

Natural Weight-Loss Food: Olive Oil

by About the Natural Weight-Loss Authors



A Mediterranean-style diet, rich in olive oil, has proven valuable to the health of the people of that region for thousands of years. Within the last century its benefits have been scientifically acknowledged, investigated, and promoted for optimal health, including weight management.

Health Benefits

Olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA), which promote heart health by decreasing "bad" LDL cholesterol without reducing the "good" HDL cholesterol. The invisible healers within this "liquid gold" also work to prevent cancer, inflammation, and may even play a helpful role in diabetes and weight loss.

Research indicates that replacing other types of fats with monounsaturated fats, especially olive oil, helps people lose weight without additional food restriction or physical activity (although doing so would further increase weight-loss!). A number of studies showed that when people substituted MUFA-rich olive oil for saturated fat, they ate less food and either maintained their weight or lost weight. Several other studies indicate that monounsaturated fat enhances the body's breakdown of stored fat.

Olive oil is a good source of vitamin E, carotenoids, and polyphenolic compounds.

Nutritional Values

Serving Size: 1 tablespoon

Olive oil has very few trace nutrients, with the exception of vitamin E. It has no carbohydrate, protein or fiber.

Calories: 119

Fat: 13.5 g

Saturated fat: 2 g

Monounsaturated fat: 10 g

Polyunsaturated fat: 1.5 g

Vitamin E: 2 mg

Selection and Storage

Extra virgin and virgin olive oils possess the monounsaturated fats (MUFA), nutrients, and phytochemicals that give health benefits your body will be happy to receive -- so choose them whenever possible.

Lite olive oils -- Also called "light" or "mild" -- have undergone an extremely fine filtration process (no heat or chemicals) to remove most of the natural color, aroma, and flavor. This makes them suitable for cooking or baking, where the fruity olive flavor would be objectionable. The terms "lite," "light," and "mild" can be used along with "extra virgin olive oil," "virgin olive oil," and "olive oil." In this case, the terms "lite" and "light" do not refer to fat content. These oils contain the same amount of fat and calories as any other oil (about 13 grams of fat and 120 calories per tablespoon).

To prevent the formation of cell-damaging free radicals, store olive oil in a cool, dark place; the refrigerator is ideal. The best storage containers for olive oil are either tinted glass (to keep out light) or a non-reactive metal such as stainless steel. Avoid most plastic. Oil can leach noxious substances, such as PVCs, out of the plastic and into the oil. Containers need to have a cap or lid for tight resealing to keep out unwanted air.

Preparation and Serving Tips

Consider keeping small amounts of olive oil at room temperature in a sealed container, such as in a small, capped porcelain jug that keeps out air and light. This way, olive oil is ready to use instantly. Refrigerated olive oil will become cloudy and solidify, making it difficult to use. Returning it to room temperature restores its fluidity and color.

Virgin and extra virgin oils are best used in uncooked dishes or at low-to-medium temperatures. Refined and "olive oil" grade oil are the choices for high-heat purposes such as frying. If you are heating oil and it smokes, throw it out and start over. That oil is damaged and no longer good for your health.

To enjoy olive oil, try it drizzled over salad, pasta, or cooked vegetables. Use olive oil to make healthful salad dressings or marinades. Use for dipping bread. Pour a little olive oil into a small side dish, then add a few splashes of balsamic vinegar. Use olive oil as the fat in sauces, using a whisk when adding it to a sauce to help emulsify or blend the watery ingredients with the oil. Use in place of butter on potatoes, vegetables, and bread.

Olive oil, when used as a substitute for other fatty oils, can help you maintain your weight-loss routine of healthy eating.

NOTE FROM 55PLUSINFO: I use olive oil almost exclusively in all my cooking and it works great. I have the following olive oils that I use constantly: Garlic flavored, Lemon flavored, Blood Orange flavored, and Persian Lime flavored, along with my own homemade Italian flavored oil. These can be used with almost any dish.

Source: <http://health.howstuffworks.com/food-nutrition/natural-weight-loss-food-olive-oil-ga.htm>