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Cooking (with) Olive Oil

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Known since ancient times for its medicinal virtues, olive oil continues to bring into the kitchen its assets as part of a healthy diet, inspired by the international reputation of the Mediterranean cuisine. Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) is extracted by a mechanical process only (pressing, decanting, filtration, ...) from fresh olives, making it a pure fruit juice (see the chapter “Extra Virgin Olive Oil in Cooking” by Raffaele Sacchi).

Many international competitions are dedicated to the valorization of this product. One of them, Olio Nuovo Days (www.olio-nuovo-day.com; Figure 111.1) has a double particularity: (1) it happens twice every year to compare only freshly pressed oils, in January for the northern hemisphere and in June for the southern hemisphere, and (2) it includes master classes and diners with chefs to promote new ways to use EVOO in the kitchen.

Indeed, oil has been traditionally used mainly hot (for cooking) or cold (for seasoning). For instance, in his Guide Culinaire (1903), Escoffier mentioned olive oil only in four recipes: to cook mushrooms in the Sauce Chasseur, to cook a hare in the Civet de lièvre, to brown a fish in the Poisson à la Bonne Femme and to season the Soupe à l’ail. The same is found in Le livre de cuisine (1867) of Jules Gouffé, where ingredients are cooked in olive oil (Cochon de lait, Brandade de morue, Filets de sole aux anchois) or just sprinkled with oil for serving (Harengs saurs, Salade allemande).

But EVOO could also be considered in itself as (one of) the main ingredients of a recipe. This is what I demonstrate here with a few examples I presented during some of the Olio Nuovo Days master classes for chefs. Let’s go into the kitchen (Figure 111.2)!

FIGURE 111.1 Winners of the Olio Nuovo Days contest (northern hemisphere, 2020).
(Photo ©Olio Nuovo Days)

FIGURE 111.2 Master class of EVOO cuisine at Ritz Escoffier cooking school, Paris.
(Photo ©Olio Nuovo Days)
Crunchy EVOO
Poor EVOO directly into liquid nitrogen, wait a few seconds, then filter through a metal sieve and serve immediately.

EVOO Powder
Mix EVOO with half its weight of maltodextrin and a pinch of salt; the preparation can be used immediately or kept in a sealed box.

Jellified EVOO Vinaigrette
Boil together 100 g lemon juice + 30 g sugar + 100 g water + 1 g salt + 6 g carrageenan, add 100 g EVOO, mix and pour on a flat surface (or in a small glass for more volume); wait until set, cut into the desired shape and serve (Figure 111.3).

EVOO Cold Mousse
Put 200 ml liquid cream (30% fat) + 100 ml EVOO + a pinch of salt/pepper in a siphon. Keep cold until served (Figure 111.4).

EVOO Hot Mousse
Put 200 ml liquid cream (30% fat) + 100 ml EVOO + 200 ml egg white + a pinch of salt/pepper in a siphon. Keep for 1 h at 65 °C in a water bath until served.

EVOO Encapsulation
Melt 200 g isomalt at 150 °C, then cool it to 120 °C. Bathe a metal ring in order to form a film (as you would do to make soap bubbles!), drop some EVOO on the film, and let the gravity stretch the film and encapsulate the oil (Figure 111.5).

EVOO Ice Cream
Mix 300 ml liquid cream + 100 g sugar + 50 ml EVOO while pouring liquid nitrogen into it until set. Serve immediately (liquid nitrogen ice creams tend to melt quickly because they are made from very tiny crystals; see the chapter on cryocooking by Peter Barham).

EVOO Sponge Cake
Mix 150 g egg white + 25 g pistachio + 50 g EVOO + 75 g sugar + 25 g flour, pour in a siphon, let it rest in cold for 30 min, inject gas (2 N₂O cartridges) and pour 1 cm of the liquid into a paper cup; cook for 45 s in a microwave oven at 900 W.
Frozen EVOO Soufflé

Prepare a sabayon with the juice and zest of 2 oranges + 5 egg yolks + 100 g sugar + 2 tablespoons of rum, let it cool down before incorporating 200 ml whipped cream + 200 ml EVOO, add pieces of candied orange peel and meringues, pour into individual cups and freeze. Serve with an orange coulis.

Of course, more generally, many recipes including a good amount of any fat can be tested by replacing (part of) the fat by EVOO. Have a try with pastries, chocolate mousse, soufflés, tarte Tatin, custards, Hollandaise sauce – Just play!