

Health Benefits of Olives



Olives are small stone fruits that are related to mangoes, cherries, peaches, almonds, and pistachios. A staple in the Mediterranean diet, olives have been consumed by humans for 10,000 years. The most common varieties are green, black and Kalamata or Greek olives, which are red or purple. Green olives are most often used in the making of olive oil.

Note: Bitter when raw, olives are fermented and brined, making them high in salt (sodium). High sodium intake is associated with increased risk of high blood pressure and stroke.

WHAT MAKES OLIVES GREAT?

Nutrition

¼ cup (about 8 whole olives provides) 49 calories, <½ gm protein, 1 gm fiber, 6 gm fat and no cholesterol. This portion also provides 400-800 mg sodium depending on the processing. Total recommended sodium intake is <2,300 mg/day.

Fat

The most prominent nutrient in olives is the generous amount of monounsaturated fat. This healthy fat can help to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, and is associated with reduced risk of heart disease. Due to stages of ripening when picked, black olives contain higher fat than green.

Vitamins

Olives are rich in fat soluble vitamins A, E and K, as well as quercetin and polyphenol antioxidants. These compounds boost immunity, and fight aging and disease. Kalamata, or Greek olives, with intact pits are highest in these compounds. Pitted olives have lower levels of vitamins.

Minerals

Olives provide potassium which helps to maintain healthy blood pressure, but are also high in sodium which is a contributor to high blood pressure. Rinse olives before consuming to remove some of the sodium.

Olives provide magnesium and calcium for heart and bone health. Phosphorus is a key component of cell membranes and is essential for energy production. Olives also provide trace amounts of copper and iron.

Fiber

Fiber in olives helps to regulate blood sugars, lower cholesterol and feed our healthy gut bacteria.

BUYING & USING OLIVES

Green olives are picked green and cured before they ripen. Black olives, also called California black olives, are picked green but ripen to a dark brown or black color and are softer in texture. Kalamata olives ripen on the tree and turn a dark purple color before being harvested and have a rich, fruity flavor.

Black and green olives are usually found pitted, whereas Kalamata olives can be found pitted or unpitted.

Most black, green and Kalamata olives can be found in jars or cans on grocery shelves. Some deli departments may provide mixed olives in the bulk refrigerator section or in an olive bar offering a wide variety of specialty olives.

To reduce salt, rinse olives before adding to recipes, hummus or dips. Add olives to potato salads, tuna or green salads. Sprinkle on pizza or add to relish trays as a tasty appetizer or snack. Olives can also be added to corn bread or other quick bread recipes, muffins or focaccia.

Tapenade is an olive spread usually served with crackers, crusty bread or on sandwiches (*see recipe pg 2*). It can also be served with main dishes or omelets.

Experiment with olives from California, Spain, Greece and Italy. Choose from over 100 varieties including Agrinion, Amfissa, Manzanilla, Cerignola, even white olives.



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Olive Wreath Appetizer

inspiredbycharm.com

Ingredients:

- 1 fresh rosemary, cut into sprigs
- Mixed olives
- Cherry tomatoes
- Mini mozzarella balls
- Ground black pepper, or red pepper flakes

Directions:

1. Start with a large round plate. Place sprigs of rosemary into a wreath shape around the perimeter of the plate.
2. Add olives, tomatoes and mozzarella into the greenery, until wreath is full.
3. Top with pepper as desired.
4. Serve with small forks or holiday toothpicks.

Tampenade

cookieandkate.com

Ingredients:

- 1 cup Castelvetrano olives, pitted
- 1/2 cup Kalamata olives, pitted
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley
- 1 Tbsp drained capers*
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in blender or food processor and pulse a few times until chopped but not pureed.
2. No processor, no problem. Just mince olives before mixing with other ingredients.
3. Store leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

***Capers** are unripe buds of a Mediterranean bush that are dried and brined just as olives. They have a similar saltiness to olives but with a lemon tang. They can be found in jars or cans at most grocery stores in the olive and pickle section.

Fougasse Bread

simplysogood.com

Ingredients:

- 3¾ cup flour
- 2 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp dry yeast dissolved in ¼ cup water
- 1 Tbsp fresh rosemary, diced
- ½ cup Kalamata olives, chopped
- 1½ cups water

Directions:

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, salt, yeast, rosemary and olives. Stir to combine. Add water and mix until moistened.
2. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit at room temp for 18 hours.
3. Place dough on floured surface and divide in half. Gently shape each half into a 5x10" rectangular shape.
4. Line a baking tray with parchment paper. Place dough rectangles on tray. Make a slash down the center of each rectangle 1" from top and bottom and spread slightly. This should form a slight oval.
5. Gently slash sides of the oval partway through at 2-3" spacing. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to rise 1 hour.
6. Uncover and bake in 425°F oven for 25 minutes or until golden brown. Makes 2 fougasse.

Carrot Chickpea Salad with Olives

theveganatlas.com

Ingredients:

- 1 15-oz can chickpeas, drained
- 3 carrots, grated (1 cup)
- ½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 2-3 green onions, sliced
- ½ cup black or Kalamata olives, pitted, chopped
- Juice from 1 lemon
- 1-2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp Za'atar or other spice blend
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and toss.
2. Cover and let rest 30 minutes before serving.

REFERENCES

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