

Olive oil has been the hallmark of the healthy Mediterranean Diet for over 2,500 years. It adds vibrant flavors and textures to Mediterranean foods and is high in healthy, monounsaturated fats along with antioxidants. Simply drizzle it on cooked fish or vegetables, or use it as a dip for bread. Vegetables roasted, grilled, or sautéed in olive oil are simply tastier – so you’ll find yourself eating more of them!



## OLIVE OIL FLAVORS

Olives are the fruit of the olive tree. Soon after being picked, they’re cleaned in a water bath and 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, abundant in extra virgin olive oil.

## OLIVE OIL GRADES

Olive oil is graded on taste, acidity level, and processing method. Choose olive oil based on how much flavor you need. The table below lists the main types of olive oil in order of decreasing price and flavor.

GRADE	DESCRIPTION	USES
Extra Virgin Olive Oil	Naturally extracted with no heat or chemicals, most flavorful, healthiest, broad range of flavors	Drizzling, dipping, vinaigrettes, marinades, grilling
Olive Oil	Also called “pure” or “classic” olive oil, made from a combination of EVOO and refined olive oil, mild flavor, “everyday cooking oil”	Grilling, sautéing, roasting, pan frying, baking (substitute for butter), sauces
Light-Tasting Olive Oil	Almost flavorless, made in the same way as olive oil, doesn’t influence taste but still adds healthfulness	Same as olive oil, useful if you don’t want any olive oil flavor

Source: North American Olive Oil Association (NAOOA).

## BUYING AND STORING OLIVE OIL

The four foes of olive oil are age, heat, air, and light. When you buy olive oil, look for best buy dates as far out as possible. Olive oil can keep for up to two years in a sealed container. (Look at the bottling date on the label.) At home, store olive oil in a cool, dark place, securely sealed with a cap when not in use.



## 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 into a cold 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!

## BAKING WITH OLIVE OIL

Baking with olive oil, instead of butter, cuts the amount of cholesterol and saturated fat in your favorite recipes. Olive oil produces lighter-tasting breads, brownies, biscotti, and cakes. And more good news – you need less olive oil than butter when baking!



## GRILLING AND FRYING WITH OLIVE OIL

Grilling and frying with olive oil seals in the natural moisture of foods, leaving them less greasy. Also, foods cooked in olive oil have less cholesterol and saturated fat than foods cooked in most other fats. Here are some tips when grilling and frying with olive oil:

- Marinate foods in olive oil before grilling to add flavor and properly coat them.
- Heat the oil slowly and pan-fry at 350° to 360°F.
- Place food on wire racks after cooking to drain excess fat.