



European Commission

OLIVE OIL

Most of world's olive oil is produced in the EU.

On average, 3 million tonnes of olive oil is produced around the world every year. Around 2 million tonnes of this production takes place in the EU. The main Member States involved are: Spain (66% of EU production); Italy (15%); Greece (13%); and Portugal (5%).



66%



15%



13%



5%

The EU is also the biggest consumer of olive oil, with around 1.5 million tonnes of olive oil (50% of world production) consumed within the EU every year, and the biggest exporter of olive oil, exporting around 570 000 tonnes per year.

LABELLING

Amongst other things, the labelling shall mention the name of the category and its specific characteristics



Category of olive oil :

- ▶ Extra virgin olive oil
- ▶ Virgin olive oil
- ▶ Olive oil composed of refined olive oils and virgin olive oils
- ▶ Olive-pomace oil

If geographical indication :



PDO (Protected designation of origin)



PGI (Protected geographical indication)

Best before date

Origin

OLIVE OIL CHARACTERISTICS

Extra virgin olive oils and virgin olive oils are obtained directly from olives and solely by mechanical means. The oils have a wide range of characteristics such as organoleptic properties (taste, colour, smell, feel) which depend on various factors such as the type of olive, soil, climatic conditions, harvest date etc.



Extra virgin olive oil

is the category with the highest quality from an organoleptic point of view, **it has no defects and is fruity**. Its acidity level shall not exceed 0.8%.



Virgin olive oil

is also fruity but has **some slight sensory defects**. Its acidity shall not exceed 2%.

Other categories of olive oils can also be sold directly to consumers



Olive oil composed of refined olive oil and virgin olive oils

results of a mixture of refined olive oil with extra virgin and/or virgin olive oils. Its acidity degree shall not exceed 1%.



Olive-pomace oil

results of the mixture of refined olive-pomace oil with extra virgin and/or virgin olive oils. It must have a degree of acidity not exceeding 1%.

OTHER CATEGORIES OF OLIVE OILS FOR REFINING OR INDUSTRIAL PURPOSES

Lampante olive oil

is the lowest quality virgin olive oil. It has substantial sensory defects (taste and/or smell) which can be the result of bad processing of the olives, or of weather incidents altering the olive fruits while on the trees. Lampante olive oil **must be refined** in order to remove its defects. As such, it cannot be sold to consumers. After refining, the oil obtained is known as 'refined olive oil'.

Refined olive oil

has little or no olive aroma, flavour, or colour. Refined olive oil cannot be sold to consumers. It is blended with extra virgin olive oil and/or virgin olive oil to make the "olive oil composed of..." category.

Crude olive-pomace oil

Olive-pomace is the residual paste obtained after the oil is extracted from the olives. The oil obtained out of this paste is the crude olive-pomace oil.

Refined olive-pomace oil

is obtained after the refining of crude olive-pomace oil. Blended with extra virgin and/or virgin olive oils, it can be marketed to consumers as olive-pomace oil.

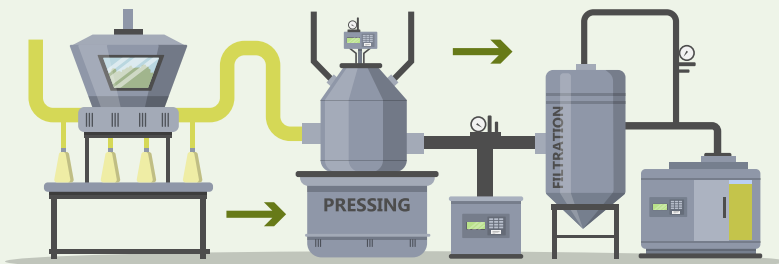
PRODUCTION OF VIRGIN OLIVE OILS

The process for the production of extra virgin olive oil, virgin olive oil and lampante olive oil is exactly the same.



HARVEST AND TRANSPORTATION TO THE OIL MILL

The harvesting of olives usually starts in October and ends in February. Depending of the harvesting date and of the maturation of the olive fruits, the olive oils obtained may have different properties. After the olives have been picked up in olive groves, they need to be transported to the oil mill as soon as possible, to avoid processes of fermentation.



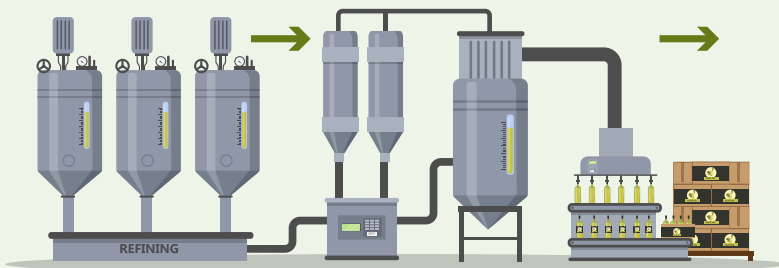
AT THE OIL MILL

Leaf removal by fans and washing operations

The olives are washed under jets of water to remove all foreign matter to avoid negative consequences on olive oil organoleptic characteristics.

Olive processing (mechanical extraction)

The clean olives then pass, with their core, into the grinder. It is important during this mixing stage to respect a temperature below 27°C. This manufacturing procedure is a guarantee of quality and the guarantee of an oil extracted by cold pressure. In a decanter the liquid separates from the solid. The remaining dry dough is called olive-pomace.



Storage of olive oil

The oil is then properly stored in large, usually metallic containers. Before it is marketed, the olive oil is analysed in order to determine whether it belongs to extra virgin oil, virgin olive oil or lampante olive oil category.



RETAIL

The extra virgin and virgin olive oils are bottled and labelled with appropriate mandatory and optional indications. Bottles should be kept away from light and warm temperatures until they are transported to retailers and sold to consumers. Those conditions of preservation are key to avoid an oxidation of the oil that will degrade its quality.

MARKETING STANDARDS AND CONTROLS

European legislation defines the different categories of olive oils and their characteristics. It also provides rules on packaging and labelling. EU Member States perform controls on olive oil samples to ensure that those rules are respected and that the products sold to consumers meet their expectations.

