

Olive Oil Tasting Sheet



Qualitative classification and editorial evaluation of premium olive oils

This document presents a classification into five major families designed to position the full spectrum of high-quality olive oils. The approach is based exclusively on dominant sensory style and deliberately excludes industrial blended oils lacking identity and character. A non-numerical editorial evaluation system, unlike that traditionally used for wine, complements this framework and is specifically adapted for magazine use. Following each tasting note, a pictogram corresponding to one of these five families will visually punctuate and classify the oil.

1. Vibrant green fruit

These oils are produced from very early-harvested olives. They stand out for their intense aromatic freshness, with notes of green olive, fresh leaf and cut grass. On the palate, they are lively and incisive, marked by pronounced bitterness and pungency that create a strong sensation of tension, freshness and energy. The aromatic profile is clearly defined by green olive, cut grass, artichoke and green almond. Bitterness is firm, pungency assertive, and the structure straight, vertical and energetic.

2. Balanced green fruit

Also originating from early harvests, these oils seek harmony above all. Green fruit remains clearly expressed, while bitterness and pungency are measured, controlled and well integrated. These are balanced, approachable and highly versatile oils, built around a precise and well-judged expression of the fruit. Aromatic markers include fresh olive, fine herbs and almond. Bitterness and intensity are fully integrated, giving rise to a fluid structure and a harmonious overall reading.

3. Elegant ripe fruit

These oils are obtained from riper olives and display softer, more rounded aromatic profiles, sometimes recalling almond or ripe fruits. On the palate, they are supple and smooth, with limited pungency. They belong to a style defined by finesse and controlled softness rather than power. The aromatic expression centres on ripe olive, sweet fruits, almond and occasionally stone fruit notes. Bitterness ranges from low to moderate, pungency remains discreet, and the mouthfeel is rounded and refined.

4. Full-bodied ripe fruit

Produced from olives harvested at full maturity, these oils express generosity and warmth. Aromas are rich and expressive, while the palate is broad, round and enveloping, with very little bitterness. They offer immediate pleasure and a comforting, generous style. Aromatic markers include black olive, dried fruits and pastry-like notes. The structure is wide and enveloping, delivering a pronounced sensation of roundness.

5. Terroir or signature oils

These oils do not aim to fit into a predefined stylistic category. Instead, they strongly reflect a specific variety, a terroir or the personal vision of the producer. Their profiles may be original or atypical, yet always coherent. These are oils of character, meant to be explored, understood and appreciated on their own terms. They are marked by singular, sometimes unconventional aromatics, and by a non-standardised but internally coherent structure, ideally suited to tasting and high-level gastronomy.

Essential elements to be carefully assessed

When tasting, particular attention must be paid to overall balance, acidity, varietal aromas versus vegetal or even floral notes, quality of the fruit expression, texture, persistence, power, pungency, delicacy, depth, complexity, precision, structure, bitterness, as well as aromatic intensity and concentration. Whenever the information is available, the harvest campaign (vintage) and the blend composition should be recorded. The geographical origin (region) is also considered essential.

Two examples of tasting notes

Ex. 1 (*2024–2025 harvest campaign, October–November 2024*) The oil displays a bright, intense golden-yellow colour. Aromas are expressive and enveloping, driven by a fine sense of freshness. Notes of ripe tomatoes (yellow tomato, green zebra, fleshy red tomato) emerge alongside fresh aromatic herbs (olive leaf, bay leaf, with a hint of local garrigue), artichoke and fresh almond, complemented by a very delicate touch of dried hazelnut. On the palate, the oil is gentle and refined, with a supple, airy texture that avoids any heaviness. Roasted nuances appear on the attack, evoking roasted bouquet garni, roasted red tomato and roasted courgette. These are followed by dried Provençal herbs, dried bay leaf and fleshy tomato notes such as crushed green zebra and beefsteak tomato. Toward the long, persistent finish, dried fruit notes of toasted almond, cashew nut and a subtle hint of toasted hazelnut bring a sense of gourmandise and complete the flavour profile. The result is a balanced and refined oil, underlined by a light bitter and peppery note lingering in the background.

Ex. 2 : (*2024–2025 harvest campaign. Varieties: Leccino, Moraiolo, Frantoio and Maurino*) The nose is elegant and expressive, revealing aromas of crushed yellow tomato, fully ripe cherry tomato and confit purple artichoke, lifted by fine citrus notes and a discreet floral accent. On the palate, the oil is well-built, elegant and juicy, showing a certain richness and generosity, combined with genuine delicacy of texture. It unfolds flavours of fleshy yellow tomato, Vesuvio tomato (Pomodorino del Piennolo del Vesuvio) and olive leaf, highlighted by subtle touches of fresh herbs and sweet almond. The finish is harmonious, offering good length and a savoury, persistent aftertaste.