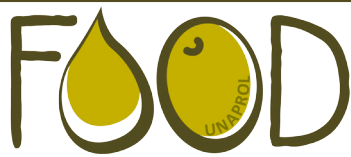


Looking for

THE PERFECT



NEWSLETTER

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Ministero delle
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EUROPEAN CULTIVARS

A territory like that of Mediterranean Europe offers a huge variety of high quality olive types: the matrices of origin are widely diversified and each of them expresses unique environmental, climate and landscape conditions.

The result of this richness is an extraordinary biodiversity, to which every area of Mediterranean Europe contributes by expressing different olive varieties ("cultivars"), connoted by personal organoleptic properties.

European olive production is therefore particularly varied: individual cultivars are the result of unique territorial conditions and a specific genetic structure, which has evolved naturally over time and today represents a unique heritage in terms of taste and nutritional characteristics.

Learning to distinguish between the different varieties is the first important step towards better appreciating these excellent resources of European agricultural heritage.

But where is this richness concentrated? As mentioned, production is widespread at the level of the entire Mediterranean area, with some areas that have always been particularly suited for olive cultivation.

The country where olive biodiversity is most concentrated is Italy, where more than 600 native cultivars have developed and evolved over time – an absolute world record.





THE OLIVE HARVEST

The olive has been present in the life and culture of man for over 3000 years, and traditional methods of harvesting olives have been passed down from generation to generation. Today we can still distinguish between different traditional methods:

1. Hand-picking from the ground: being the simplest and most intuitive, it is the first to have been used, with the olives harvested by hand once they have dropped to the ground after complete maturation. This practice allows the olive to be harvested at full maturity, but sometimes the fruits appear partially damaged and this can affect the quality of the oil to some extent.
2. Beating or raking: this is still widespread today, although quite demanding on the tree. The olives are detached from the branches by means of poles (beating) or wooden rakes (raking), causing them to fall into nets placed at the base of the tree.
3. Hand-picking: this is the technique most used by “artisanal” companies and consists of pulling the olives from the branches by hand. This implies a very high labour cost because there must physically be someone who climbs the tree and detaches the olives. This technique permits choosing the best fruits and keeping the olives intact.

Alongside traditional harvesting techniques, mechanised harvesting methods have become established over time. Here, machines that cause the tree to vibrate and the olives to fall off, or vibrating rakes (harvesters) that shake individual branches, are used. This type of harvesting is more economical but, compared with hand-picking, the quality of the harvested olives is proportionately inferior, because the machine cannot select the product to be harvested.

TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

MANUAL HARVESTING OF OLIVES THAT HAVE FALLEN TO THE GROUND ON REACHING MATURITY.

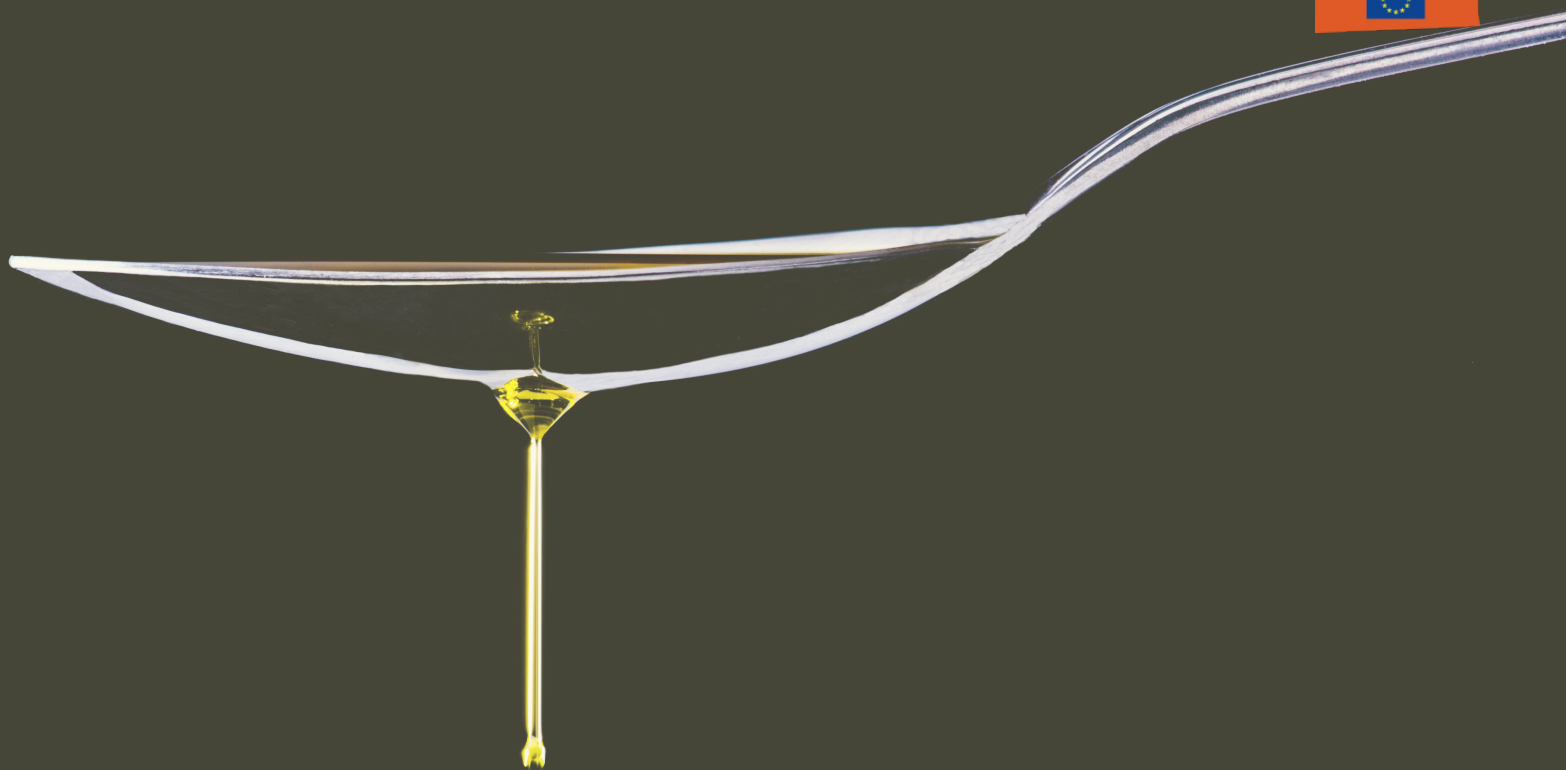
USING POLES (BEATING) OR WOODEN RAKES (RAKING) TO CAUSE THE OLIVES TO FALL ONTO NETS SPREAD ON THE GROUND.

MANUAL HARVESTING OF OLIVES FROM THE BRANCHES (HAND-PICKING).

MECHANICAL HARVESTING

THE OLIVES ARE HARVESTED USING MACHINES THAT VIBRATE THE TREE AND MAKE THE OLIVES FALL OFF.

HARVESTING TAKES PLACE USING VIBRATING RAKES (HARVESTERS) THAT VIBRATE THE BRANCHES AND CAUSE THE FRUITS TO FALL.



ORGANOLEPTIC ASSESSMENT OF OIL

Before marketing, in addition to chemical tests, virgin olive oil has to undergo a sensory assessment according to certain parameters in order to describe its organoleptic characteristics.

Sensory analysis assesses the specific positive and negative attributes of the oil, for the purposes of respective classification. The assessment takes place using PANEL TESTS encoded at international level by IOC regulations (<http://www.internationaloliveoil.org/>), in which professional tasters taste the oil and in accordance with standardised procedures, attribute a precise product category based on the merits and defects identified. The main phases of analysis are the olfactory and olfactory-gustatory phases.

Panel Tests also identify the positive attributes, if any, of the oil: “fruity”, “bitter” and “pungent”, eventually classified according to the intensity of perception. Several positive attributes can be distinguished through this further classification: fruity (with the possible dominance of “green” or “mature”), balanced and sweet oil, which depend mainly on the

variety of the olives and the different balance of bitter and pungent components.

The overall assessment of the oil is the sum total of the olfactory-gustatory sensations perceived directly and/or in retro-nasal form. The test sequence calls for an olfactory test, followed by an olfactory-gustatory procedure including assessment of oral sensations (combined olfactory-gustatory, retro-nasal and tactile sensations).

In order not to be influenced by the colour of the oil, the sample is presented in a coloured (blue) glass, covered with a watch glass. For the olfactory analysis, the taster must rotate the oil in the glass covered by the watch glass in order to spread it evenly on the sides. The watch glass is then removed and the taster inhales deeply with both nostrils for a maximum of 30 seconds, repeating the procedure several times at intervals of a few minutes if he/she has not come to any conclusion.

For the gustatory analysis, a small amount of oil is placed in the mouth, spreading it over the oral cavity to allow the taste buds to savour all the senses. Through short successive inhalations, the aromatic

volatile components are perceived and the sample extended over the entire oral cavity. Finally, in order to assess the sensation of pungency to the best, the oil is swallowed.

All Panel Test data are collected according to strict standardised procedures and processed using pre-set statistical calculations, thus permitting a more reliable and consistent classification of assessments.

OLFACTORY ANALYSIS



GUSTATORY ANALYSIS





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FUNCTIONS OF USE AND PAIRINGS

Knowing well what we bring to the table is a somewhat knowing ourselves better: this is certainly also the case of European high-quality olives and oil.

While the particular genetic characteristics are the fundamental element for product quality, each variety expresses autonomous properties of aroma and flavour, and together all represent a priceless treasure to be discovered and enjoyed.

Biodiversity is also the basis of the different functional characteristics and intended uses of products: some olive cultivars are particularly suitable for table consumption, while others represent precious “souls” capable of originating the excellent quality of fine European extra virgin olive oil.

Choosing a European extra virgin olive oil for dressing and cooking means using a superior quality product in terms of both taste and the inimitable properties of use in cooking. The choice ranges from the delicate with a mellow aroma, ready for immediate consumption, to the richer in flavour, also with marked fruity accents.

One can then distinguish the extra virgin olive oil with a bitter aftertaste or mild tingling, rather than the one with a herbaceous sensation or scent of mowing.

The colour also changes the personality: from deep golden yellow to softly veiled with green tones but sometimes also orange reflections, European extra virgin olive oil embraces all the colours of the Mediterranean sun.

The versatility of extra virgin olive oil's different accents and perfumes ensures a perfect pairing for all occasions: it combines naturally with the food culture of Mediterranean Europe, but it finds ideal meeting points with any kind of food tradition and with modern creative cuisine.

The aromatic spectrum, which derives by intensity from the original varieties of olives which represent the matrix and from the characteristics of maturation of the fruits, exalts its use for all daily dishes and pairings. For the fruity oil, for example, the following uses are indicated according to the different degrees of intensity:

- light: vegetable sauces, fish fillets, salads;
- medium: boiled vegetables, grilled and roasted fish, white meat;
- intense: vegetable soups, red meat, bruschetta.

Resistance to high temperatures and a high smoke point also make extra virgin olive oil a superior level product for frying, with foods that are enriched with antioxidants during the cooking cycle.

But let us not forget how versatility in cooking and endless possibilities of pairing are only the premises of a much broader benefit: bringing to the table two resources of inestimable value for the daily diet (the olive, along with its precious nectar, and extra virgin olive oil) means taking care of both taste and well-being, because they are exceptional foods for the palate and fundamental for the body.