



Olive Oil: A User Guide

How to select, transport and store your Australian Extra Virgin Olive Oil

This is a huge subject, but we'll try to cover the basics as briefly as possible, so you can get the best from your Australian Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO). We've based this document on a wide variety of sources, including government research, the wisdom of olive producers, chefs, scientists and show judges that we have met since we began our olive oil journey, as well as our own experiences.

BUYING OLIVE OIL

1. What should it look like?

A common misconception is that olive oil needs to be a certain colour to be any good. In reality, it doesn't matter whether it's green, golden or clear—what matters is the freshness and flavour. Some producers filter their oil extensively, others go for a more rustic effect and there may be small amounts of sediment not unlike wine. As with wine, too much sediment is a bad thing but a little is relatively harmless. In dark glass, it may not be possible to tell what the oil looks like. In clear glass, olive oil is damaged by light—even artificial—and this sort of packaging should be avoided.

Apulia Grove EVOO is sold only in dark glass or special casks which protect it from light and air.

2. How long does it keep?

Unlike wine, olive oil does not improve with age! Quite the opposite—the flavours and health benefits start to decline as soon as it is exposed to air, heat and light. You would not buy 5 year old orange juice—don't buy 5 year old olive oil.

Good olive oil has a shelf life of at least one year **unopened** -- check the Best Before date the producer has placed on the package for this.

With **opened bottles**, you should use the contents of any package within three months. With **opened casks**, the cask format prevents air getting into the oil and you should be OK for 6-9 months at least.

Apulia Grove EVOO has a Best Before date of two years from processing. We also specify the year of harvest on the bottle—if it's the current year, you know the oil will be fresh and delicious. If it's not, as long as the oil has been carefully handled and stored, it will be fine up to the Best Before date.

3. What should it taste like?

Good EVOO will have fruity, grassy and peppery flavours, and some may have nutty overtones. Things you should not taste in your olive oil are rancidity (e.g. off butter flavour), bacon or salami, or musty or mouldy smells. These latter mean the oil is either past its best or has possibly been badly stored and handled.

The degree of pepperiness you prefer is up to you. Some people like a very 'robust' flavour; others do not. If you can't taste the oil prior to purchase, 'road test' it with a small package first to see if you like it. Even a fine, prize winning oil isn't much use if you don't care for the flavour. Your taste buds know—trust them. Children in particular are excellent judges of good EVOO, we've found.

Apulia Grove is a mild Tuscan-style oil blended from Corregiola and Frantoio olives, and is suitable for general purpose cooking as well as a delicious 'finish' on your special dishes and salads. We offer tastings at our selected retailers around Victoria—watch our Facebook page (listed below) for dates and times.

4. What other things should I look for?

Your olive oil producer should be a member of the Australian Olive Association Code of Practice for Extra Virgin Olive Oil. If they are, you have the following guarantees:

- The oil is grown, produced and packed in Australia
- It meets AS5264-2011 which is the Australian Standard for Olive Oil. Qualification for this is done through testing in an independent, accredited laboratory according to strict quality criteria
- It contains no additives or preservatives, and is not adulterated with other, inferior oils.
- It is produced in accordance with HACCP-compliant procedures for food safety and quality and conforms to all applicable statutory regulations
- The producer is committed to sustainable farm practices
- You should see one of these two logos in the producer's sales material:
 - Certified Australian Extra Virgin—small version



- Large version



- This means that the producer is a member of the Code of Practice, and you have very high confidence that the oil is what it says, is made in Australia, and is authentic and healthful.

Apulia Grove is a member of the Code of Practice, and our oil in testing actually exceeded the requirements of the Australian Standard. We do **not** include the Code of Practice logos on our packaging due to cost and space constraints—our labels were designed before the Code and the Standard were in place, and we won't be producing a new design for at least a couple of seasons. We **do** display the logo on our web site and Point of Sale materials—which we are entitled to do, as current members of the Code of Practice.

5. Why buy Extra Virgin Olive Oil anyway?

There is a large and increasing amount of evidence that EVOO is an extremely healthy product and, as an essential part of the mediterranean diet, linked with improved cardio-vascular health and a number of other health benefits. Don't take our word for it; this is a matter of public record. It is also why it is vital to insist on Australian Standard and Code of Practice compliant EVOO, as an inferior product may have little or no health value whatever—some, quite the reverse. Oils called 'Light' or 'Pure' are **NOT** extra virgin and may in fact have had all the health properties refined out of them during processing. Note that some imported oils purporting to be Extra Virgin actually are not—the media gave this a lot of coverage between 2008 and 2010, and the situation has not changed significantly.

Why risk it? Apulia Grove EVOO is Standards and Code of Practice compliant, and is good for the planet, good for the land, good for Australia—and good for **you!**

TRANSPORTING AND STORING OLIVE OIL

There are a number of simple do's and don'ts:

DO transport and store your EVOO out of direct sunlight, regardless of the packaging style.

Olive Oil degrades rapidly with exposure to air, heat and light. In Australia, where summer room temperatures may easily exceed 30 Celsius, it is important to store the oil in the coolest part of the pantry or perhaps even the vegetable crisper in your fridge. If EVOO gets too cold, the fats may separate. This doesn't harm the oil particularly, but it should be warmed up again before use if this happens—don't heat it, just allow it to reach room temperature in its own time.

DON'T leave your oil all day in a hot car.

You may take months off the shelf life, and you will certainly damage the health properties and flavours. If you have a large shopping expedition, make your oil among the last things you buy before you head home. Use chiller bags if you have them.

DO buy packages that you will use within three months.

DON'T buy big tins if they're going to hang around in the pantry for months or years once you open them. Exposure to air—even just what's in the tin—degrades the oil rapidly.

DO buy Australian Standard compliant EVOO in preference to imports. The Australian Standard is based on thorough research and state-of-the-art methods to ensure your purchase is of the highest possible quality, and of trustworthy provenance. Insist on it at your retailer or supermarket. The large supermarkets in particular have resisted the Standard, for reasons best known to themselves.

DO find out more about EVOO if you are interested. Some references:

<http://www.australianolives.com.au>, particularly Consumer Information

<http://www.australianextravirgin.com.au>

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2385824.htm>: 7.30 report on suspect imported oils, 2008

Our web site: <http://www.apulia-grove.com.au>

Our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/ApuliaGroveOlives>