

How Olive Oil is Made

Harvesting



Production of olive oil begins with the harvest. The picking of the olives starts as early as September, when the olives are under-ripe and still green. They yield little oil, but their flavor is intense. These oils

have the longest shelf life and are richer in flavor and aroma. Oil from olives harvested early has a low percentage of acid and a deep green color.

However, most harvesting takes place between early November and late December.



The youngest green olives are hand-picked off the branches, whereas riper olives are beaten or shaken

down with rakes or sticks and collected on nets beneath the trees. Since olives are delicate, the best oils are made from olives that are picked by hand or by machines that do not beat or bruise the fruit. Leaves and small stones are removed.



Milling and Pressing

After gathering the olives, growers bring them to be pressed. Olives should be crushed within the first 24 or 36 hours of picking. If left to wait, the level of acidity rises, creating olive oil of poor quality. Just before being crushed, the olives need to be run through a washer to eliminate any remaining impurities. Generally the olives are crushed whole, without prior stoning.

The simplest and oldest method of crushing olives is with granite millstones, although other methods are now used. The olive paste obtained is layered on nylon or natural fiber mats which are stacked high with metal disks between them. These mats of olive pulp are then put under great deal of pressure from a screw or hydraulic press. The liquid produced by the pressing drains through the mats and is collected for the final separation.



This liquid is made up of water and oil that need to be separated from one another. The liquid is put through a centrifugal separator, where the rapid spinning eliminates all remaining water and all of the impurities from the oil.

After centrifugation, oil appears amber in color, with an opaque quality—a characteristic feature of superior oils. The more acidic the oil, the clearer and brighter it appears, and the worse it is for your health. Oils processed in this mechanical or hydraulic presses cannot be called virgin olive oil and is expensive. Cheaper oils are produced by crushing the olives several times or by heating.

From:

http://www.italiancookingandliving.com/olive_oil/oil_essentials/production.html



Complete the diagram with **ten pieces of missing information** from the passage
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