

Tasting Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Extra virgin olive oils are like wine, offering a range of flavor that varies based on olive type, harvest time, and growing region, among other things. Below are tips for a do-it-yourself tasting. Follow up by using the oils in recipes and comparing to your tasting notes. The more you try, the more you'll know!

Tasting Tips:

Gather 2 – 5 oils for comparison. If you have an indication of the oil intensity, be sure to start with the most delicate oils first and work your way up to more robust oils.

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Follow these simple steps:

- Consider both the aromas and flavor sensations of each oil. Color is not an indication of quality, but it can influence a taster's perception. Professionals use blue-tinted glasses to remove color bias.
- Place about a tablespoon of oil in your tasting glass (a wine glass works well, but small plastic soufflé cups are ok too – and make for easy clean-up!)
- Warm the oil by cupping your hands around and over the top of the glass, and slowly rotate it so the oil sticks to the sides.
- Remove your hand from the top of the glass and put your nose up close, inhaling to catch the aromas. Think about what you smell – is it green, ripe, earthy, fruity, nutty? Jot down your initial perceptions so you can refer back to them as you compare oils.
- Now, you taste! Sip enough oil to hold in your mouth and let the flavors cover your tongue. Make some noise by slowly sucking in some air, which will help release the flavors in the oil. Close your mouth with the oil inside and

breathe out through your nose. For a full experience, you should swallow at least some oil and note the tastes/sensations in your throat

- What notes do you catch – Apple? Tomato? Herbs? Citrus? Nuts? Spices?
- Do you feel bitterness on your tongue? Pungency in the back of your throat?
- Think about the level of intensity of each sensation, are they balanced or does one dominate?
- Jot down notes so you can compare later.
- Cleanse your palate before moving on to the next oil. Sparkling or still water and slices of apple, such as Granny Smith, work well.
- Keep it simple and take breaks between oils. Your senses may become overloaded so limit each session to five oils maximum.

