

TASTE TEST

Best Olive Oils at Every Price Point (2021)

We tasted over 100 extra-virgin olive oils from all over the world.



BY JOE SEVIER

March 1, 2021



Photo by Joseph De Leo

All products featured on Epicurious are independently selected by our editors. However, when you buy something through our retail links, we may earn an affiliate commission.

In our ambitious quest to find the best olive oils, we tested more than 100 bottles over a two-week period. The good news? We found plenty of olive oils we loved at every price level. The bad news? We also found bottles we really really *didn't* like too.

The particularly upsetting part is that even the bottles we did like upon first taste were no longer means to you) extra-virgin olive oil from the [most recent harvest](#), [storing it smartly](#), and [using it with abandon](#) every morning, noon, and night. Get through it while it's still fresh!

In fact, several of our Test Kitchen editors admit to only keeping [one bottle of olive oil](#) in their kitchens for cooking, baking, dressing salads, and adding a finishing drizzle to dishes that need it. If you, too, are that type

of cook, you'll be set with the highest scoring olive oil in our roundup: [Monini GranFruttato Extra-Virgin Olive Oil](#).

But, like I said, we picked a few other top contenders. For our methodology and the full list of oils we tasted, scroll to the bottom. But first: our picks for the best olive oils of 2021.

as vibrant when we tasted them again, one week later. That's why we suggest buying a reasonably priced (whatever that

Best olive oil overall: Monini GranFruttato

This top-scoring Italian blend is balanced with a lingering peppery bite. Senior editor [Maggie Hoffman](#) found it grassy with sage-like undertones. It also tastes, unmistakably, of olives (which, funny enough, you can't say for every brand).

One thing that may contribute to this bottle retaining its freshness and vibrancy is that the manufacturer has installed a "pop-up pourer" underneath the cap, which limits the amount of oxygen that can get in. (Remember: Oxygen, heat, and light can all turn a good oil bad.) Use this bottle in any and all olive oil applications.

We also liked [Merula Extra-Virgin Olive Oil](#). For a milder option around \$20, go for this Spanish blend. Commerce editor [Emily Johnson](#) found it to have a soft herbal flavor reminiscent of sage or oregano. The delicate flavor would play well in both sweet and [savory bakes](#) or in cooking something like [scrambled eggs](#), where a hint of olive oil is nice, but a bold oil may be overpowering.



Merula Extra Virgin Olive Oil

\$20 AT SUR LA TABLE

What we were looking for in the olive oils

We set out to find the best extra-virgin olive you could buy in a large cross section of America's grocery stores, plus a few that could easily be purchased online

Since olive oil is best used quickly, most of our editors (myself included) tend to just keep one bottle around. So instead of focusing on two bottles being the “best for cooking” or the “best for finishing,” we focused on finding the most crowd-pleasing bottles in an assortment of price ranges. Because, honestly, we can tell you what we think is best, but you’re gonna do what you want with it as soon as you get it home.

Calling one bottle “the best” is also a tricky business. As with any crop that fluctuates from year to year, the taste of olive oil changes from year to year. And, just as different varieties of grapes produce differently flavored wines, different varieties of olives produce differently flavored oils, and everyone’s preferences are different.

After scouring Internet best-of lists and digging through the highest-rated oils on popular buying sites, we gathered blends and single-varietal oils from around the world.

You’ll notice that we selected only extra-virgin olive oils, as opposed to straight olive oil or light olive oil. The reason for this is simple: Bottles labeled extra-virgin olive oil (a.k.a. EVOO) are the purest form of olive oil. It’s made entirely of natural cold-pressed olives. A light or regular olive oil, on the other hand, will include processed oils as well. Those additional processed oils yield an olive oil that lacks the tell-tale flavor and aroma of an EVOO.

How we tested the olive oils

A group of Epicurious editors and staff sampled the olive oils over a two-week period in a blind olive oil tasting. All oils were opened just before they were poured into unmarked containers. Oils were tasted first in groups according to price range. We sipped the oils plain, then dipped baby romaine lettuce leaves and bread cubes in the oils to see how they fared as a drizzling oil, and tasted them with thin slices of green apple and grapes to test the oils’ partnership with acidity.

We then tasted our top 20 olive oils (the top three to five in each price range) in a second blind tasting, where the oils were again unmarked and arranged in random order. For all tastings, editors were asked to sample the oils in a random order to avoid issues of palate fatigue.