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## Olive oil: But wait, there's more!

April 29, 2005

By **Cathy Barber** / Food & Wine Editor

Throughout history, olive oil has been used for everything from treating leprosy to lighting lamps. Today, we think of it merely as a cooking ingredient.

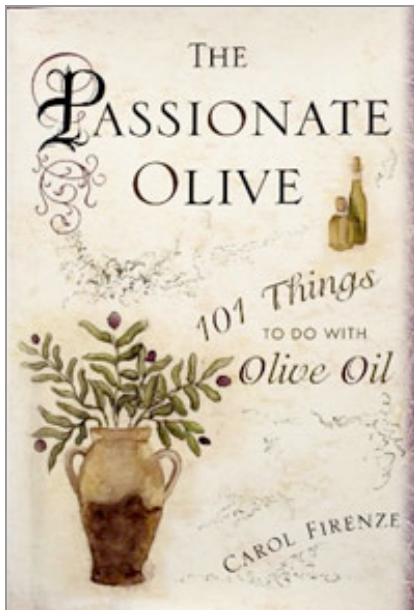
But in *The Passionate Olive*, Carol Firenze says that in a pinch you can use it to shine pearls, remove tar and more, much, much more.

Many of Ms. Firenze's suggestions reflect how olive oil was used by her Ligurian ancestors: cough remedy, pewter cleaner.

Some uses, she admits, are tales she's heard but never tested (olive oil as emergency transmission fluid). Others are matters of record: Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams used it to oil their bats.

Some get personal: an olive-oil nail and cuticle treatment, a whole chapter on "olive oil and sensuality," another on baby care using olive oil.

Then there's the religious uses of olive oil, including the ordination of a priest. Good to know, probably won't come up in real life.



**The Passionate Olive: 101 Things to do With Olive Oil**

By Carol Firenze (Ballantine Books, \$17.95)

**BOTTOM LINE:** A slippery feast of tips and trivia, sure to land in many an olive oil gift basket.

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The tips go on and on and all around the house. They're conveniently spelled out in the index, in case you're in a bind and need to know right now where that olive-oil wrestling competition is held. (Kirkpinar, Turkey, page 179.)

But first and foremost, olive oil is a beloved ingredient, and Ms. Firenze comes through on that score with simple and flavorful recipes scattered throughout the book. These tend to be Italian peasant in style: quail and polenta; fava beans with pecorino; eggplant parmesan; and roasted vegetables.

She also gives several pages of tips for organizing an olive oil tasting, which is a fun way to spend an evening with like-minded foodies.

While it's not quite a cookbook, it makes for fascinating reading, even if you don't plan to keep a bottle of olive oil in every room. Clearly, its uses go far beyond the kitchen. Maybe too far, in some cases, but that's a matter for consenting adults.

### Fresh Tomato Sauce With Black Olives

*Ingredients:*

- 6 ripe tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup pitted oil-cured black olives
- 6 anchovy fillets (optional)

*Directions:*

Peel the tomatoes and cut in half. Remove the seeds (with a spoon or your fingers) and season inside and out with salt, pepper and garlic.

Grill the tomatoes over a hot grill with the cut side down for 3 minutes.

Remove from the grill and chop into very small pieces.

Dress with olive oil, olives and optional anchovy. Serve with grilled meats or over pasta. Makes 6 servings.



Evans Caglaga / DMN

Olive oil

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