



Industry innovation ensures quality of European olive oil

Olive oil production technology has recently been modernised in line with the latest research and innovations to meet European quality standards. The TAICHI project experts from Italy's major olive oil producing associations – CNO, UNAPOL and UNASCO – have revealed some production secrets.

EU legislation regulates every phase of olive oil production process, from olive farming and harvesting to pressing and labelling, to ensure a safe and high-quality product on our table.

While traditional olive oil production methods like hand-picking and pressing are still respected by many Mediterranean producers, they are costly and time-consuming, which may cause fruit fermentation and loss of some vitamins and nutrients in oil along the way. To produce top-quality oil, freshly harvested olives must be brought to the oil mill, washed with clean drinking water, milled and pressed - all within 24 hours. Modern olive factories have new machinery and innovative equipment to reach this goal.

Instead of hand-powered stone disks called 'molases', modern factories use mechanical crushers to mill large amounts of olives into a thick paste within minutes. Then, the paste goes through a slow stirring process known as 'malaxation' in closed chambers filled with a neutral gas to prevent oxidation and fermentation. After that, the paste goes into centrifuges to effectively separate oil, water and solid remains.

According to EU regulations, extra virgin olive oil can be labelled 'cold extracted' only if it is obtained with chemical-free mechanical methods at a temperature below 27°C (80°F) to preserve its vitamins and unique flavour. This is the most valuable olive oil category on the market.

Freshly pressed olive oil is stored in hygienically-sealed steel containers or nitrogen gas tanks and transported to bottling stations and distribution platforms, with an optimal temperature of 12-18 °C maintained throughout the supply chain. This is how high-quality European olive oil is made.

The TAICHI project, supported by the European Union, is promoting awareness and use of European olive oil in Mainland China and Taiwan. It provides authoritative information and the best tools to recognise high-quality olive oil on the market.

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