

From olives to oil...



Olive trees (*Olea europea sativa*)

Olive trees belong to the family of the "Oleaceae". Olive trees are ancient plants, and originally come from the Mediterranean basin; they are mentioned in the Bible, in myths and by Roman and Greek writers as they symbolise peace, victory and honour, apart from the tree's intrinsic virtues. The olive tree is an evergreen, very long-lived: some can reach to be hundreds of years. It has tough leaves and small flowers which grow in June. The "olive" fruit is a stone-fruit, originally green; when it is ripe, it becomes black and fleshy. Depending on the environmental conditions, trees can produce between 15-30 kg of olives per year.

Olive picking

The period for picking olive depends on what the olives will be used for. Olives used for oil are generally picked between November and January. They can be handpicked or mechanically picked thanks to big combs which rake the olives from the branches.



In the oil press, the olives are turned into oil

The process starts with the pressing of the olives with the pressure of slowly rotating grinders. The pulp resulting from this pressing is spread over specific jute discs (fiscole) which are carefully placed on a mobile trolley, and then put inside an hydraulic press which, thanks to the mechanical pressure, separates the liquid part (oil and water) from the solid remaining part (olive residue). After this, the oil is separated from the water with the help of a blender, and is then ready for consumption. This method is called "cold pressing oil", precisely because olives are pressed at room temperature.

Nutritional Value

Extra virgin olive oil is made up by unsaturated fats, which are very easy to digest, iron, and A-E vitamins. It has many beneficial properties for human organisms as it:

- protects from heart and liver diseases
- has important anti-oxidant properties
- helps the intestine
- stops the increase of cholesterol
- helps to stop arteriosclerosis



Other pieces of information:

- Generally, olives are picked when they are green
- The yield of olives into oil is about 15-25%. So, from 100 kg of olives, 15-25 kg of oil are made.
- It is also used in cosmetics and to preserve food
- In the past, olive oil was used as fuel
- It is ideal for frying because it resists to alterations caused by high temperatures.

Extra virgin olive oil from the Castelli Romani is undergoing the process for the recognition of D.O.P. quality denomination.

