



## *Olive Oil Frequently Asked Questions*

### **What does Extra Virgin mean?**

“Extra Virgin” oil has no heat or chemicals used to extract the oil and falls within a set range on a number of chemical readings. The highest potential health benefits come from Extra Virgin.

“Virgin” oil has no heat or chemicals used to extract the oil but the oil is in a higher range of acidity and chemical readings.

“Plain”, “pure”, “light” or any other form of olive oil may have heat and or chemicals may be used to extract the oil and or the acidity will be in the highest range.

### **Why does extra virgin matter?**

Extra virgin oil contains the highest amounts of the “good” things you can get from using olive oil, such as heart health, cancer fighting properties, antioxidants, etc. The other grades of oil may have minimal or none at all of the chemistry that can give you positive health benefits.

### **How long can I use my oil?**

If you know when it was pressed you should plan to use it up within nine to 12 months of the pressing. NOT the date from when you buy or open it, but from when it was pressed. No matter how it is stored, olive oil is declining as it ages and will eventually have zero health benefit and begins to go rancid. Generally, oils from the Southern Hemisphere are pressed in May-June, and the Northern Hemisphere in November-December.

### **Can I cook with olive oil? Will it burn?**

Fresh olive oil can take a higher heat. The smoke point is determined greatly by the age of the oil. As it ages, the smoke point goes down. Also, sometimes the more robust oils can take slightly more heat than the delicately mild oils.

### **Why don't you have oil from all of the countries year round?**

### **Why can't I find Italian oils in the fall?**

Besides quality, freshness trumps everything, so we intentionally carry only the freshest available. While Italian oils can be great, Italian oils sold in the US in the fall are probably a year old already and have little or no health value. They may have lost flavor and begun to go rancid before you bring it home! We choose to instead carry oils from Southern Hemisphere countries such as Australia during the fall months, because they are fresher. Australian oils are sweeping award competitions, and countries such as this are definitely equal to Mediterranean oils. We seek to provide the freshest at all times. Our oils are independently laboratory tested to ensure the highest quality so we will carry the best from wherever we find it at the time.

### **Should I store my oil in the fridge?**

Heat, light and air can affect the quality of your oil. Even in ideal conditions it declines as it ages. It is best to buy in quantities you can consume in three to six months. Store it in a dark bottle, in a cool, dark cupboard; not in the refrigerator.

***Benessere Olive Oils and Vinegars - [www.benessereoil.com](http://www.benessereoil.com)***

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## *Olive Oil Frequently Asked Questions, continued*

### **What is independent laboratory testing?**

Benessere carries only the finest, top quality, extra virgin olive oil. Our oils are independently laboratory tested by industry award-winning **Modern Olives Laboratory Services**.

Extra virgin olive oil decreases in flavor and health benefits over time. Fresh-crushed olive oil is like fresh-squeezed fruit juice in that it contains the most flavor and nutrients. Old, poorly made and improperly stored extra virgin olive oil yields fewer if any health benefits and has an undesirable flavor.

### **Crucial Olive Oil Chemistry Definition Key**

**Oleic Acid:** is a monounsaturated omega-9 fatty acid found in olive oil. Olive oil is generally higher in oleic acid than other vegetable fats. The range found in extra virgin olive oil is between 55-85%. Extra virgin olive oil high in oleic acid has greater resistance to oxidation. Generally, higher is better.

**Free Fatty Acids (FFA):** Based on **IOOC (International Olive Oil Council) Standards** the maximum limit for free fatty acid in extra virgin olive oil is 0.8g per 100g or (.8%). A low FFA is desirable. Free fatty acid speaks to the condition of the fruit at the time of crush. The higher the FFA, the greater the indication of poor quality fruit such as damaged, overripe, insect infestation, overheating during production or too much of a delay between harvest and crush. Generally, lower is better.

**Peroxide Value:** Based on **IOOC Standards** the maximum peroxide value for extra virgin olive oil is 20. A very low peroxide value is desirable. Unsaturated free fatty acids react with oxygen and form peroxides, which create a series of chain reactions that generate volatile substances responsible for a typical musty/rancid oil smell. These reactions are accelerated by high temperature, light, and oxygen exposure.

**Polyphenol Count:** Polyphenols are a class of antioxidants found in a variety of foods. Polyphenols such as *Oleuropein*, *Oleocanthal*, and *hydroxytyrosol* impart intensity connected with pepper, bitterness and other desirable flavor characteristics. Recent studies indicate that these potent phenols are responsible for many of the health benefits associated with consuming fresh, high quality extra virgin olive oil. Phenols in olive oil decrease over time or when exposed to heat, oxygen and light. Consuming fresh, well made olive oil with high polyphenol content is crucial when looking to obtain the maximum health benefit commonly associated with consuming extra virgin olive oil.

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