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## **Getting Real About Extra Virgin Olive Oil**

### **CONSUMER TIPS FOR BUYING EVOO**

**Berkeley Calif., (July 20, 2010)** – The recent report that sixty-nine percent of imported olive oils and ten percent of California-produced olive oils sold by California supermarkets and big box retailers as “extra virgin” were mislabeled may have confused consumers about what is real extra virgin olive oil. Given the many health benefits, great taste and surging popularity, olive oil lovers everywhere need not despair.

According to the [California Olive Oil Council](#) (COOC), there is a vast selection of real extra virgin olive oils that are easy to find and in a wide range of prices available in specialty retail, grocery, and supermarkets and online. In fact, the COOC’s maintains a rigorous certification program designed to have the highest standards for earning the “Extra Virgin Seal” for fresh, certified California oils. Not surprisingly, the four California extra virgin olive oils that passed the recent quality study were from olive oil producers that have been annually certified for several years by the COOC.

“The COOC was founded to promote quality extra virgin olive oil grown in California and we welcome the opportunity to help fund and support any research that exposes defective or adulterated oils wherever they exist – even in our own backyard,” said Albert Katz of Katz Olive Oil, a small family-owned artisan orchard and farm in Suisun Valley in Northern California.

How can consumers ensure they are purchasing the highest-quality extra virgin olive oil? One expert, Linda Sikorski, head buyer at Market Hall Foods, recommends consumers follow these buying tips.

#### **Check the label!**

Does it say extra virgin olive oil? Is there a harvest or milling date, in addition to the best use date? Is the harvest date within 12 months? Extra virgin oil is “best used” within 18 months. Make sure the oil is purchased well in advance of the best used date.

#### **What about the bottle?**

Is the bottle dark to cut down on light exposure? Is it on the top shelf exposed to direct light? Light dramatically shortens shelf life, so look for signs it’s been on the shelf too long, such as dust on the bottle.

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### **Look for the COOC Seal**

The COOC seal is the consumer's assurance that the olive oil is extra virgin, grown in California, and from the most recent harvest. To earn the seal, the olive oil must pass various chemical analysis standards and be taste tested by the COOC's highly trained taste panel.

### **Know your retailer**

Buy from retailers who know the producers, growers and importers. These experts also know how to care properly for the oil. Ask for a taste. Specialty retailers are generous with sampling, as they want the customer to know what they are buying.

### **Buying Online**

Check for the harvest date and always buy from the most recent harvest. Ask before you complete the purchase.

### **Storage Tips**

Lastly, store your extra virgin olive oil from light, air and heat. Use it up once it is open. Rancidity is one of the major culprits—an oil that has been exposed to heat or light or is simply old. So what was once a delicious, fruity, pungent extra virgin olive oil may have been stored improperly, been on store or home shelves too long, open for too long, or sitting next to the stove.

A detailed listing of how each olive oil included in the UC Davis study fared can be found at <http://olivecenter.ucdavis.edu>.

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### **About the California Olive Oil Council and its Extra Virgin Seal Certification**

Founded in 1992, the California Olive Oil Council is a nonprofit trade and marketing association whose purpose is to promote the growing of olives and production of fresh, high-quality extra virgin olive oil in California. The COOC represents more than 90 percent of olive oil production in California and promotes fresh, quality extra virgin olive oils made throughout the state through grower, producer and consumer education. Home cooks, consumers and chefs all count on the COOC Seal as their guarantee of extra virgin olive oil. For more information, visit [www.cooc.com](http://www.cooc.com).