

Title:

The Olive - History and Production

Word Count:

419

Summary:

Did you know there are 35 species of olives? Have you wondered why some olives are green and others black? The link at the bottom of this page offers an abundance of information about olives.

Keywords:

Olive garden, olive tree, olives

Article Body:

The Olive tree dates back to early ancient times in both biblical and classical writings. In these early writings, the olive oil is referenced as a symbol of both goodness and purity, and the tree represents peace and happiness. In ancient times, the oil was also burnt in sacred lamps at temples during the Olympic Games, and the victor was crowned with its leaves.

Olives have been cultivated since prehistoric times in Asia Minor. Today olives are commercially produced in Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Portugal, China, Chile, Peru, Brazil, Mexico, Angola, South Africa, Uruguay, Afghanistan, Australia, New Zealand, and California. The Mediterranean area produces 93% of the olive production. Currently there are some 800 million olive trees being cultivated. California is the only state where olives are grown commercially. Over 90% of the olive production is used to make olive oil.

The Olive tree is considered an evergreen tree. These trees can live to be over 2,000 years old. They grow 20-40 feet high and begin to bear fruit between 4 and 8 years old. The tree blooms with small whitish flowers and have a wonderful fragrant.

A Franciscan missionary planted the first olive tree in California in 1769 at a Franciscan mission in San Diego. The olives grown in California are called ;°mission olives;±. Of all the species of olives, this olive is especially good for its oil.

Olives are not edible, green, or ripe, and must be treated with lye and/or cured in brine or dry salt before being edible. They contain about 20% oil. Olives

must be processed to remove the bitter glycoside oleuropein, before they are edible, so they are usually first treated with lye and then pickled.

Greek olives are not treated with lye. They are strong tasting because they are just packed in dry salt, or pickled in brine for 6 to 12 months (where they undergo a process of lactic fermentation), and finally packed in fresh brine.

Spanish green olives are picked before they are ripe, treated with lye, and then placed in a brine and allowed to ferment.

California olives are treated to set the pigment, treated with lye and then packed immediately in brine and sterilized. They do not undergo the fermentation process, and the sterilization 'cooks' them. This lack of fermentation and the 'cooking' when they are sterilized produces a bland, uninteresting olive

Ten medium size black olives have 50 calories and 4 grams of fat.