



THE OLIVE AND THE GRAPE

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USEFUL DEFINITIONS/EXPLANATIONS of OLIVE OIL "GRADES"

According to the [International Olive Oil Council](#), **extra virgin olive oil** is obtained only from the olive, the fruit of the olive tree, using solely mechanical or other physical means, in conditions, particularly thermal conditions, which do not alter the oil in any way. It has not undergone any treatment other than washing, decanting, centrifuging, and filtering. This excludes oils obtained by the use of solvents or re-esterification methods, and those mixed with oils from other sources.

It has a free acidity, expressed as oleic acid, of no more than 0.8 grams per 100 grams (0.8%), and other characteristics that correspond to those fixed for this category in the IOOC standards. Extra virgin olive oil accounts for less than 10% of oil in many producing countries. This is the highest quality of olive oil. Note that extra virgin olive oils vary widely in taste, color, and appearance. Their taste and aroma should reflect the fact that they were made from olives and have some positive attributes (that is, they cannot be totally tasteless). They are supposed to have no taste defects. It is also important to note that the U.S. has not adopted this definition as a legal standard yet. Some states have passed laws to enforce it. This allows lesser quality oils to be legally labeled as extra virgin while they are not.

In the U.S., flavorless and often low quality (refined) oil is sold as "**lite**" or "**light**" (aka: **extra light olive oil**) oil for a premium price. The "light" designation refers to flavor, not caloric content, as all olive oil has the same amount of calories. There is no official definition of lite or light.

Pomace is the ground flesh and pits left after pressing.

According to the [International Olive Oil Council](#), oils in this category are obtained by treating olive pomace with solvents or other physical treatments, to the exclusion of oils obtained by re-esterification processes and of any mixture with oils of other kinds. They are considered an inferior grade and are generally used for soap making or industrial purposes. This category includes crude olive-pomace oil, refined olive-pomace oil, and what is called olive-pomace oil which is a blend of refined olive-pomace oil and virgin olive oil. (Yes, this is confusing!)

<http://www.internationaloliveoil.org>