

Olive Oil: Healthy Nectar or Unwholesome Fraud?

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A high quality extra virgin olive oil is not only delicious, but also incredibly good for you. Olive oil, especially when eaten with a Mediterranean Diet, has been shown to potentially decrease the risk of heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's, diabetes and even obesity. Fresh extra virgin olive oil with a peppery burn is a strong anti-inflammatory with a healing potency similar to ibuprofen.

So, if olive oil is so healthy for you, why is there so much controversy surrounding it? It turns out that much of the olive oil industry, especially from Italy, is quite shady and leads down a road with the mafia at the end of it. It is estimated that up to [80% of extra virgin olive oil](#) in supermarkets in the United States is fraudulent, meaning it is either just regular olive oil (not extra virgin) or it is not olive oil at all. Creating completely fake olive oil is not that difficult, just take some cheap safflower oil, add chlorophyll and beta carotene and you've got some semblance of olive oil. If you were to taste test this fake oil right next to a rich, fresh extra virgin olive oil, you would definitely notice the difference. But unless you are a connoisseur of olive oil you might never know.

It is vitally important for our health (and our taste buds) to find a real, high quality extra virgin olive oil. Here are some tips on what to look for and some brands that have passed the test:

- 1) Chose brands of extra virgin olive oil that have been [tested and proven to be reliable](#). Here are a few that are known to be good tasting, high quality olive oils: California Olive Ranch, Trader Joe's Greek Oil, Costco's Kirkland brand.
Olive oils shown to be of lower quality: Bertolli, Filippo Berio, and Pompeian.
- 2) If olive oil is cheap it probably isn't extra virgin. Price matters when it comes to extra virgin olive oil. The process used to make a top quality olive oil is not cheap.
- 3) Purchase from olive oil specialty stores. Stores where you can try the different oils and pour your own bottles are usually high quality and not fraudulent.
- 4) Purchase olive oil from regulated areas. In the United States, California is very highly regulated and usually a good choice.
- 5) Look at the date on the bottle. You don't want a past date or close-to-date bottle as the fresher the oil, the better it is for you.
- 6) If purchasing a glass or plastic bottle (I recommend glass), make sure the glass is tinted. A clear glass lets sunlight in, causing the oil to oxidize (break down) and lose quality. Or opt for a metal container that keeps the light out entirely.

Things to watch out for:

- 1) "Bottled in" If the olive oil says something like "Bottled in Italy", it very likely isn't even from Italy.
- 2) "Lite" olive oil – many people purchase "lite" olive oil thinking it is lower in calories, but all that means is that it is lighter in color, which means the good stuff has been filtered out and it isn't as healthy. Same amount of calories per serving.
- 3) Super cheap – If an olive oil is super cheap it is very very likely that it isn't extra virgin.

One warning: Once you begin purchasing a delicious, fresh, healthy extra virgin olive oil you will find it difficult to go back to using any inferior product. Enjoy!