

The Basics

A chat with a local expert on all things olive oil

BY CARLIE FISHGOLD

If you've soaked a nugget or two of bread into the green and yellow swatches of fine olive oil and vinegar at the Rochester Public Market, you've been to Cosimano & Ferrari. We sat with founder and olive maestro Patrick Cosimano to learn more.

Where does your oil come from? Most of the olive oil I sell now is directly from my growing partners in California.

Is it true that olive oil must be stored in a dark bottle? Most everything you read will tell you that olive oil should only be purchased in tinted bottles to protect against the light. However, studies are showing that it really might not matter. Would you rather buy something labeled extra virgin (that really isn't) in a dark bottle or something direct from the grower, stored properly, and bottled within weeks of purchasing in a clear bottle? When we opened, we weighed this option and decided we would go with a clear bottle to allow our customers to see what they were consuming.

What should people be looking for, so they know they're getting a good product? Origin of the olive—

know your source by knowing your vendor. Know the harvest date, which should be right on the bottle. In European oils, look for a PDO or PGI seal (DOP and IGP in Italy), which verifies the oil is produced and processed in a certain region. For olive oil from California, it will have a California Olive Oil Council certification.

Does the origin of the olive really affect the oil? There are over 70 countries that produce olive oil and over 700 different olives, so from that perspective I would say yes, origin matters. What type of olive, where they are grown, climate, soil, harvesting, age of the tree and other factors all affect the flavor and quality of the oil. Again, I go back to knowing your source. Our growing partners have won more awards for their oils than any growers in the country.

What are your favorite ways to use olive oil? What's a snack you eat, a dish you make most often, maybe that you crave? I'm craving Thai chili oil with fig balsamic on my flat iron steak, lemon oil with blueberry balsamic on my salad, Ascolano with a drop of lemon balsamic on garbanzo beans with

Vidalia onion and crushed black pepper. Manzanillo on vanilla bean ice cream with sea salt and mint. That's what I'm craving right now. Tomorrow morning might be a garlic-jalapeno scramble....The possibilities are endless.

How did you choose to set up shop at the Public Market? I love the market and was interested in becoming a vendor in some capacity. I had been a member of the Olive Oil of the Month Club through the now-defunct La Cucina magazine. I'd get a new bottle of Italian extra virgin oil delivered to my doorstep every month and, like most people, I thought that olive oil was just olive oil. I started learning about different varieties of olives and the flavors of oil they produce, and I thought that it might be something that people would enjoy learning about and tasting. I also wanted to continue an Italian tradition at the market since a majority of its customers were Italian and Jewish immigrants in the early 1900s...thus, the name Cosimano & Ferrari. Cosimano is my father's side of the family, and Ferrari is my mother's.

