

Advertisement
Century 21
 All Islands



WEATHER



77°F

Mostly Sunny

HIGH: 85°F LOW: 72°F

Detailed forecast >>

SPONSORED BY

Pleasant Holidays

[HONOLULUADVERTISER.COM](#) | [WEATHER](#) | [CLASSIFIEDS](#) | [JOBS](#) | [CARS](#) | [HOMES](#) | [APARTMENTS](#) | [SHOPPING](#) | [DATING](#)
[LOCAL NEWS](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [BUSINESS](#) | [ISLAND LIFE](#) | [ENTERTAINMENT](#) | [OPINION](#) | [TRAVEL](#)

Only 29 cents/day
for home delivery

Island Life

Printable version

E-mail this story

Posted on: Wednesday, October 19, 2005

TASTE

A world of olive oil

- [Olive oil recipes for frittata, pesto](#)
- [Caribbean salad a toss of spicy pork and pineapple](#)
- [Sauce up beef with blueberries, wine](#)
- [Smoky chipotle sauce puts zip in casseroles](#)
- [Homesick for laulau? Try this ...](#)
- [Pumpkin bars with fat carved out](#)
- [Culinary calendar](#)
- [Persimmons: Is it maru or fuyu?](#)

By [Wanda A. Adams](#)
Advertiser Food Editor

When she was just a girl, Carol Firenze's grandparents, first-generation immigrants from the Liguria region of Italy, used to tell her how long and hard they had to work to earn enough money to afford good olive oil during the Depression years, and how precious this ingredient was to them.

Later, when she traveled to Italy to meet her cousins there, she eagerly tasted different kinds of olive oil and found that Italians are almost as interested in talking about olive oil — the oil they press from their own orchards, the memorable olive oil at a special meal, uses for olive oil, their experiences with regional olive oils — as they are in making it.

A history major in college who received her doctorate in education with a focus on cultural understanding, Firenze came to understand that the olive tree, olives and olive oil mirror the history of Western civilization.



Olive oil has many uses, ranging from shoe shine and cough syrup to diaper rash remedy. Oh, and it's excellent for cooking, too.

RICHARD AMBO | The Honolulu Advertiser

FIRENZE IN TOWN

Advertisement

HAWAII'S BEST RESTAURANTS

2005-06 guide to Hawaiian restaurants



HonoluluAdvertiser.com

TOP JOBS

Customer Service Representatives

Security

Join Goodwill!

Banking Specialist II,
Human Resources Specialist

Project Administrative Assistant

All Top Jobs

[About Top Jobs](#)

ISLAND LIFE
[About Men/Women](#)
[Taste/Recipes](#)
[Faith calendar](#)
[Travel](#)
[Health/Fitness](#)
[Comics](#)
[Tube Notes](#)
[TGIF calendar](#)
[E-Postcards](#)

ARCHIVE
[Back issues](#)

FEATURED NEWS
[Nation/World news](#)
[Movie showtimes](#)
[TGIF calendar](#)
[Special projects](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Columnists](#)
[Photo gallery](#)

CUSTOMER SERVICE
[Help page](#)
[Contact us](#)
[Subscriber services](#)
[Reader services](#)
[Advertising services](#)
[About us](#)
[Site map](#)
[Corrections](#)
[Today's front page](#)

RESOURCES
[Discussion board](#)
[Traffic hotspots](#)
[Phone directory](#)
[Hawaiian dictionary](#)
[E-mail news alerts](#)
[RSS news feeds](#)
[Wireless news](#)
[Newspaper in Education](#)
[Blood Bank of Hawaii](#)

HONOLULU TRAFFIC
 SPONSORED BY [DTRIC](#)

civilization.

The more she learned about the rich golden-green fluid, the more it fascinated her. Finally, she determined to write a different kind of book about olive oil: Not just another cookbook about how to use olive oil in the kitchen, but one that identifies the place of olive oil in every room in the house. The book, illustrated with watercolor drawings, is "The Passionate Olive: 1010 things To Do with Olive Oil" (Ballantine Books, hardback, \$17.95) and it offers everything from instructions for how to make beauty treatments with olive oil to olive oil lore dating back to Greek and Roman times. Plus, of course, her Nonna's and Mama's own recipes.

Firenze, who arrives in Hawai'i tomorrow for signings and appearances here, is an international management consultant.

But her heart is olive-shaped. She is a certified olive oil consultant and a board member of the California Olive Oil Council.

Her book stands on three key messages:

- Olive oil connects everything. "History, mythology, religion, medicine, cosmetics, politics, culture — you can bring up any subject and it will relate to olive oil," she said in a phone interview from Los Gatos, Calif., where she lives. In a single 30-minute conversation, she mentioned that Zeus preferred Athena's gift of an olive tree over Poseidon's gift of war; that Christ means "anointed one" and it was with olive oil that he was anointed; that the approach with an olive oil marinade is to rub the meat with herbs and spices first, then pour on the oil. Her history chapter covers 8,000 years of olive history in 14 "pretty clever pages," she said.

- Olive oil is not just for cooking. Firenze drinks two tablespoons of olive oil every day, as an antioxidant, skin-enhancer, digestive-tract soother and all-purpose, bad-cholesterol-lowering, vitamin-E-rich tonic. "I read that Sophia Loren does that and she looks pretty good," she said, and you could hear the smile over the phone. Italian

FIRENZE IN TOWN

Carol Firenze, author of "The Passionate Olive"

Tasting, talk, book-signing

2 p.m. Saturday, Borders, Ala Moana; 2 p.m. Sunday, Borders, Waikēle

Information:

www.thepassionateolive.com

OLIVE OIL TERMS

Extra virgin olive oil: produced by mechanical means, no flavor defects, acidity of not more than 0.8 percent

Virgin olive oil: produced by mechanical means, minor flavor defects, acidity of not more than 2 percent

Olive oil (or pure olive oil): mix of refined and virgin olive oil; acidity of no more than 1 percent

First cold-pressed: produced by traditional hydraulic press, from first press of olives, at temperatures less than 80.6 degrees

Cold extraction: produced by method other than traditional hydraulic press, at temperatures less than 80.6 degrees

Light/extra-light olive oil: refers to color, fragrance and taste, not fat content or calories

Filtered/unfiltered: unfiltered oil, preferred by connoisseurs for dipping and drizzling, contains suspended fruit particles

THE ODDBALL OLIVE

Some unusual uses for olive oil:

- Shine shoes
- Polish furniture (with lemon, water)
- Cough syrup (with lemon, honey)
- For blisters (compress with chamomile tea)
- Exfoliant (with sea salt)
- Diaper rash remedy (whipped with water)

mothers routinely massage their breasts with olive oil when feeding, to help prevent stretch marks or skin irritation, and also so bambino gets a little oil. A spoonful in your kitty's dish every so often will solve that nasty hairball problem. Firenze makes scented moisturizing lotion with olive oil and essential oils, such as lavender, mint or rosemary.

- Learn to read and understand olive oil labels. In contrast to other olive-oil-producing countries, the United States does not have a truth in labeling law that relates to olive oil. The California Olive Oil Council is attempting to introduce legislation to improve the verification and authenticity of label language. And the group has its own seal, given to California-made oils that meet the criteria for labeling as extra virgin olive oil (no flavor defects and an acidity level below 0.8 percent).

One thing to know is that Italy exports more olive oil than it produces, so some olive oil labeled "packed in Italy" or "imported from Italy" may be made from olives grown in Tunisia, Morocco, Spain or Greece. There is nothing wrong with the olives from these countries, Firenze said, but one key to fine olive oil is pressing the olives within 24 hours of picking. In California, some new varieties are being grown that can be mechanically picked with grape-harvesting equipment; these olives can reach the press within 90 minutes.

Olives that have traveled don't make the best-tasting oil, she said. Look for the source of the olives in the fine print on the label; it's required to be there. If you're buying an "Italian" olive oil made with Greek olives, you might want to think twice.

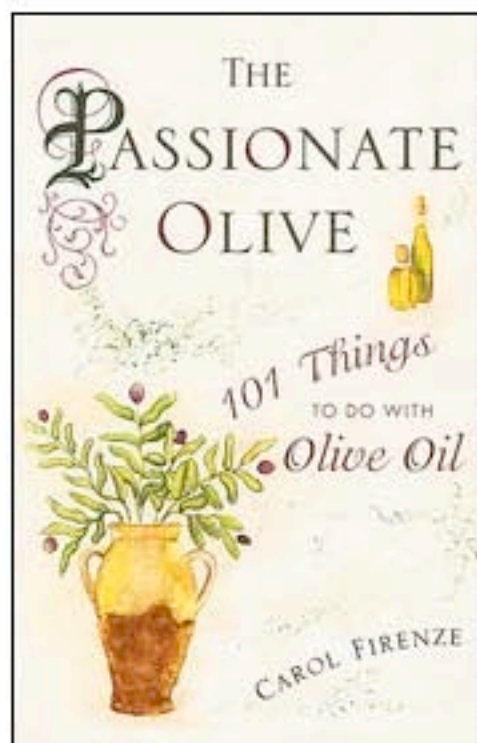
In Italy, extra virgin olive oils must be certified so by a professional taster, who will disqualify the oil for any defect. Tasters are looking for fruity, bitter and pungent characteristics; defects are described as fusty, musty, winey-vinegary, muddy, metallic or rancid flavors. The oil also is tested for acidity level. There are 41 such tasters in the world, but only one in California, she said.

Firenze believes that olive oil is on the same path to sophistication that wine has taken in the United States.

"When I was young," she said, "we just ordered red or white. Now everybody knows the varietal and style they want."

Similarly, olive oil is pressed from many different cultivars (plant types, analogous to wine varietals), each of which has different color, taste and intensity. It's a world of flavors to get to know.

Reach Wanda A. Adams at wadams@honoluluadvertiser.com.



Carol Firenze

RELATED NEWS FROM THE WEB

Latest headlines by topic:

- [Recipes](#)
- [Life](#)
- [Fruits](#)
- [Food](#)

Powered by Topix.net