

The olive oil

Language

English

The olive tree and the olive oil the signs of the Mediterranean world. It is said that the Mediterranean goes up to “where the olive tree is”.

The olive groves are still today one of the striking images of this region of the world and the Mediterranean countries account for 95% of the production of olive oil in the world.

Produced from the harvesting and pressing of the olives, the olive oil was known and used throughout the Ancient Mediterranean. It includes the “sacred trilogy” of the Mediterranean Diet, present in celebrating worship and rituals.

In the Christian religion the “holy oils” mean the presence of the Holy Spirit and appear in the anointing of the priests, and are also ointment for birth, confirmation and extreme-unction ceremonies.

The olive oil appears as a source of light and heat, has important feeding, healing, medicinal and also dermatological roles. It shows different characteristics, classifications and flavours.

The olive tree was intensively introduced in Portugal by the Romans, being considered by them as the “olea prima inter arbores est”. In Santa Luzia parish, Tavira, there is an olive tree dating back more than 2,000 years, listed as of public interest, considered to be one of the oldest trees in Portugal.

This species is all over the continental territory, from the Algarve to Trás-os-Montes and the olive oil is produced in almost all regions of the country.

“*Maçanilha*” is a variety of olives characteristic of the dryland orchards in the Algarve. The table olives can be prepared in different ways: crushed, slashed, of water and salt. In Tavira municipality, with ancestral traditions in olive growing, there are still three operating oil presses.

In the traditional Portuguese cuisine the use of olive oil is included in the preparation and cooking of the main dishes and it is also used in soups and salads.