

## **The Grades of Olive Oil | Clear & Simple Definitions**

Hi everyone! Welcome to this video about the different olive oil grades, how they're made and what they're used for. My name is Hannah-- I work with Centra Foods. I want to just go over today a little bit about each grade, how it's pressed, what it's best used for in manufacturing and in distributing and give you guys a little bit of background. In the olive oil industry, there seems to be a lots of questions about what's what and we want to lay it all of there and have it be as clear and simple as possible for people.

I'm going to start at the beginning-- we're going to start towards the higher end, the Extra Virgin grades, and work our way down, and then discuss some of the other oils as well.

### **Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil**

The highest grade is known as Extra Virgin. It's what you're going to find in most grocery stores, most retail gourmet stores, that's what they're going to carry.

There are a few different types of Extra Virgin, one being traditional and one being organic. What that means is that the olives have been certified organic, the process that's used to make it is a completely organic process. Someone has actually come through and they've documented this. Normally (just like with any certification) you are going to pay a premium for the organic certified Extra Virgin.

In all honesty, the oil is quite similar. Not a whole lot of pesticides are used on olives and olive trees because they're a really hearty plant and they grow very well. But, the organic certification documents this. So if you are making a USDA Organic Certified product (you're manufacturing it), absolutely, the Organic [Extra Virgin Olive Oil] is what you need to go with.

### **Extra Virgin Olive Oil**

Extra Virgin Olive Oil is made-- the olives are harvested and it's made just from fresh olives. It's actually just an olive fruit juice. Those olives are harvested, they're picked from the trees and they are brought to the mill to be pressed. They're actually ground into a very fine paste with water and then they're put into a centrifuge. You can think about a centrifuge as a really large dryer [or even better, a washer on the spin cycle]-- it works in the same way. It spins very fast and the olive particles separates from the olive oil, which separates from the water. And they all come out three different areas and the oil is separated off. So it's actually really just that fresh fruit juice, essentially. And so that makes Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

It does need to be a certain acidity just to be qualified as Extra Virgin Olive Oil. The acidity does need to be under 0.8. What that means is that when they do the acidity testing, it needs to be under that acidity. If it is, and it meets all of the taste requirements, then it is an Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

### **Virgin Olive Oil**

Virgin Olive Oil, which is the second sister to Extra Virgin Olive Oil, is very similar. It's actually just-- it's pressed in the same way, it's produced in the same way, but the acidity level is higher. When we do that final taste testing, that final chemical testing the acidity level is anywhere between 2.0 or lower (between 2.0 and 0.8). So that's the primary difference between Extra Virgin and Virgin Olive Oil-- not a huge difference.

### **Refined Olive Oil**

The next jump down is going to be the refined olive oil. Now, refined oil is actually made by taking that Virgin Olive Oil (it's a slightly lesser grade than Extra Virgin Olive Oil, maybe it's not the ideal, perfect taste and the utmost premium quality). You're going to take that [Virgin Olive Oil] and they'll actually refine it using a high heat process. That takes a lot of the flavor components out of the oil, a lot of the color, and with it, arguably a lot of the health benefits too that come with Extra Virgin Olive Oil. That heating process really removes a lot of the components of that oil, though it's still olive oil.

The result, after you refine it, is what's known in the industrial world as Refined Olive Oil. That's the same thing as "Lite Olive Oil" that you'd see on a [retail] shelf-- "Light Tasting"-- anything like that, that's actually Refined Olive Oil.

### **Pure Olive Oil**

Then, to get the next grade, it's actually a slight step up. If you mix Virgin or Extra Virgin Olive Oil that has not been refined back into that Refined [Olive] Oil-- just a little bit, make it a blend-- that is actually what's known in the US as Pure Olive Oil.

Pure Olive Oil seems to have the most confusion around it, and for good reason. The USDA defines this grade as just "olive oil" and the word "pure" has become attached to it simply because it was used as a marketing term for so long on labels that people came to know it as Pure Olive Oil. Now, a lot of times you'll hear olive oil referred to as Pure, Pure Olive Oil or just Olive Oil-- those are all the same things. And that's not just regular old olive oil, what comes out of the olive. That's actually a refined oil that's had Extra Virgin or Virgin blended back into it to increase the color and the flavor a little bit.

So when you see Pure Olive Oil on the grocery store shelf, that's why it's slightly cheaper than the Extra Virgin Olive Oil, because it is a few steps down.

### **Olive Pomace Oil**

The next grade down from that is what's known as Olive Pomace Oil. Olive Pomace Oil, what that actually means is oil that comes from the pomace of the olive. The pomace of the olive is all of the leftover material that's left after the Virgin and Extra Virgin is pressed. You have the pump, the flesh, the skin. That actually is a drier material, but [it's] just like any seed oil that would be a drier component.

A solvent is added it (normally it's known as hexane that's added to the pomace) and it removes the very last of that oil that is possible out of the pomace. It's still made from an olive material, and so that's why it's known as olive pomace oil, but that is the lowest grade. The

solvent is removed, and so it's often used in manufacturing, it's used in soap making, it's used in body care-- lots of different things.

Olive Pomace Oil is debatably one of the more controversial olive oils, but no more so (I would say) than Canola Oil or any other seed oil that would use that same [expelling] system.

### **Other Oils and Blends**

The next step down from there would be to look at some of the other oils-- the Canola Oil, Sunflower Oil, Safflower Oil, Soybean Oil. Those are lots of really common oils that are now used in manufacturing.

Another very common thing is actually taking that olive oil (any of the grades, any different type can be used) and creating what's known as an olive oil blend. What that means is you're combining two different oils to create a particular taste profile, maybe you want to use both ingredients or it helps lower your price-- there's lots of different reasons. A common blend that we see would be Canola Oil and Extra Virgin Olive Oil blended together, say in a 75% Canola Oil, 25% Extra Virgin Olive Oil-- that's a common blend. Those blends are used by food manufacturers, they're used by food service providers, distributors. They're just very common. You can really use any of those different grades [in those blends].

If you decide that you want to go without the olive oil, and you want to go with a different grade of oil, there are lots of different grades that are good to choose. As I mentioned, Canola Oil: right now non-gmo is really big on the market, especially in the natural and whole foods marketplace. Canola Oil is now available in Non-GMO versions (as most seed oils are). And just a note-- olive oil is naturally non-gmo.

You can get lots of different kinds of Canola Oil. Expeller Pressed, which means it is a mechanically pressed oil. Just like Extra Virgin Olive Oil, it does not use that solvent. You can get, Expeller Pressed Non-GMO Oil, which means it's expeller using mechanical means and then only uses Non-GMO seeds. That's another option.

Same kind of things with the Safflower Oil, Sunflower Oil; those are both seed oils that are very light tasting. They're used a lot in frying or other high heat purposes. And then, Soybean Oil which is a common oil to use. It's kind of considered one of the lowest grade of oil you can use in food manufacturing. It's been normally used (in the past) in very high volumes. We've seen a move towards the natural food marketplace in the past 5 years, so it's much more common to see olive oils and canola oils used in lots of different ways.

If you have any questions about these grades or these blends, how they're made, what they're good for feel free to get in touch with us. You can give us a call, or you can contact us anytime. We look forward to hearing from you, have a great day!