

In light of our partnership with the [Fresh Pressed Olive Oil Club](#), we thought we'd share this wonderful article from Dr. Steven Sinatra. Enjoy!

Including olive oil in your diet is certainly what I call a “Sinatra Smart” move for its many health benefits. But with all of the controversy about pure olive oils, how do you know if you're [buying pure extra virgin olive oil](#), or not?

This is an olive oil dilemma I've faced myself. Years ago, enthralled by the health perks of extra-virgin olive oil, I took pleasure in acquiring cold pressed extra virgin olive oil from countries around the world. But then I learned that much of what we buy is actually laced with other oils. For example, some olive oils are mixed with canola oil made from rapeseed oil, which is considered toxic by many experts. Plus, some olive oils are made with GMOs.



The final straw for me was a 2012 University of California at Davis study which tested eight major brands, and 124 samples, of extra virgin olive oil—and more than 70% failed! Plus, I discovered that to carry the extra virgin olive oil label in Europe a product only needs to contain 75% extra virgin olive oil.

Eating pure extra virgin olive oil is important because it's higher in health-promoting polyphenols than other olive oils. But if the one you're buying isn't pure extra virgin olive oil, you risk ingesting oxidized fats and [free radicals](#) that can damage your cells.

How Do You Spot Pure Olive Oil?

Unfortunately, many of the “tried-and-true” methods for spotting questionable olive oil are nothing more than urban legends. For example, the “refrigerator test” which assumes pure extra virgin olive oil will solidify with refrigeration, can't be 100% trusted since oils high in wax, or chilled and filtered over the winter, can also solidify. Another legend is the “flame test” which says that an oil lamp filled with pure extra virgin olive oil should light. From what I've learned, that's equally unreliable.

I did a lot of research, and some of the best advice I found came from Carole Firenze, author of *Passionate Olive: 101 Things to Do with Olive Oil*. Because olive oil is highly vulnerable to air, light, heat, and time when you're looking for pure olive oil you should look at these three things:

- **Storage:** Extra virgin olive oil must be stowed in a dark bottle, metal container, or light blocking packaging away from heat and light.
- **Harvest Date:** Look for a harvest date and select an olive oil that was made from this year's harvest.

- **Traceability:** Read labels carefully, noting where the olives originate—including the country, state, province or local area. If you know nothing about the mill or producer, look for seals of authenticity from certification agencies such as the California Olive Oil Certification (COOP) or DOP and IDP (Italian certifications). According to Firenze, traceable olive oils are more likely to be authentic.

But is authenticity enough? My only concern is that extra virgin olive oil authenticated by other countries are shipped properly to the U.S. I was advised that most olive oils exported to the U.S. arrive by boat, as faster air travel is cost prohibitive.

Traveling on barges where transit time is long, and temperatures are high, is risky when time and heat are so critical to olive freshness and quality. So, unless a friend or relative gifts me with an extra virgin olive oil that they have just bought from a certified grower and brought back to the U.S. by plane, I buy American.

I'm most confident about organic extra virgin olive oils from California with the COOC seal. I also check the expiration date and follow the pointers I listed above. Plus, I observe where the extra virgin olive oil is located in the store, ensuring that it's stored away from light and heat. I've also tried extra virgin olive oils from local growers.

Once I get it home, I keep my extra virgin olive oil in a cool cabinet before and after opening, and date the bottle so that I know when it was opened and what its anticipated shelf life will be. Plus, I use all of these same techniques for storing my light olive oil for cooking. Then, I relax knowing I'm doing all I can to maximize the health benefits I will be enjoying every time I consume a meal—or a straight teaspoon—of nature's liquid gold!

Now it's your turn: What is your favorite way to eat olive oil?

This article originally appeared on [Dr. Sinatra's website](#).