

TOP 10 TIPS ON USING OLIVE OIL

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author of THE MIRACLE OF OLIVE OIL (Watkins Publishing)

18 January 2012

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These tips will help you make the most of this fragrant, nourishing greenish-yellow oil

1. Choose extra virgin olive oil as this is the best for scent, flavour, nutrients, health and keepability. It's great used either as it is, or for cooking.
2. Ideally, buy olive oil in an opaque container made of tin, ceramic, or non-reactive dark plastic; this is because light oxidizes the oil, using up its vitamin E and other antioxidants. If the only available containers are brown or green glass bottles, choose one from the back of a shelf (where it's relatively dark) and store it in a dark place.
3. Store olive oil in a cool place, as heat also uses up antioxidants. It thickens if kept in the refrigerator, so remove it half an hour before use. Alternatively, keep a small bottle of olive oil at room temperature, and top this up as necessary from a larger one kept in the refrigerator.
4. When cooking with olive oil, don't let it smoke, as this indicates burning. Extra virgin olive oil smokes at a higher temperature (210°C) than other unrefined vegetable oils (corn, peanut, soybean and walnut oils smoke at 160°C, sunflower oil at 107°C), and lard smokes at 188°C and butter at 177°C, so extra virgin (or virgin) olive oil is a good choice for frying, roasting and baking.
5. You can reuse olive oil four or five times for frying. But repeated heating lowers its smoke point, so be especially careful not to overheat it. After each use, remove any particles of cooked food by passing the oil through a paper coffee filter or a piece of muslin, then refrigerate it.

6. To use extra virgin olive oil instead of butter in a recipe, substitute 3 tablespoons of olive oil for every 2oz of butter. Olive oil is a brilliant fat for baking cakes and biscuits and making puddings and other desserts, giving a lovely smooth texture and subtly aromatic flavour.
7. For a lovely salad dressing, put into a screw-top jar 8 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil, 2 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar or fresh lemon juice, 1 teaspoon of Dijon mustard, 1 teaspoon of runny honey, 1 crushed clove of garlic and a pinch of ground black pepper. Screw on the lid and shake well. This keeps in the refrigerator for a week.
8. Olive oil can help prevent or treat many common ailments, but note that added olive oil should take the place of other fat so you don't increase your total daily calorie intake.
9. Consume olive oil as part of a healthy balanced diet that is rich in whole foods such as vegetables, fruits, wholegrains, beans and pulses, and that doesn't overload you with calories.
10. Make beauty products containing olive oil to soften, moisturize and soothe skin, help maintain its elasticity and counter infection, give nails a sheen, and soften their cuticles. Store any surplus in the refrigerator for up to a week. THE MIRACLE OF OLIVE OIL offers recipes for moisturizer, exfoliating skin scrub, face mask, bath oil, nail oil, lip balm and massage oil, and you can use neat olive oil as an eye-make-up remover and as a deodorant.