

~ Ask Granny Earth ~

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Olive oil

## Ask Granny Earth

**As far as olive oil goes, could you explain the different kinds, such as Virgin, Extra Virgin, ordinary and Pumice? Which one is the most healthy and what's the difference?**

Now that you've made the decision to stay away from those BAD fats, you're switching to Olive oil. Good choice! Then when you're in the grocery store, you look at all the different labels on the Olive oil; more confusion. Until just recently, I too suffered from the same confusion. Then I did the research.

**Virgin Olive Oils:** Oils that are obtained only from the fruit of the Olive tree by mechanical processes in conditions (especially thermal ones) that do not cause alterations in the oil and which must not receive any treatment other than washing, machine pressing, filtering and bottling. This category does not include oils that have been obtained by using solvents, or any other mixture with oils of different characteristics.

**Extra Virgin Olive Oil:** Virgin Olive Oil whose free acidity (expressed as oleic acid) is not more than 1 gram per 100 grams. It is top grade and has low acidity. It comes from the first pressing, *using no heat or chemicals*.

**Olive Oil:** Extracted from the pulp and pits that are left after the second pressing of lower quality olives. Heat, high pressure and *solvents* are used. Sometimes a small amount of virgin olive oil is blended in for taste and aroma.

**Pure Olive Oil:** Olive oil that consists of a mixture of refined olive oil and virgin olive oils, whose free acidity (expressed as oleic acid) cannot be more than 1.5 grams per 100 grams. Pure means- no non-olive oils are mixed in.

**Olive-Pomace Oil:** Olive Pomace is the solid residue or paste obtained from the olive oil production process. It's the pulpy material left after the extraction of the oil. This residue is treated with '*solvents*' to extract the oil it contains in order to obtain:

**Refined Olive-Pomace Oil:** Oil obtained by refining crude olive-pomace oil, whose free acidity (expressed as oleic acid) cannot be more than 0.5 grams per 100 grams. This oil, with no flavor, aroma or color, is improved with edible virgin olive oils to obtain the oil called "Olive-Pomace Oil".

**Olive-Pomace Oil:** Oil that consists of a mixture of refined olive-pomace oil and virgin olive oils, whose free acidity (expressed as oleic acid) cannot be more than 1.5 grams per 100 grams.

On September 2001, the Canadian Food Inspection agency (CIFA) issued an alert to warn consumers about health risks in Spanish, Italian and Greek Olive-Pomace Oils, saying that they contained high levels of benzopyrene. Benzopyrene is one of a family of highly carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon chemical compounds, formed during the high temperature drying process of the olive residue, prior to solvent extraction of the residual oil.

In shopping for Olive Oil by the gallon, I once made the mistake of buying the least expensive: Olive-Pomace Oil. I had no idea what "Pomace" meant or the process involved in making it. I now know that Olive-Pomace Oil is the worst choice of all olive oils, as long-term exposure can lead to serious health risks.

In making wise choices about our food, a good rule of thumb is: the less refining and chemicals, the better. As in the case of Olive Oil, the Extra Virgin would be the healthiest choice, since it is from the first cold pressing of the olives and contains no solvents for extraction purposes. In other words it is pure and none of its properties have been destroyed through a heating

process. In contrast, the Olive Oil and the Olive-Pomace Oil both use *heat and solvents* in the extraction process, making it much less desirable for a healthy diet.

My research tells me to beware of Olive Oil that is labeled "**light or extra light**". It has the exact number of calories as regular olive oil, and is a mixture of refined olive oils of the lowest quality which has been purified with chemicals. It is then blended with Extra Virgin Olive Oil to make it taste and smell better. The 'light' refers to the color and fragrance. Stay away from them; they are low quality industrial products.