How to Make an Olive Oil Salad Dressing Tasty, Healthy, Quick

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“Limited and not conclusive scientific evidence suggests eating about 2 tablespoons (23 grams) of olive oil daily may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease due to the monounsaturated fat in olive oil. To achieve this possible benefit, olive oil is to replace a similar amount of saturated fat and not increase the total number of calories you eat in a day.”

—Food and Drug Administration’s qualified health claim for olive oil

Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) has a higher natural phenol (a type of organic compound) content than other forms of olive oil. EVOO is the least processed of the various types of olive oil so it retains more phenols. Like monounsaturated fat, the phenols in EVOO also may contribute to desirable blood lipid levels (cholesterol and triglycerides).

What healthier way to enjoy olive oil than as part of a dressing served over a salad filled with nutritious fruits and vegetables? A benefit of making a simple oil and vinegar dressing is you control the amount of ingredients, such as salt and fat. And, you can make a fresh salad dressing from common kitchen ingredients in a couple of shakes or whisks.

Here’s how to make a basic olive oil dressing using the general guidelines for a classic French vinaigrette:

A classic French vinaigrette is typically 3 to 4 parts oil (usually extra virgin olive oil) and 1 part acid (frequently red wine vinegar).

Seasonings include salt, pepper (freshly ground) and often Dijon mustard and/or garlic.

Start experimenting by beginning with 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar or citrus juice. You may be able to use less oil and more acid ingredient if you use one of the following vinegars in your dressing:

• rice vinegar
• white wine vinegar
• raspberry, blueberry or other fruit vinegar
• champagne vinegar or lemon, lime or orange juice

Note: While lime and lemon juice can stand alone in salad dressings, you’ll get more flavor by combining orange juice with vinegar. Joy of Cooking (Simon & Schuster Inc., 1997) recommends distilled white vinegar is best used in pickling, not salad dressings.

For a better flavor, thoroughly mix the oil and vinegar. The standard procedure is to whisk the vinegar with the salt, pepper and any other seasonings. Then add the oil in a slow stream, whisking constantly, until dressing is

Basic Oil and Vinegar Salad Dressing

Directions (adjust amounts given in table below according to personal taste):
1. Whisk together vinegar and any additional seasonings or flavorings,
2. Slowly add olive oil and whisk in. Or, shake all ingredients together in a small jar with a tight lid.

For safety and freshness, serve homemade dressings the same day you make them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INGREDIENTS</th>
<th>FOR 1 MAIN-DISH OR 2 SIDE-DISH SALADS</th>
<th>FOR 2 MAIN-DISHES OR 4 SIDE-DISH SALADS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balsamic, red wine or white wine vinegar, lemon juice, lime juice or combination of vinegar/orange juice</td>
<td>1 teaspoon</td>
<td>2 teaspoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra virgin olive oil</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
<td>2 tablespoons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt &amp; freshly ground black pepper</td>
<td>To taste</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OPTIONAL SEASONINGS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minced sweet onion</td>
<td>1-1/2 teaspoons to 1 tablespoon</td>
<td>1 to 2 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dijon-type mustard</td>
<td>1/4 to scant 1/2 teaspoon</td>
<td>1/2 to 1 teaspoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garlic powder or clove of minced garlic</td>
<td>Dash of garlic powder OR 1 very small clove of garlic, minced</td>
<td>1/8 teaspoon garlic powder OR 1 clove, minced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>A pinch to taste</td>
<td>A pinch or 2 to taste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopped fresh herbs (e.g. oregano, thyme, tarragon, parsley)</td>
<td>1-1/2 or more teaspoons</td>
<td>1 or more tablespoons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To enjoy EVOO at its best, UC Davis Olive center recommends buying an amount that will be finished in about six weeks after being opened. If you limit exposure to light, heat and air, it will likely maintain a satisfactory quality beyond this. Properly stored, unopened EVOO may maintain its quality for two or more years.

EVOO, because of its more pronounced flavor compared to other forms of olive oil, is most often used to flavor salads and dressings; as a base for marinades; and is drizzled on foods, such as pasta, just before they are served. The flavor profile of EVOO varies from robust to more subtle and fruity. Match the flavor to the ingredients — red meat, for example, may support a more intense flavor. More delicate foods, such as white fish and veggies, may pair better with a milder EVOO.

Choosing, Storing and Using Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Light, heat and air are enemies of olive oil freshness. Look for containers made from dark glass; tin; or even clear glass placed in a box, or mostly covered by a label advises the UC Davis Olive Center. Store olive oil in a cool, dark place, such as inside a cupboard in a cooler location away from the stove and oven. Refrigeration will cause olive oil to become cloudy and harden. Olive oil returns to its normal color and consistency when returned to room temperature. If you bought olive oil in bulk, you may wish to refrigerate a portion to prolong its quality until you’re ready to use it.

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