



the one fat you should be eating

Drizzle olive oil over just about everything—for flavor *and* your health.

BY MOLLIE KATZEN

One of the most common diet mistakes women make is passing on full-fat vinaigrette in favor of fat-free salad dressing. Fat helps your body absorb the nutrients from lettuce and other vegetables and also improves satiety (which means having a salad for lunch really *will* keep you full until dinner). But you'll do your body the biggest favor if you opt for a dressing made with olive oil. Yes, it's high in calories and fat (120 calories and 14 grams of fat per tablespoon), but studies found it protects against heart disease. And no one is saying you should pour with abandon. Drizzling—on salads, steamed vegetables, pasta, and even meats—is the appropriate method. Here's a quick lesson on which olive oil to choose and how to work it into your diet without packing on the pounds.

✓**Opt for extra virgin** This is the best-quality and most flavorful type of olive oil. It contains more polyphenols—antioxidants that help

protect against heart disease and cancer—than other kinds of olive oil and other oils high in heart-healthy monounsaturated fat, such as canola oil. A recent report in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that people whose diet included one to two tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil a day showed a 1.74 mg/dl increase in their good (HDL) cholesterol levels. (Other studies show that every one-point rise in HDL reduces heart-disease risk by 2 to 3 percent.)

✓**Experiment to find your favorite**

As with wine, the flavor of olive oil depends on several factors—the area where the olives are grown, the variety of the olive, and the stage of ripeness when the olives are picked. They can be fruity, peppery, or smooth and buttery. Try brands from a few different locations—Tuscany, Spain, Greece, California, France, and even Chile—to find the kind you prefer.

✓**Buy small amounts**

Those big cans *do* seem like a bargain, but olive oil can go rancid in a few months, even if it's properly stored. Olive oil has three enemies: heat, light, and oxygen. Choose a brand that comes in a dark bottle or a can, keep it tightly capped, and store it in a cool, dry place.

✓**Limit your intake** Research shows that one tablespoon a day is enough to improve your health. Use olive oil in place of other fats, like butter or mayonnaise, and try it in recipes where it plays a starring role—like my Basil Tapenade (go to shape.com/healthykitchen)—so you can really enjoy the flavor.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Cold pressed means no heat is used to extract the oil from the olives; heat breaks down the flavor.

Extra virgin has the most antioxidants and a low acidity level.

Fino is a blend of extra-virgin and virgin oils.

Light refers to flavor, not calories or fat.

Unfiltered contains small particles of olives.

Virgin has a slightly higher acidity level than extra virgin.



This oil is gourmet quality at a super-market price

WHAT I'M COOKING WITH THIS MONTH My kitchen is always stocked with a bottle of **Stutz** extra-virgin olive oil. Made in northern California near where I live, it's flavorful and fruity. You can order it through thewhitewhale.com (\$19 for 25 ounces).

Have a question for Mollie? E-mail her at askmollie@shape.com. Mollie Katzen's latest book is *Eat, Drink, & Weigh Less*.

