

Tips for buying olive oil



Check for a harvest date

Better producers will often indicate on the container when the olives were harvested. Look for the most recent harvest, which is typically October – December in the Northern Hemisphere and May – June in the Southern Hemisphere. A “best by” date often is two years from the time the bottle was filled, not when the olives were processed, and therefore is an unreliable indicator of quality.



Value freshness

Find a truly fresh extra virgin olive oil and compare with the familiar “olivey” flavor often mislabeled as extra virgin. A quality extra virgin olive oil should smell and taste fresh, have fruity notes (descriptors might include grassy, apple, green banana, artichoke and herbaceous), and may have bitterness and spiciness (which are indicators of healthy antioxidants.)



Choose a good container

Heat and light are the enemies of freshness. Containers are made from dark glass, tin, or even clear glass largely covered by a label or placed in a box.



Keep cool and dark

Exposure to heat and light will diminish freshness and shorten the shelf life of olive oil.



Look for a quality seal

Producer organizations such as the California Olive Oil Council and the Australian Olive Association require olive oil to meet quality standards that are stricter than the minimal USDA standards. Other seals may not offer such assurance.



Use it up

To enjoy extra virgin olive oil at its best, buy in a container size that can be finished in about six weeks or so. Freshness will diminish with time.