

# Olives and Olive Oil

**Olives are not only rich in healthy fats but also in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory phytonutrients, making them a powerful food in support of heart and metabolic health**

**Olives** are one of the oldest cultivated trees, with the oldest known surviving tree thought to be at least 2,000 years old. The tree, known as the "olive tree of Vouves" is located on the island of Crete. It still produces olives and acts as a symbol of everything olives stand for -- longevity, prosperity and peace.

Valued for their oil for at least 6,000 years, humans have been embracing olives for food, medicine, cosmetics and other uses for centuries, including using their oil to light the original Olympic torch.

Olives, though, are incredibly bitter in their raw form due to oleuropein, a compound the plant uses to ward off various predators. Birds still eat them, however, swallowing them whole to avoid the unpleasant flavor and helping to disperse their seeds in the process.

It's unclear exactly when humans discovered how to make olives palatable, but ancient Romans are often credited with figuring out that fermenting olives in brine with lye quickly got rid of the bitterness and rendered olives a tasty snack.



## Why Eat Olives and Olive Oil

An estimated 90% of olives produced worldwide are used to make oil, consumption of which has tripled in Australia over the last 30 years. Whether you prefer to consume it as an **oil** or in **whole** form, there are many reasons to make olives a regular part of your diet.

In addition to providing a healthy source of monounsaturated fat, olives are rich in **antioxidant** and anti-inflammatory phytonutrients. Taken together, eating olives can provide a number of benefits to your health.

### 1. Reduce Oxidative Stress

Olives have been found to protect against low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol oxidation, which is linked to heart disease.

### 2. Support Heart Health

Polyphenolic compounds in olives have significant cardioprotective effects and support heart health in a multitude of ways

### 3. Anticancer Effects

Oleuropein has significant anticancer effects and has been found to inhibit proliferation and induce apoptosis (programed cell death) by modifying important epigenetic factors in breast cancer. Researchers even stated oleuropein has the potential to be a therapeutic drug for breast cancer prevention and treatment.

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