Olive oil tastings are a great way to let shoppers explore the amazing flavors and aromas present in extra-virgin olive oil and to merchandise exceptional oils carried by your store.

Setup

- About a week ahead, post the store announcement (see following page) prominently in your store.
- Create “olive oil stations” consisting of
  1. One of your chosen bottles of olive oil
  2. Plastic cups filled with about 1 tablespoon of oil
  3. A basket of small bread pieces
  4. Napkins
- Nearby, display several bottles of each olive oil being sampled, for participants to purchase after the tasting.

Tasting Steps

- Provide participants with the two olive oil handouts and a pen or pencil.
- Stand by the first olive oil station and instruct participants on how to taste the oil, based on the instructions provided on the “Olive Oil Tasting” handout.
- After successfully tasting one oil, have participants move to the remaining olive oil stations to complete the tastings.

Supplies List

- 3-4 different extra-virgin olive oils. We suggest sampling varieties from various areas like Italy, Greece, Spain, and California to show the regional differences between olive oils. However, feel free to choose any extra-virgin olive oils you carry in store.
- Small plastic cups. Enough for each participant to try each oil in a new cup. *(Note - oil will soak through paper cups.)*
- Water and water cups for participants to cleanse their palates between oils.
- Bread for participants to dip in oil to taste each variety.
- “Olive Oil 101” and “Olive Oil Tasting” handouts
  Print one for each participant.
- Pens or Pencils for participants to take notes about oils.
Celebrate the Mediterranean Diet

Olive Oil Tasting

Olive oil tastes like… olive oil, right?

Not so fast! Different olive oils range in taste from mild to peppery, and each one is ideal for different uses. Want to learn more?

Please join us for a free olive oil tasting

on ________________________________

date

at ________________________________

time

Learn more about the healthy and delicious Mediterranean Diet from Oldways at www.oldwayspt.org
SHOPPING & TASTING THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

HOW TO TASTE OLIVE OIL

“The olive tree is surely the richest gift of heaven.” Thomas Jefferson

First Things First

Picking the best olive oil is a matter of taste - your taste. Try several varieties, and pick your favorite. There’s no right or wrong opinion when it comes to olive oil: While you might insist a particular olive oil tastes nutty, a fellow taster might instead sense apples and green peppers.

How do you determine who’s right? You both are! Call it a tie and enjoy olive oil’s many complexities together.

Olive Oil Flavors

There are more than 200 varieties of olive oil. Each has its own unique taste and odor. The groups below describe the flavors of most olive oils:

✴ Full-Bodied and Earthy: Strong flavored, big oils that lack sweetness. Some can have a peppery punch as well. Best used with strong-flavored foods.

✴ Fruity & Peppery: Have a stronger olive flavor that’s often accompanied by a peppery aftertaste. Best used with pasta dishes, robust soups, or as a drizzle.

✴ Fruity & Herby: These are the herbal, grassy oils. Good for most foods, especially with vegetable, pasta and seafood dishes.

✴ Mild & Buttery: These subtle oils retain a fruity flavor. Good for mild dishes such as a simple fish dish or salad dressing.

How the Experts Do It: Official Tastings of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Olive-growing regions use two tests to decide the quality of an oil: 1) chemical tests, to determine its acidity content and 2) human taste tests done by official tasters. Taste tests are very serious events governed by rules of conduct set by the International Olive Oil Council. Official tasters rate olive oils on a set of vocabulary used to assess the flavor principles of extra-virgin olive oil.

Some of these terms include:
Almond  Apple  Artichoke  Chamomile
Citrus fruit  Eucalyptus  Exotic Fruit  Fig leaf
Flowers  Grass  Green  Fruity
Herbs  Olive leaf  pepper Pear  Pine kernel
Soft fruit  Tomato  Vanilla  Walnut
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It’s best to try no more than three or four olive oils per tasting so you don’t overwhelm your palate. As you taste each oil, you should notice the fruity taste of the olive. Try using some of the descriptors used by official tasters to describe the olive oils you sample today. Use the chart below to record the aromas and flavors you experience, using the words on the previous page - or your own choice of words.

(1) Pour a little olive oil (about 1 tablespoon) in a small glass. Smell the oil deeply, and note its initial aromas. What do you smell?

(2) Gently swirl your glass to coat its sides with oil. Cup the glass in your hands for about 30 seconds to warm the oil. Lift the glass to your nose again. This time sniff it rapidly and deeply. Analyze the aroma. Has it changed?

(3) Now it’s time to taste the oil! Take a small sip (about half a teaspoon) without swallowing. Roll the olive oil around in your mouth for a few seconds. The oil should touch all areas of your mouth so that you can note the various tastes and sensations. How does it feel in your mouth? What are the flavors? Do you like them?

(4) Since olive oil is enjoyed with food, it’s important to note the effects of food on an oil’s flavor. Dip a piece of bread into the oil, and try it. Does the bread enhance the flavor of the olive oil? Does the oil enhance the bread?

(5) Before trying the next oil, clean your palate with a sip of water.

(6) Try the remaining oils using the above steps. At the end of the tasting, review the flavors and oils you liked and disliked. Decide if you’d like to add any of these to your home pantry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oil #</th>
<th>Smell(s)</th>
<th>Flavor(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handout

SHOPPING & TASTING THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

OLIVE OIL 101

“The olive tree is surely the richest gift of heaven.” Thomas Jefferson

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 widely-available olive oil in order of decreasing quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>TASTE</th>
<th>USES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXTRA VIRGIN</td>
<td>Highest quality oil made from first pressing with no heat or chemicals.</td>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>Dips, salads, drizzled over stews and fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contains more healthy nutrients.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIRGIN</td>
<td>Lacks the perfect taste of extra-virgin but isn’t refined</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Same uses as EVOO but with less flavor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLIVE</td>
<td>Blend of virgin and refined (chemically-treated or mechanically-filtered)</td>
<td>Mild flavor</td>
<td>Grilling, frying and baking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>oils; often about 90% refined and 10% virgin oil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITE or LIGHT</td>
<td>The word “lite” means the oil is lighter in color, NOT that it’s lower in</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>When flavor isn’t wanted, especially in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fat or calories. Lite olive oil is often a blend of about 98% refined and</td>
<td>flavor</td>
<td>baking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2% virgin oil.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SHOPPING & TASTING THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

OLIVE OIL 101

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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 and buy it in sizes that you can use quickly.

Sautéing 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 found in more expensive extra-virgin olive oils. Fry food only rarely -- and use fresh oil when you do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUTTER</th>
<th>OLIVE OIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 tsp</td>
<td>3/4 tsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tsp</td>
<td>1 1/2 tsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tbsp</td>
<td>2 1/4 tsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tbsp</td>
<td>1 1/2 Tbsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
<td>3 Tbsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3 cup</td>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
<td>1/4 cup &amp; 1 Tbsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3 cup</td>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/4 cup</td>
<td>1/2 cup &amp; 1 Tbsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>3/4 cup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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’ll need less olive oil than butter when baking.

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