



Best value olive oil

You don't have to spend big bucks when buying extra virgin olive oil – two of our Best Buys are from budget supermarkets

How we test

Fresh apple slices were key in tasting our oils



Our experts blind-tasted 12 standard extra virgin olive oils and rated them individually on aroma, taste, complexity and overall balance. As a panel, they then graded the oils out of five to make our star ratings. The oils were served in black glasses (oil colour isn't important for taste) at room temperature. Palates were cleansed between tastings with water and fresh apple slices.

We tested standard extra virgin oils from Aldi, Asda, Bertolli Originale, Carapelli, Felippo Berio, Lidl, M&S, Morrison's, Napolina, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. We tried to buy 500ml bottles but, where unavailable, we bought 750ml bottles.

The experts

- Adam Byatt, head chef and owner of Trinity – a *Good Food Guide* restaurant
- Judy Ridgway, international olive oil judge and author
- Sam Rosen-Nash, savoury grocery buyer at Fortnum & Mason
- James Wierzelewski, executive chef at Harrods

We're all encouraged to use olive oil to keep our hearts healthy: it's high in monounsaturated fat that helps, among other benefits, to lower bad cholesterol. But the variety in supermarkets can leave you overwhelmed.

However, as our taste test reveals, you don't have to dig deep in your wallet to get good quality. Of the 12 supermarket and branded extra virgin olive oils our experts tasted, two of our Best Buys are from budget supermarkets and, per 100ml, they're by far the cheapest on test

(both 33p per 100ml) – giving them both Exceptional Value status.

We've tested big names including Bertolli and Felippo Berio – but our experts agree that the best are from Aldi, Lidl and Waitrose. These Best Buys all received four stars (out of a possible five).

But no matter how good an oil, to keep it fresh, our experts say that you must store it in a cool, dark place, in a sealed bottle.

Best on test

The Best Buy extra virgin oil from Waitrose (50p per 100ml) costs 17p

Best on test ★★★★★

Waitrose
500ml £2.48
(50p per 100ml)

Lidl Primadonna
750ml £2.49
(33p per 100ml)

Less depth ★★★

Bertolli Originale
500ml £3.79
(76p per 100ml)



Aldi Evoo 750ml
£2.49 (33p per 100ml)

more per 100ml than our other Best Buys but is mid-priced compared with other oils tested.

Our experts said that this four-star oil had a great taste, with hints of pepper and chilli, and it didn't leave a waxy aftertaste. The panel felt that its bitter aftertaste would complement a salad with sweet ingredients, such as orange.

■ **Best Buy Primadonna from Lidl costs just 33p per 100ml** and was also given four stars. It was described by our experts as a delicate oil that's ideal for everyday use. They felt that it would work well for dressing salads as well as sweet tomatoes.

■ **Aldi's Solesta Evoo oil (also 33p per 100ml)** received four stars because of its 'enticing aroma' of tropical fruits and lemon. The taste was well-balanced but it didn't quite match up to its aroma.

Less depth

Four oils weren't rated Best Buys but still had reasonable flavours.

■ Mid-priced **Sainsbury's oil (54p per 100ml)** got a three-star rating thanks to its good overall balance and complexity. It was praised for its lingering fruity taste.

■ **Bertolli Originale oil (76p per 100ml)**, one of the most expensive tested per 100ml, had a good aroma with 'hints of apple'. It also got a three-star rating,

but was criticised for leaving a waxy coating in the mouth.

■ The panel could also smell apple in the three-starred **Felippo Berio oil (at 78p per 100ml)**, toward the top of prices) and it had 'good flavour with peppery tones' – a good oil for everyday use.

■ The panel agreed that **Tesco's oil (at 46p per 100ml)** one of the lowest priced), was pleasant with good balance, but it lacked depth and flavour.

Below average

■ The lower-priced **Asda oil (46p per 100ml)** and one of the most expensive, **Napolina (84p per 100ml)**, both got two-star ratings. Our experts liked the aroma but were less keen on the taste.

Leave on the shelf

Three oils were rated poorly by all our panellists and were given one star each.

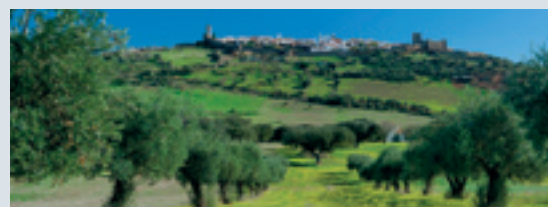
■ Our experts considered that **Carapelli's oil (at 84p per 100ml)** one of the most expensive) tasted old and rancid, with an unpleasant aroma and a 'stale nuts' taste.

■ They also agreed that the mid-priced oil from **M&S (57p per 100ml)** tasted old when they tried it.

■ And they considered lower-priced **Morrison's oil (46p per 100ml)** to be 'fusty' (occurring when stored olives begin to ferment), with an 'acidic feel'.

Differences in olive oil

Not sure whether you should opt for extra virgin, virgin or standard oil? We set you straight



Virgin oils are produced by mechanical or physical methods only, such as washing and filtration. But chemical processes can be used with standard oils, which can alter aroma and taste. Advances in production mean that terms such as first and second press are less relevant – extra virgin and virgin oils are both from first presses.

Extra virgin olive oil is the highest quality and has an acidity level of no more than 0.8%, for

virgin oil it's no more than 2%. Extra virgin olive oil tends to have a stronger flavour and is generally used as a dressing as it's the most expensive type.



If you're cooking with oil, chef Adam Byatt says it's not worth using extra virgin – it's costly and the strong taste can overpower delicate food. We say try standard olive oil: Sainsbury's is 40p per 100ml, while its extra virgin oil is 54p per 100ml – that's 70p less per bottle.

Sainsbury's 500ml
£2.70 (54p per 100ml)



Tesco 500ml
£2.28 (46p per 100ml)

www.which.co.uk

Below average ★★

Asda 500ml £2.28
(46p per 100ml)



Napolina 500ml
£4.19 (84p per 100ml)

Leave on the shelf ★

Carapelli 750ml £6.29
(84p per 100ml)



M&S 500ml £2.85
(57p per 100ml)

Morrison's 500ml £2.28
(46p per 100ml)