Olive Oil

Did You Know?

Heat, light, and air exposure can affect the quality of olive oil.

Limit exposure to all three of these and your olive oil can keep well for up to two years in the original sealed package. Ideally, however, only purchase what you can use within 8-10 weeks.

Photo by: Alpha/Flickr

Olive oil is a type of oil made from the pressing of green olives. Used as a staple in the Mediterranean diet, it is considered a healthy fat, and can be used for cooking of all types.

Different names for olive oil indicate the degree of processing the oil has undergone as well as the quality of the oil.

- Extra-virgin olive oil is the highest grade available, followed by virgin olive oil.
- The word "virgin" indicates that the olives have been pressed to extract the oil, no heat or chemicals have been used during the extraction process, and the oil is pure and unrefined.

Health Benefits of Olive Oil

- Olive oil may reduce inflammation.
- Extra virgin olive oil is the least processed, having the greatest amount of nutrients and antioxidants.
- The USDA recommends 5-7 teaspoons of oils or fats per day (about 2 tablespoons), and olive oil is an excellent source for these fats.
- Olive oil is high in MUFA's (monounsaturated fatty acids), the fats that are good for your heart and that help lower "bad" LDL cholesterol while increasing the "good" HDL cholesterol.

Delicious Ways to Enjoy Olive Oil

The flavor of olive oil varies from mild to light in virgin olive oil, to fruity and aromatic in extra virgin olive oil.

Try cooking with olive oil in a variety of ways such as:

- Salad dressings or dips
- Sautéing vegetables
- Topping or finishing soup, fish, or meat
- In place of butter or other saturated fats in baking

Incorporating olive oil into your diet can be both delicious and healthy. For more information on olive oil, visit the North American Olive Oil Association at http://www.aboutoliveoil.org

Foods A-Z, April 2017