

Virgin Olive Oil the Best Oil for Heart Health

Olive oil is one of the monounsaturated fats that are important as heart-protectors. It is lavishly supplied with the most active form of Vitamin E. Olive oil has antioxidant activity to spare, so it is considered now to have a protector effect against diseases (cancer, arthritis, premature senility and cardiovascular diseases). Therefore generous amount of olive oil can be consumed without risk.

Scientific research has now confirmed the peasant wisdom of Mediterranean area that olive oil is a marvelous food-medicine, thus the results of heart diseases in Mediterranean area is much lower level than those that occur in Europe and North America.

The results of the Euroolive study published in September 2006 shows that virgin olive oil is a much richer source of polyphenols than refined olive or other refined oils, and the best vegetable oil for heart health.

Olive oil is a functional food with a variety of protective effects due to the presence of antioxidants and phenolic compounds.

- 1) It produces a healthy antioxidant activity that prevents the oxidation of the bad Cholesterol (LDL). Oxidation of this type of LDL is linked to the formation of blood clots in the blood vessels leading to heart attack.
- 2) It increases the level of high density lipoprotein (HDL) the good Cholesterol, as the studies have shown.
- 3) Dietary olive oil protects the endothelium, the lining of the blood vessels by reducing both inflammation and free radical damage to cholesterol, helping to maintain its ability to relax and dilate (thus preventing high blood pressure).
- 4) It is more efficiently absorbed and promotes intestinal peristalsis, and has a beneficial effect on ulcers and gastritis.
- 5) It activates the secretion of bile and pancreatic hormones more than the prescribed drugs. Thus lowers the incidence of gallstones formation.

Compared to diets high in saturated fat and low fat, high carbohydrate diets, a number of studies have shown that olive oil-rich diets not only reduce LDL cholesterol levels but also lower blood sugar levels and decrease insulin requirements in persons with type 2 diabetes.

Practical Tips:

- Rely on delicious, flavorful virgin olive oil as your first choice for dressing salads.
- Put a little olive oil and balsamic vinegar on your bread plate and use it to add flavor to crusty whole wheat bread and rolls.
- Drizzle olive oil over potatoes, beans, grains, steamed vegetables, and soups. You will not only enhance the flavor of your food but also greatly reduce your cardiovascular disease risk.

N.B.

Extra virgin - considered the best, least processed, comprising the oil from the first pressing of the olives.

Virgin - from the second pressing.

Pure - undergoes some processing, such as filtering and refining.

Extra light - undergoes considerable processing and only retains a very mild olive flavor.