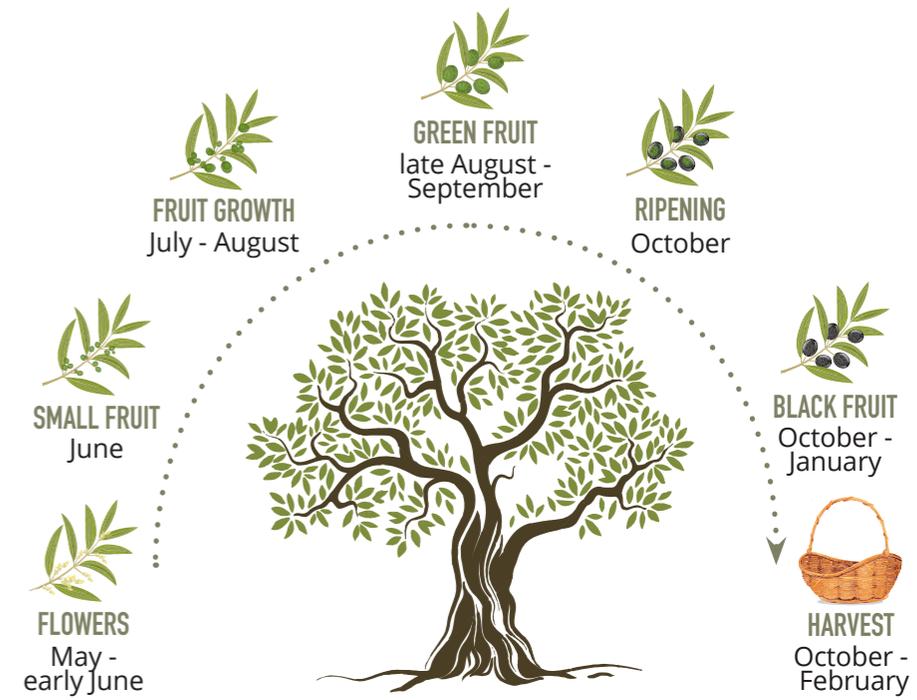


ripening period

This is the time when the olive ripens, going from green to black, usually in October, or later, depending on the varieties.

the olive tree

From flowers to olives



the olive tree

Varieties

A wide range of varieties

There are **over 2,000 varieties of olive trees** worldwide. Most **varieties** are **endemic**, being found only in a particular region, which may be large or small. However, some varieties are widespread as they are easily adaptable (the picual, the hojiblanca, the arbequine, etc.).

A wide range of characteristics

The shape of the tree, its leaves, as well as the quantity of olives it produces, vary greatly from one variety to another. **Certain varieties will thus produce 20 to 30 kg of olives per tree, while others will produce 100 kg or more.**

To each its yield

While **olive oil can be extracted from all types of olives**, they don't all have the same yield. Some varieties require **5 to 6 kg** of olives to make **1 litre of oil**, while others require **8, 9, 10 or even more than 11 kg** of olives to get **1 litre of olive oil**.

did you know?

Some one hundred endemic varieties are cultivated in France.

protected designations of origin



For each PDO, the **authorised varieties** are laid down in a **book of specifications**. The choice is established according to **the history** of the **area covered by the designation** and its **dominant and characteristic varieties**.

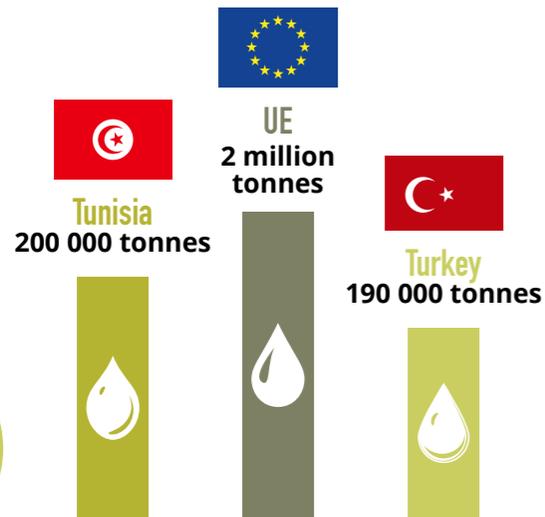
a few figures concerning olive oil production

WORLDWIDE PRODUCTION*



3 million tonnes

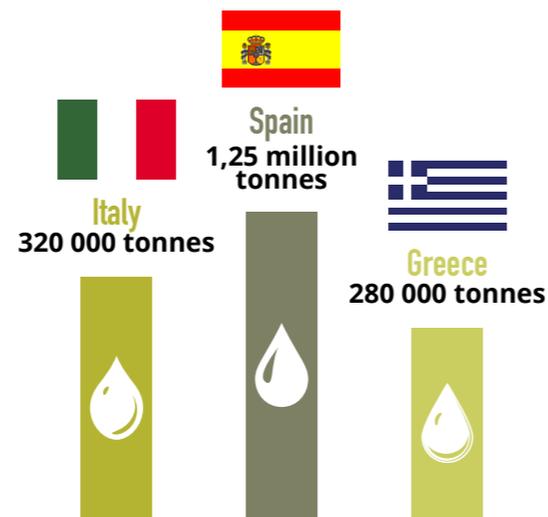
France accounts for 0,16 % of global production



EUROPEAN PRODUCTION*



2 million tonnes



The European Union accounts for 67 % of the world's total number of olive trees

* Annual average production over a 5-year period - COI data





harvesting of the olives

The olive harvest

It takes place between **October and February**. The harvesting date varies from one production area to another, depending on the varieties grown and their degree of maturity. **Certain varieties are harvested when the olives are turning colour, while others are harvested when dark and ripe**. Moreover, different varieties reach maturity at different periods. Note that for **table olives**, the harvest starts in **late August / early September** for **green olives**.

The 3 ways of harvesting olives

- **Manually**, by hand or with a manual rake,
- **Semi-manually**, with mechanical rakes or branch shakers,
- **Mechanically**, with machines that shake the tree trunk or olive-picking machines.

Gentleness and technique

Special care is given to the fruit during the harvest. Table olives are **carefully picked and stored**, in the aim of avoiding bruising. For the extraction of the oil, any damaged fruit is discarded. In terroirs that produce table olives as well as olive oil, **the fruit is graded**: the biggest (and best) will become table olives, while the smallest will be used to produce olive oil.

Protected designations of origin



For **PDO olive oils**, the **harvesting date** is set each year according to the **maturity of the olives** and the **product's specific criteria** including its organoleptic properties.

extraction of olive oil

Olive oil is a pure fruit juice. The oil contained in the fruit is simply extracted via mechanical processes, under temperatures that do not cause any alteration of the oil (based on principles that have been applied for over 2,000 years). The only processes involved are **the washing** of the olives, their **grinding**, **centrifugation** and **filtration**.

did you
know?

On average, 5 to 8 kg
of olives are required
to make 1 litre
of olive oil.

Leaf removal
and washing



To obtain a good-quality oil, the fruit must be sound and fresh (short lapse of time between the harvest and arrival at the mill), cleared of impurities (leaves, twigs, etc.) and washed.

Grinding
and malaxing



The olives are ground into a paste with a millstone or a mechanical grinder. The olive skin, pulp and stone are ground together. Malaxation homogenises the paste and allows the droplets of oil to combine into larger ones.

Extraction



The oil is obtained through cold extraction.

- **Either by pressing:** the olive paste is placed on pressing mats (or filtering discs) which are piled up; it is then pressed to extract the oil. This method is gradually disappearing.

- **Or by centrifugation:** based on the different densities of the olive paste components, centrifugation separates the oil from the water and solids (pulp residue, stone and skin).

Separation



The oil is then separated from the vegetable water through the different densities of the fluids (as oil is lighter than water). This is done either through natural decantation (a slow process, which presents a risk of alteration through oxidation) or separation through centrifugation.

Filtration



The last step before bottling is filtration. However, it is not mandatory. Filtration does not alter the taste of the oil in any way.



olive oil

Storage and preservation

A fragile product

While it is **non-perishable**, olive oil is a **fragile product**. It must be **carefully bottled and stored**.

The ideal container is one that **will protect the oil from light** (an opaque container or one that is stored in a cupboard) and **air** (a container with a lid). Maintaining a **constant temperature** throughout the storage period (between 15°C and 20°C) will also ensure its preservation. Below 15°C, the olive oil may freeze and develop white spots. This is a natural phenomenon which does not affect the quality of the oil or its taste. All you need to do is leave the oil at room temperature for a few minutes and the white spots will disappear.

Quality that does not depend on time

Unlike wine, **olive oil does not improve with time!**

To preserve all of the characteristic flavours of the olive oil, we recommend that you **use it by the date shown on the bottle** and within 3 to 6 months after its opening.

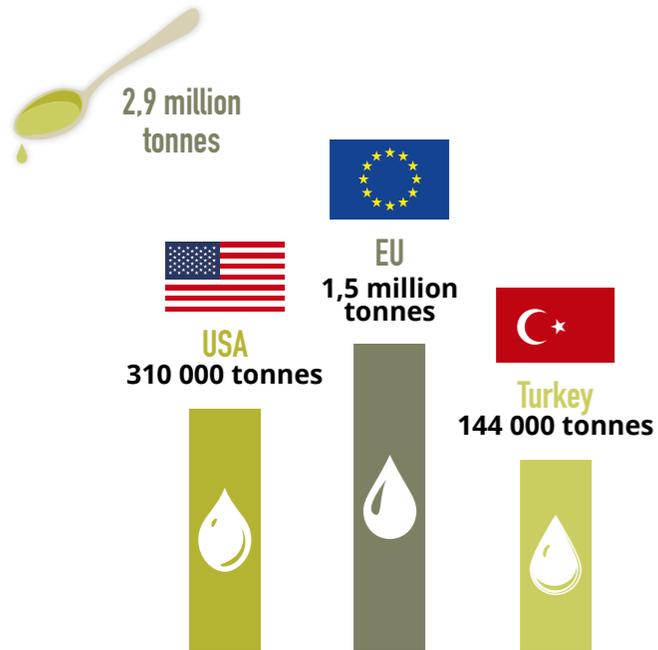
did you know?

After its extraction, the olive oil is stored in a cool, dry place in stainless steel containers to avoid all oxidation that would quickly lead to rancidity.

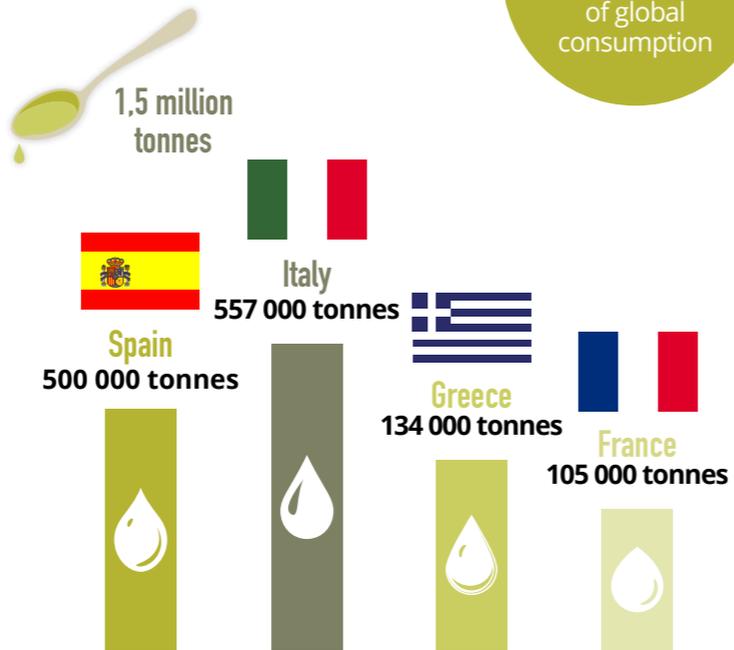
a few figures

Olive oil consumption

WORLDWIDE CONSUMPTION*



EUROPEAN CONSUMPTION*



The European Union
accounts
for over 50 %
of global
consumption

* Annual average consumption over a 5-year period - COI data



tastes & uses

Taste categories

Like wine – with its reds, rosés and whites – olive oil comes in **three taste categories: subtle taste (goût subtil), intense taste (goût intense) and traditional taste (goût à l'ancienne).**

The taste of the oil depends on numerous factors, including the olive **variety(ies)**, the **terroir**, and human **know-how**.

Within each of these categories, there are olive oils with different aromatic combinations, but which share the same basic characteristics of sweetness, roundness or intensity.

A wide range of flavours for numerous uses!

Each olive oil will impart its aromas to the dish in which it is used, like a full-fledged ingredient.



Olive oils extracted from **olives harvested at maturity**, when black, and pressed fresh. They are generally **sweet**, with **aromas of fruit** (dried fruit, ripe fruit or berries), and **flowers**, along with herby notes (light to medium). They are mild, with little or no bitterness.

PDO olive oils with a «subtle taste (goût subtil)» include: PDO huile d'olive de Nyons, PDO huile d'olive de Nice, the Aprutino Pescarese PDO (Italy), the Sitia Lasithiou Kritis PDO (Greece), the Baena PDO (Spain), and the Azeite de Moura PDO (Portugal), among others.



Olive oils **extracted from fresh olives, harvested during the ripening stage** (green or mixed olives). These oils can be quite strong (tingle at the back of the throat) with light to medium bitterness. They have **aromatic notes of vegetables and herbs**, such as artichoke, green tomato, basil, etc.

PDO olive oils with an «intense taste (goût intense)» include: PDO huile d'olive de la Vallée des Baux-de-Provence, PDO huile d'olive de Haute-Provence, the Monti Iblei PDO (Italy), the Aceite de la Rioja PDO (Spain), and the Azeite de Trás-os-Montes PDO (Portugal), among others.



Olive oils made from **stored olives matured for 4 to 8 days after the harvest**, under specific **controlled conditions**, before the extraction process. They give off **notes of black olives, tapenade, cocoa**, sourdough bread, mushrooms, vanilla and candied fruit, without any bitterness or strong taste.

PDO olive oils with a «traditional taste» include: PDO huile d'olive de la Vallée des Baux-de-Provence - olives mûrées, and PDO huile d'olive d'Aix-en-Provence - olives mûrées, among others.



useful tip

Olive oil can be used cold or in cooking, in all types of dishes. However, the olive oil must be chosen according to the type of cooking and the dish to ensure a harmonious combination of tastes between the oil and the food.

tastes & uses

Uses in cooking

Best ways to use olive oil

Olive oil can be used **cold or in cooking**, unlike certain other vegetable oils that can only be used cold (such as walnut oil).

Moreover, it offers a wide range of tastes as it is **virgin**, i.e. non-refined (the extraction processes preserve all of the characteristic flavours of the oil present in the olive).

From salads to chips!

Olive oil **can withstand high temperatures**. With a **smoke point** of **210°C**, it can be heated without any alteration of its quality. However, heating olive oil to temperatures above 180°C may reduce the oil's aromas, which is a shame if you use a PDO olive oil.

It is therefore preferable to use a European extra virgin olive oil for cooking, and **add PDO olive oil at the end of the cooking, or use it for quick cooking** (eggs, for example).

tastes & uses

Good combinations

Choosing the right olive oil

Olive oil's wide range of aromas can be used to enhance a dish, sublimate it, and sometimes add a distinctive touch. **Olive oil goes perfectly well with** vegetables, fish, shellfish, meat, fruit, and even pastries. The combination of olive oil with foods must be based on a good balance of flavours. Each ingredient must respect the others.

Preferred combinations:

- the mild aromas of **subtle-tasting (goût subtil) olive oils** with delicate dishes such as vegetables (salads, carrots, courgettes, etc.), delicate fish, fruit, desserts, etc.
- the herby aromas of **intense-tasting (goût intense) olive oils** with stronger-tasting ingredients such as Mediterranean vegetables (artichokes, aubergines, tomatoes, etc.), pulses, meat, oily fish, etc.
- the woody aromas of **traditional (goût à l'ancienne) olive oils** with shellfish, game, summer vegetables, rocket, aubergines, potatoes, etc.

In cooking, innovation, pleasure and personal taste are of course the main criteria. **The only recommendation: invent, innovate, and enjoy yourself!**



a few drops to sublimate a dish!

PDO olive oils have taste and very different flavours depending on the variety(ies), the origin, and the know-how. All you need is a few drops to enhance even a simple dish (mashed potatoes, pasta, fish, etc.). Good ingredients, creativity, a little time (not necessarily a lot), PDO olive oils and voilà, you become a Chef!



mastering the taste of olive oil

«With olive oil, you can do everything that you do with other fats. However, you have to learn how to use it and, most importantly, master its taste which, for palates who are not used to its aromatic strength, may become too powerful. In cooking like in everything else, the right dosage is crucial».
Christian Etienne - starred Chef

tastes & uses

Expert's advice

Keep several olive oils in your cupboard

- one for «everyday» use,
- and 2 or 3 PDO or PGI olive oils (or a variety of these), in small bottles, with different aromatic notes to flavour your dishes.

Use olive oil like a spice, or even better... as a **full-fledged ingredient!**

Caution

Make sure your oil is protected from air and light.

If you want to transfer your olive oil into a nice container, make sure it is not porous. If it is transparent, keep your oil in a cupboard.

Did you know?

With **PDO olive oils**, all you need is a drizzle to enjoy all their aromas.

reading the label

to make the right choice

Particulars mentioned

Olive oil labels must include certain particulars, such as:

- **the trade name:** as a preference, choose virgin or extra virgin olive oils,
- **the origin** of the olive oil (determined by the **place of harvesting** of the olives and the **place of extraction of the oil**),
- **the olive oil category**, which defines the olive oil in a more precise way; for example, for extra virgin olive oil, this is materialized by the wording «superior category olive oil obtained directly from olives and solely by mechanical means»,
- **the net amount** of oil, expressed in litre, centilitre or millilitre,
- **the date of minimum durability**, indicated by the words «Best before end» or «Best before»,
- **the storage conditions**,
- **the name and address of the person or company in charge of marketing**, which in **no way defines the origin of the olive oil**.

Other particulars may also appear on the label, but these are optional, such as the olive variety, harvesting date, harvesting process, etc.



the label of origin: Pdo

to recognise a Pdo
product, look for
the logo!



The Protected Designation of Origin guarantees **a link between a product and its terroir** (geographical area, climate, geology, know-how, etc.). It refers to a **typical and unique product**, based on its **origin** and the elements related to it (variety, production and processing conditions, etc.). It designates a product whose **production, processing and preparation** take place in a **specific geographical area with recognised and verified know-how**.

The name of the PDO is stated on the label, preceded or followed by the wording «PDO» (or «AOP» in French).



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