



Olive Oil Basics: Intro Lesson & Guided Tasting

Beginner-Friendly Overview • Myths •
Buying & Storage • How to Taste •
Guided Flight



Learning Objectives

- Understand what olive oil is and how extra virgin is defined.
- Learn common myths and what the science actually says.
- Know how to read a label, buy smart, and store oil for quality.
- Practice the official tasting technique and build a flavor vocabulary.
- Apply your skills in a guided tasting of 4–6 oils.

Agenda (60–75 minutes)

Part 1: Definitions & How It's Made (10)

- Grades, IOC basics, how modern mills work

Part 2: Myths & FAQs (10)

- Cooking, smoke point, color, refrigerator test, adulteration reality

Part 3: Buying & Storage (10)

- Labels, harvest/ best-by, seals, storage best practices

Part 4: Tasting Technique (10)

- Aroma, taste, chemesthesis; faults vs. positives

Part 5: Guided Tasting (20–30)

- 4–6 oils from mild to robust; optional defect reference

Q&A (as needed)

Part 1: What Is Olive Oil? How Is It Made?



Olive Oil 101

- **Olive oil** = oil from the fruit of *Olea europaea*, composed mainly of triglycerides (oleic acid predominant)
- Two big families:
 - **Virgin:** mechanically extracted; includes Extra Virgin, Virgin, Lampante
 - **Refined:** neutralized/deodorized, often blended
- **Extra Virgin** = no sensory defects, some fruitiness, chemical limits met



How It's Made (Modern Outline)



Harvest & Clean

Remove leaves/twigs; wash olives



Crush & Malax

Hammer mill common; gentle mixing at ~80–86°F helps oil droplets coalesce



Separate & Polish

Centrifuges (decanter + separator) split oil/ water/ solids; optional filtration



Store & Package

Protect from heat, air, light; stainless tanks; nitrogen headspace; dark glass/ tins/ bag-in-box

Olive Oil Production

1.



Olive harvest

- a. Hand picking
- b. Shake with sticks and catch in the net
- c. Harvest with large vibrators

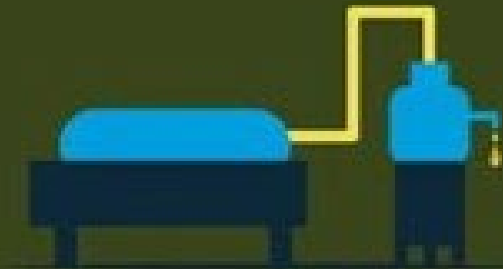
3.



Grinding

- a. With stainless steel mills
- b. With heavy granite stones

5.



Oil extraction

- a. By cold pressing
- b. By cold extraction

7.



Bottling

The last step before enjoying at home

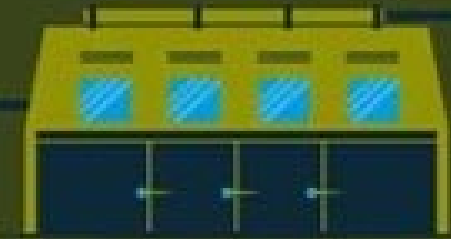
2.



Cleaning

Remove the leaves
Cleaning the fruits

4.



Mixing

Homogenization of the pulp

6.



Filtration

- a. With the help of filters
- b. Decanting

Part 2: Myths & FAQs



MYTH: "You can't cook with EVOO."

- You can. MUFA + phenolics give strong oxidative stability; great for sautéing, frying.

MYTH: "Color predicts quality."

- It doesn't. Variety/ maturity drive color; pros hide color in blue/red glasses.

MYTH: "Light olive oil has fewer calories."

- All oils ~120 kcal/ Tbsp. 'Light' refers to flavor (more refined).





MYTH: "Fridge test proves EVOO."

- Solidification depends on fatty acid/waxes; not a quality test.

MYTH: "Adulteration at retail is rampant."

- U.S. monitoring & FDA work find little confirmed adulteration on shelves.

MYTH: "First cold press is essential."

- Mostly marketing; modern oils are centrifuged; EV is already 'first' extraction.

Part 3: Buying Smart & Caring for Your Extra Virgin Olive Oil



Reading a Label (What Matters)

Grade: Look for “Extra Virgin Olive Oil”

Harvest/ Best By: Fresher is better; “Best by \leq 2 years from bottling” is typical

Origin: “Product of” = where olives grew; “Imported from” \neq origin

Varieties: Learn styles (e.g., Arbequina vs. Koroneiki vs. Picual)

Seals: Trade/ government seals can add assurance but taste trumps all



Storage Essentials

Enemies: Heat • Air • Light • Time

- **Keep cool:** ~59–64°F is ideal; avoid hot counters and above-stove storage
- **Minimize air:** recap promptly; larger volumes = bag-in-box preferred
- **Limit light:** dark/painted glass, tins, or keep in pantry box
- **Use it:** Once opened, aim to finish bottles in ~ 6–8 weeks



Sensory Building Blocks

Aroma (orthonasal & retronasal)

- Green vs. ripe fruitiness; herbs, tomato leaf, citrus, nuts, floral, etc.

Taste

- Sweet, salty, sour, bitter, umami (bitterness is normal in robust oils).

Chemesthesis

- Pungency/pepper (throat tickle), 'hot' sensation (not temperature).

Mouthfeel

- Astringency, viscosity/"greasiness."






Official Technique (Beginner Edition)

- 1. Cover/warm:** cup the glass; swirl to release aromatics (~82°F / 28°C).
- 2. Sniff:** lift cover, inhale, pause to assess.
- 3. Sip:** 1 tsp; spread, warm in mouth.
- 4. Aerate:** gently pull air through the oil (strippaggio), then exhale through nose.
- 5. Swallow (or spit):** notice bitterness and peppery pungency.
- 6. Cleanse:** water + slices of Granny Smith apple between samples.



Positives & Faults (What to Notice)

	Positives	Fruitiness (green/ ripe), bitterness, pungency (pepper)
	Common Faults	Rancid (stale/ nutty paint), fusty (anaerobic/ fermented), musty (moldy), winey-vinegary
	Extra Virgin Requirements	No defects + some fruitiness.



Part 5: Guided Tasting

- 4-6 samples
- From mild to robust
- Optional fault reference



Tasting Flight (Example Lineup)

1. **Mild/ Delicate EVOO** (ripe-leaning)

Goal: identify gentle fruitiness, low bitterness/ pungency

2. **Medium/ Balanced EVOO**

Goal: perceive harmony of fruitiness, moderate bitterness/ pepper

3. **Robust/Green EVOO** (early harvest)

Goal: experience stronger aromatics, distinct bitterness, cough-inducing pungency

3. **Everyday “Olive Oil”** (refined blend)

Goal: compare neutral profile vs. EVOO character

Optional: Fault Reference (if available)

Rancid or fusty sample for learning purposes (Do not finish)



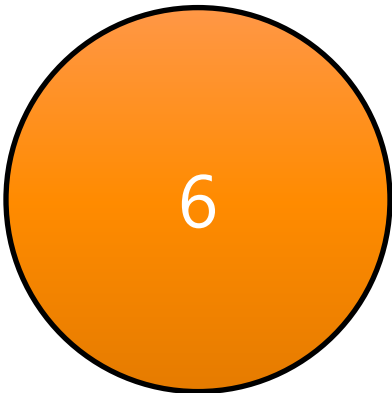
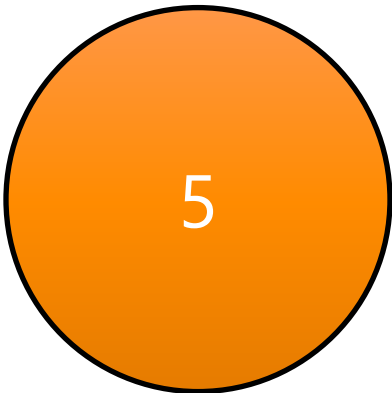
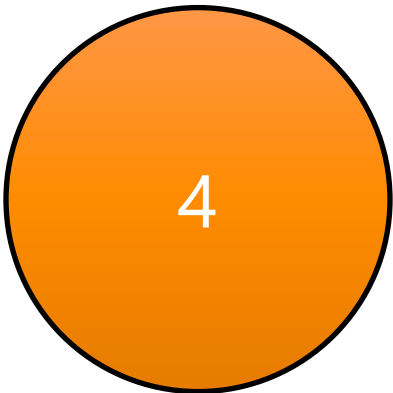
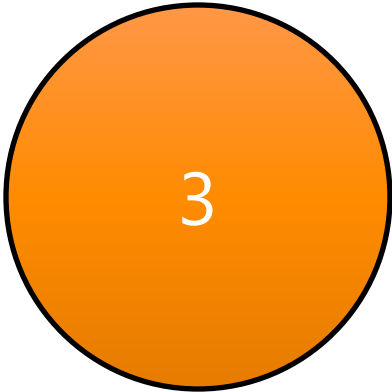
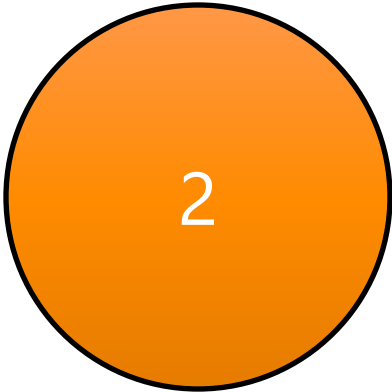
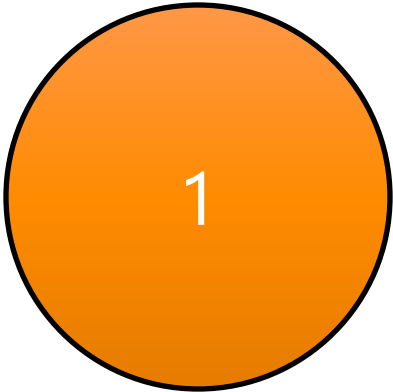
Tasting Prompts (Use After Each Sample)

- **Aroma first:** What fruits/herbs/vegetables or other references?
- **Intensity:** Mild • Medium • Robust?
- **Bitterness:** Low • Medium • High? Where do you feel it?
- **Pungency:** Mouth heat or throat catch? How strong?
- **Overall:** Everyday cooking • Finishing • Specific pairings you imagine?





Guided Tasting Mat



Notes:

Buying Scenarios/ Pairing Ideas

Everyday cooking EVOO

- Medium intensity
- Reliable, good value

Finishing oil (salads/vegetables)

- Choose styles you love aromatically
- Robust for bitter greens, delicate for fish

Heat applications

- Sauté/ roast/ fry are all fine with EVOO
- Use styles appropriate to the dish



What to Remember



- Extra Virgin = no defects + fruitiness; it's a legal, taste-verified grade
- You can cook with EVOO; stability is excellent vs. many seed oils
- Ignore color; ignore the fridge test; "light" means light flavor
- Read labels: grade, harvest/best by, origin, variety, seals
- Store cool, dark, capped
- Finish opened bottles within ~ 6–8 weeks