



Pots, pans, woks and Extra Virgin Olive Oil... a mismatch or a perfect mix?

Putting to bed some of the myths, rumours and half truths.

Australian Extra Virgin Olive Oil (AEVOO) is one of the freshest and healthiest products you can eat. Olives are grown in every state across Australia and harvest occurs from April through to July, providing you the opportunity to have fresh AEVOO almost every week of the year. Thanks to the natural diversity of the Australian environment and growing conditions, there's an exciting range of high quality AEVOO available all year round.

Did you know that 95% of the olive oil produced in Australia is Extra Virgin which means that the oil comes from the first pressing of the olive – 100% natural juice squeezed from the olive and not refined in any way? AEVOO gets from the tree to table in less than three months.

One of the oldest continually produced foods in the world, Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) is prized for its superior flavour and health benefits as well as its perfect balance of aroma, taste, vitamins and nutrients.

There are many oils available on the market and some are better for some uses than others. AEVOO can be used for just about everything, but there are some “myths” that you can't use AEVOO for frying or, worse, can't use AEVOO with some types of pots, pans and woks. We need to address some of these rumours and innuendoes and see how valid they really are.

First let's talk about “smoke point”. The smoke point refers to the temperature at which a cooking fat or oil begins to break down. The substance smokes or burns, and gives food an unpleasant taste. The important thing about cooking with any oil (olive or otherwise) is not to heat the oil to a temperature above its smoke point (also referred to as smoking point).

The smoke point of Olive Oil varies with its quality. High quality extra virgin olive oils (with low free fatty acids) have a high “smoke point” and are an excellent choice. Low quality olive oils have a much lower smoke point. So purchasing a high quality AEVOO will provide you with those extra degrees of frying temperature that you might need.

MYTH 1 *EVOO is no good for frying.*

FALSE: If you want to ensure that you are using the best oil possible for your health and well being, then freshly squeezed Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) stands up well to high cooking temperatures and has been used for frying all types of food for decades.

Good quality EVOO such as AEVOO has a smoke point that is substantially higher than the ideal temperature for frying food (180° C) – why would you want to destroy your food by cooking it any higher?

Remember this! The general rule for EVOO is that the better the quality (i.e. lower Free Fatty Acid) the higher you can heat it before it starts to smoke.

MYTH 2 *EVOO goes bad when it is heated and/or used for frying and is hard to digest.*

FALSE: When heated, olive oil is the most stable fat, which means it stands up well to high frying temperatures. Its high smoke point is well above the ideal temperature for frying food (180°C). The digestibility of olive oil is not affected when it is heated, even when it is re-used several times for frying.

Myth 3 *Heating Olive Oil Will Make it Saturated or Trans-fatty.*

FALSE: AEVOO is low in saturated fat and heating it does not alter this. While successive prolonged heating of any edible oil can result in the creation of miniscule amounts of hydrogenerated fats, the home cook who shallow fries with the same oil a few times should not be concerned with this.

The factories that manufacture solid margarine from liquid vegetable oils do so by using a complicated highly controlled catalytic process that bubbles hydrogen gas through hot vegetable oil at high temperature and pressure for a number of hours – A process that you can't replicate in your kitchen.

Myth 4 *Cooking in "Olive oil" Diminishes the Nutritional Value of the Food.*

FALSE: The fact is that heating any food in any manner will break down its nutritional value. High heat such as frying is worse than moderate heat such as

steaming, which is worse than eating vegetables raw. It is not the cooking oil per se, but the high heat of frying. Most nutritionists recommend lightly steaming vegetables or eating them raw. A touch of a flavoursome extra virgin olive oil added at the table will add taste and healthful anti-oxidants, such as in the Mediterranean diet which has been shown to result in a lower incidence of coronary disease and have other health benefits.

More Myths

The following unqualified claims have appeared periodically in various publications and on some cookware labels:

FALSE MYTH: Never use olive oil in non-stick cookware as it eventually damages the non-stick surface making it not non-stick. However if you burn any oil in a pan then it will leave a residue. This is the problem with EVOO myths. It seems that EVOO is always singled out for being different from other oils when in fact its physical properties are much the same, as is its basic structural component.

FALSE MYTH: Olive oil can burn on to your pan and cause a sticky residue and brown discolouration.

FALSE MYTH: Don't use extra-virgin olive oil for cooking. It seeps into the pan over time; this is what causes discoloration and smoking in older pans when you heat the pan.

FALSE MYTH: you shouldn't use olive oil for proper wok cooking as it burns really easily, you should only use "regular" olive oil not EVOO

FALSE MYTH: While care must be taken when frying, EVOO is no more or less flammable than any other cooking oil.

The origins of these types of false claims are hard to find, but may be due to some chefs and cooks recommending against using Extra Virgin Olive Oil in cooking because either some flavour may be lost, they were actually using cheap mislabelled substitutes, using poor cookware or historically Extra Virgin Olive Oil has appeared too expensive.

With labelling on Certified Australian Extra Virgin Olive Oil being true to label [meeting Australian Standard AS 5264-2011] and a negligible price difference from many substitutes today, why not use the best – Australian Extra Virgin Olive Oil! Look for the triangular Certified Australian Extra Virgin symbol (see below) when next you purchase Australian Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

REMEMBER: Communities from around the Mediterranean, renowned for their health and vigour, have fried, cooked and used olive oil in every conceivable way for thousands of years.

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EXTRA VIRGIN[®]



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