

# THE OLIVE FACT FEED

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News and fun facts about the world of EVOO.

## HISTORY OF OLIVE OIL (PART 2)

The fall of the Roman Empire in 476 AD caused a decrease in olive cultivation and, consequently, of oil production: olives were only cultivated in some marginal areas until the beginning of the new millennium.

After the year 1000, agriculture witnessed a general recovery, which also encouraged the resumption of olive cultivation; in this period, however, oil was mainly used for non-food purposes, such as in liturgical functions.

From the year 1100 onwards, there was a general recovery in trade that favoured the growth of oil production, which was mainly used by the peoples of the Mediterranean during that period.

During the 1300s, there was a rapid development of olive groves in Puglia, while in the 1400s there was a strong growth in the demand for oil (which was also used for lighting) and, as a result, a growth in trade of the product which, in the coming centuries, was also to reach North European countries.

However, it was only during the 18th century that there was a first official cataloguing of olive varieties according to their geographical origin.

In the course of the 1900s, following the two world wars, oil production fell sharply, partly due to abandonment of the countryside and urbanisation of the post-war population.

Considered a poor food over the last century, olive oil has been rediscovered in recent years due to its nutritional properties and its use as part of the Mediterranean Diet, considered to be one of the best in the world both for a proper nutritional intake and in terms of taste and versatility.



## ITALY'S CENTURIES-OLD OLIVE TREES (PART 2)

In the previous issue, we began to talk about centuries-old olive trees which, in addition to producing huge quantities of olives, are also very important tourist attractions in the areas where they are found.

In this issue, we will discover another 5 which are among the best known throughout Italy, each with its characteristics, curiosities about its history and its traditions.

### 1) **The millenary olive tree of Palombara Sabina - Palombara Sabina (Lazio)**

This is the oldest olive tree in Lazio and stands right next to the town cemetery. It is estimated that this tree is around 3.000 years old and, before an incident that removed a part of the trunk, had a circumference of 12.5 metres. A tradition is linked to this olive tree: it is customary for young local couples to have their photos taken in front of it dressed in wedding attire as a good omen for future life.



### 2) **S'Ozzastru - Santo Baltolu di Carana (Sardinia)**

This wild olive tree, technically called "oleaster", comes from the municipality of Luras, in the province of Olbia-Tempio, and has a base circumference of 20 metres, a height of about 14 metres and an age of about 3,500 years, making it one of the oldest trees in Europe.

### 3) **The olive tree of Borgagne - Melendugno (Puglia)**

Probably the oldest olive tree in Italy is to be found in Puglia, in the Piana degli Ulivi Millenari (Plain of Millennial Olive Trees); it is between 3,000 and 4,000 years old and its olives are used to produce Terre d'Otranto PDO Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

### 4) **The centuries-old olive tree of Corato - Corato (Puglia)**

The centuries-old olive tree of Corato is found in Puglia, in the town of the same name, and is about 600 years old: as tall as a three-storey building, its trunk measures more or less 7.9 metres and it takes 4 to 5 people to embrace all of it. This tree is probably one of the progenitors of the Coratina cultivar which is typical of this area.

### 5) **The millenary olive tree of Vernole - Vernole (Puglia)**

This olive tree, which is over 1,400 years old, is to be found in Struda' di Vernole, Salento, and has been nicknamed "La Regina (The Queen)". Belonging to the native Ogliarola Leccese cultivar, the base of its trunk measures 14 metres and it can yield around 6 kilos of olives. In 2012, the tree was officially dedicated to Michelle Obama on the occasion of the first Mediterranean Diet Festival, given the commitment of the former U.S. first lady to spreading the Mediterranean Diet and, in general, the contribution she offered in the field of progress and knowledge of healthy dietary criteria and eating patterns.