

Olive Oil: Tasting Tours in Italy

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Terroir, defined as a “taste of place,” is the characteristic taste and flavor imparted by the place where a particular food or drink is produced. Often considered in wine, terroir is just as significant in extra virgin olive oil.

A wine with a “good terroir” is said to be representative of the soil, the climate, and the tradition of the area from which it came; it transmits a story and offers its drinkers an experience with every sip.

Italy, well known for its inability to separate cuisine and culture, is a rockstar of terroir, and while its wines are the most famously representative of their territories, they are not the only terroir-laden product. In fact, that additional oh-so-beloved Italian staple — the one that inhabits tiny dipping bowls and pantries of cooks worldwide — is another strong Italian homage to terroir, offering a full experience with every taste. Similar to wine, each bottle of artisanal Italian olive oil comes from a profound tradition and transmits a story of the place where it’s from.



Olive oil from certain territories generally portray distinct flavors, and olive oil tastings are just as serious (and certainly as delicious) as wine tastings, where the bottles are analyzed for a wide array of factors, such as aroma, intensity, bitterness, sweetness, texture, and astringency. And just like wine, tasting the wide range of flavors in the place where the olive oil is made is a transformative, almost magical experience.

Lucky for us Italian foodies, there are many olive oil tasting opportunities in Italy, offering a wide range of options, from the most basic to the most advanced, for travelers to discover the terroir of olive oil. What is right for you?

Check out Select Italy's quick guide of your extra virgin olive oil tastings below

The Full-Day Experience

Making a day out of your olive oil visit is the way to go if you're looking for the whole package. Give yourself time to wander through the olive groves, learn about the different varieties grown in the area, and experience the whole territory. Then, taste the landscape, the culture, the history, and the flavors you've learned in a guided tasting and/or meal that highlights the oils. Choose a full day tour that has it all: a private, guided excursion offering an introduction people and culture of the territory, tours, and tastings at multiple olive-producing fattorie, and, of course, an authentic taste of the local cuisine. Tuscany offers several of these types of experiences, as do other regions such as Umbria, Sicily, and Italy's number one olive-oil producing region, Puglia.

The Food-Centric Experience

If you are an enthusiastic foodie who is looking to concentrate 100% on the local cuisine, olive oil included, you might want to opt for a cooking class or gourmet meal. Choose from a cooking course based in olive oil-inspired dishes, such as this one in Tuscany, or go for the broader picture with an Emilia-Romagna cooking course at Academia Barilla, which incorporates its own Tuscan olive oil into the dishes. Don't feel like getting your hands dirty? Opt for a meal at Osteria Francescana in Modena with the legendary 3-Michelin-star Italian chef, Massimo Bottura, who coincidentally also makes his own olive oil, Villa Manodori.

The Sleep Amongst the Groves Experience

If you don't have room to squeeze a full-day olive oil experience between your romantic gondola rides, visits to the finest wineries, and tours of one of Italy's many UNESCO World Heritage sites, you might want to consider choosing a lodging option where olive oil is produced. Many estates that produce high-quality oil also offer their own hospitality. We'd recommend Regaleali in Sicily (where Tasca d'Almerita Olive Oil is produced and home of the world-famous Anna Tasca Lanza Cooking School) or the Tuscan estates of Borgo di Vescine, Relais Il Falconiere & Spa, Villa Mangiacane, and Casa Fabbrini.

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