



UCDAVIS

Olive Center

at the Robert Mondavi Institute

TEN MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT

Olive Oil



olivecenter.ucdavis.edu



1

MYTH: Olive oil should not be used for cooking because of its low smoke point.

FACT: Olive oil is excellent for cooking and can have a high smoke point, comparable to oils such as canola, rice bran and high-oleic peanut. Olive oil smoke points range from 347°F (175°C) to 464°F to (240°C), depending on the grade, quality and freshness.

2

MYTH: You would not like olive oil because you don't enjoy the taste of olives.

FACT: Fresh olive oil is minimally processed like juice and should have a fruity flavor without the earthiness that can come from fermentation. Table olives are processed with salt, brine and other debittering methods, and often taste salty, bitter and earthy.

3

MYTH: "Light" olive oil is lower in calories than other olive oil.

FACT: All oils have the same number of calories, nine calories per gram, which is 120 calories per tablespoon. "Light" refers to olive oils that have been through a refining process that have removed most of the color, flavors and aromas.

4

MYTH: "Extra virgin" olive oil is the only healthy type of olive oil.

FACT: All olive oil grades contain healthy mono-unsaturated fats, squalene and tocopherol but "extra virgin" grade has the most healthful phenolics and antioxidants.

5

MYTH: Most extra virgin olive oil is "fake."

FACT: Olive oil labeled as "extra virgin" most likely is olive oil, but it may not meet extra virgin standards, as found by the UC Davis Olive Center in 2010 and 2011. Media stories frequently misinterpreted these findings by claiming that most oils were "fake."

6

MYTH: You can tell a good extra virgin olive oil by its color or packaging.

FACT: No, you can't. Color is impacted by many factors other than quality, including variety, region, climate, fruit maturity and processing. While some packaging is better at preserving oil quality, packaging type does not necessarily correspond to oil quality.

7

MYTH: Olive oil gets better with age.

FACT: With enough time all olive oils, even the highest quality oils, will become rancid from oxidation. The bright flavors of fresh extra virgin olive oil will diminish with time, although some consumers may prefer the taste of a milder oil.

8

MYTH: Buying a large container of olive oil is smart shopping.

FACT: Buying a size of container that can be consumed within weeks or a few months after opening is smart shopping to deliver the maximum amount of freshness and quality from the oil.

9

MYTH: Storing olive oil in the fridge or freezer is harmful.

FACT: Research shows that extra virgin olive oil has a longer shelf life when stored at 59°F (15°C) compared to 77°F (25°C). Oil stored at a freezer temperature of -4°F (20°C) maintained higher quality than oil stored at a refrigerator temperature of 39°F (4°C).

10

MYTH: Cloudy oil or sediment in the bottle mean the oil has gone bad.

FACT: Cloudiness or sediment are not indicators that an oil has gone bad, although they may hasten the development of off-flavors. Some producers filter out sediment and water droplets to enhance clarity and prevent off-flavors from developing.

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