The Many Uses of Olive Oil

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Olive oil has many valuable uses beyond cooking, from personal care to home improvement, natural remedies and beyond.



Olive oil is more than a cartoon character, historic symbol of peace and glory or food staple of the much-vaunted Mediterranean diet. It is actually tremendously useful stuff, finding applications in personal care, home improvement, green cleaning, natural remedies and other areas.

It’s long been reported that there are a number of health benefits of olive oil. As a foodstuff it has a high concentration of monounsaturated fatty acids, which studies show promote “good” cholesterol (HDL) while lowering “bad” cholesterol (LDL). Olive oil is also known to be gentle on the digestive system, and even may help prevent gallstones and soothe ulcers. Good quality olive oil contains valuable vitamins and nutrients, and it is loaded with antioxidants, which many believe help protect the body from cancer.

These days there are an increasing array of organic and boutique olive oils offered for sale, some of them quite pricey. In general, the less processed an oil the more nutrients it contains, although the more expensive it tends to be. “Extra virgin” olive oil comes from the first pressing of olives, and retains the most flavor and aroma. Most better brands are also advertised as “cold pressed,” meaning they aren’t heated up beyond room temperature during processing.

Unsurprisingly, high heat can damage the flavor and nutrients in the oil. “Virgin” olive oil generally comes from the second pressing.

Cheaper brands sold as “regular” or “pure” olive oil are made with chemical refining and filtering, which standardize and neutralize flavors and acid contents. They have lower nutrient levels as a result.

To help protect the fragile environments of the Mediterranean and elsewhere, it’s a good idea to buy organic olive oil when you can. It also will tend to be of high quality and flavor, great for spaghetti, oven-roasted vegetables, fresh salads and many other dishes.

It’s true that you won’t be consuming the olive oil in a number of the uses below, and part of the point of this post is to help you save money by suggesting alternative uses to things you already have, so you don’t have to make a trip to the store and buy some additional products to get the job done. Therefore, we’d understand if you preferred to use the cheapest, lowest-grade oils for some of these tips. You probably aren’t going to crack open that vintage bottle of herb-infused oil your aunt brought you back from Tuscany in the event that you have a squeaky door. But since readers seemed to find everyday alternative uses for vodka, vinegar and baking soda useful, we thought we’d look into olive oil:

-Increase the elasticity of your arteries. 2-8 teaspoons (10-40 ml) a day of extra virgin olive oil could reduce your risk of heart attacks & strokes and extend your life.

-Curbs appetite Decreases desire for snacks and so could be useful as a diet aid in treating obesity.

-Reduces skin cancer risk after UV sun exposure. Apply olive oil directly after sunbathing or excessive sun exposure.

-Acne treatment An olive oil and salt paste helps some with acne.

-Sunburn treatment To relieve redness, swelling and pain after sunburn.

-Helps to prevent and reverse Alzheimer's-improving your memory.

-Lip balm. Softens your lips and prevents chapping.

-Hair conditioning treatment. Leaves your hair soft and radiant. Not only does it condition, but it also gets rid of the frizz. I put a small drop into my palm & then rub both hands together & then apply it to dry hair. (not wet hair).

-Scalp moistener. A few teaspoons massaged into hair roots can prevent dry scalp.

-Skin moisturizer. Heals dry skin and antioxidants.

-Foot softener To soften up rough, dry feet.

-Removes paint from hair. A gentle way to remove paint without harming your hair.

Use it to remove paint from your skin. Rub it on and let it soak a while then wash well with soap. The paint usually comes off without any skin damaging materials. And your skin will be all soft.

-Shaving cream.

-Makeup Remover

-Furniture polish. Use 2 parts olive oil, 1 part lemon juice (or white vinegar), or just olive oil on a rag.

-A pre manicure solution when mixed with water.

-Melted with some beeswax and poured into a small tin, it makes great lip balm, leather conditioner and wood polish.

-A couple teaspoons mixed with a can of cat food will help hairballs.

-Use it for the static in the winter. Rub so into your hands then run fingers through hair, follow with a brush or two from a natural brush.

-Mix 50/50 with saved fat for homemade soap. I have used 100% EV olive oil in soap making, but it takes longer to cure.

-Mix it with butter and garlic for your garlic bread, very nice change.

-Rub it on my turkey instead of butter.

-A Bread Dip.

-Fry potatoes in olive oil Yes, olive oil is great for fried foods!

-Mix with wine vinegar, crushed garlic, and fresh grated Parmesan cheese for salad dressing.

-Cut off the top of a whole head of garlic, sprinkle it with salt and pepper and drizzle olive oil over the top. I wrap it up in foil and roast in the oven until the garlic gets soft. Great stuff spread over home made bread.

-You can buy a pump bottle for oil at most discount or kitchen supply stores. Fill with plain or flavored olive oil to use as a spray. This can replace the spray cans of oil that many people buy. Spray your pans before cooking. It also is a great way to get a small amount of fat/oil on foods for those of us who are watching our weight, spray on salad or bread or whatever.

-I use olive oil (extra virgin) in baking where vegetable oil is called for, it makes cakes, etc.

much more moist and flavorful....I have had people ask me for the special recipe.

-Mix olive oil half and half with lemon juice to make a wood cleaner/polish. Nourishes your furniture while it cleans.

-A sip of olive oil before you go to sleep stops snoring. It makes the throat slippery. Your spouse can sleep.

-A sip of olive oil will stop a tickle that is making you cough.

-Use it as bath oil. Two to three tablespoons will do the trick.

-For a hand/body scrub, rub in olive oil then scrub with sugar and wash.

-For a facial, wet face thoroughly, then massage olive oil into your skin. Use about a half teaspoon of sugar and scrub your face with that, then wipe off gently with a warm, wet cloth until the sugar is all gone.

-Mix 3 parts Olive Oil with 1 part white vinegar for wood floor polish. Apply and rub in well.

-To keep brass looking shinier longer, buff with olive oil after cleaning. Olive oil keeps it from tarnishing so fast.

-Use olive oil to treat lice on children - better than the expensive treatments from the store and conditions the scale.

Apply on hair, being sure to get into scales. Leave this on for at least 30 minutes, but it could be all day if you don't have any plans - then shampoo out. It might take 2 shampoos to get the oil out of hair. Use once a week as a conditioner and preventative. Olive oil smothers the lice.

-Olive oil works as a lubricant on the feet (for reflexology) and does not disappear the way lotions do.

-To condition scalp on bald heads: rub with olive oil and then lay on a hot (not burning!), moist towel. When the towel cools, reheat in the microwave. Be careful not to get too hot. Continue doing this several times.I like to toast French bread and then lightly spray it with an excellent olive oil instead of buttering it. It is very good.

-Once a week treat yourself to this most fabulous beauty treatment. I give my hair and scalp a massage with olive oil. Using a regular comb, comb it through hair. This gives it unbeatable shine and it's never looked healthier. Leave it on for an hour or two. Wash hair as normal to remove oil and wrap hair in towel to dry. The run a hot bath. While the water's running I stand in the tub and scrub my face, body, and feet with a paste made of olive oil and salt- regular table salt. (This makes your skin extra soft, leaves it glowing, and has cleared up my acne.) Then soak in the tub for 15 minutes.

The first time I did this everyone noticed "something different" about me but couldn't figure it out. I even got stopped on the street by another woman who asked me how I got such beautiful skin. So there... I've told my secret!

-Old fashioned 'sweet oil' that they put in ears for wax and ear aches is really olive oil! No need to get it at the pharmacy, you probably in your cupboard. Very carefully, use a cotton swab to apply olive oil to the outside ear cavity to help with earaches and excess wax. You can also heat up some olive oil in a microwave for 30 seconds then apply it to the ear that hurts for relief.

-After cleaning and drying your kitchen sink take a cloth with a small amount of olive oil and rub it along the inside of your sink. This will prevent water stains from forming and will make your sink shine and sparkle! Your sink will look absolutely brand new. Also if my sink is clean then it inspires me to keep rest of kitchen clean as well.

-Beautify your skin. You can use it to assist you in shaving without nicking yourself. Or you can add some to your bath to get a silky smooth feeling from your cleaning. Olive oil improves the appearance and feel of your skin.

-Shine stainless steel. Many cleaning standbys, such as ammonia, can dull and even corrode chrome and stainless steel. Olive oil, however, is a safe and effective shining agent.

-Remove eye makeup. Dab a little under the eyes and rinse off with a washcloth.

-Prevent wax from sticking to a candle holder. Rub a thin coat on the base of the holder before inserting a candle. Dripped wax should peel away easily.

-Care for your pet. Add 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon to your cat’s food to help prevent hair balls.

-Moisturize cuticles. Apply a small amount of olive oil to the nail beds.

-Unstick a zipper. Using a Q-tip, apply a drop to lubricate the teeth. (Avoid touching the fabric.) The zipper should move up and down freely.

-Silence squeaky doors. Before making a mess with the WD-40, consider seeing if some olive oil will solve the problem. Lubricate hinges by applying a small dab to a cloth, then wiping the top of the hinges so that the oil runs down the sides.

-Eliminate wax from your nice candle-holders. You didn't pay all that money to have wax melt on to them. Coat them with a little bit of olive oil before you burn your candles and you should have no problem peeling that wax away.

-Give new life to old things. Certain items just need some shine to get them looking like they should - or working like they should. For example, you can improve the leather on shoes and baseball mitts by rubbing olive oil into them.

-Antioxidants have been a buzz word among health care aficionados for many years.

Antioxidants help repair damage to the body. The Whole Foods website proclaims, "Extra virgin olive oil is derived from the first pressing of the olives and has the most delicate flavor and most antioxidant benefits."

-According to AllAntiAging.com, olive oil contains oleocanthal, which can provide anti-inflammatory benefits to the skin, thus reducing the signs of aging.

-Manufactured beauty products can contain harsh additives, like alcohol. EVOO is 100 percent natural and is free from additional chemicals that could cause allergic reactions or damage the skin.

-Get Healthy Skin (And Fight Cancer!) People have used olive oil for centuries for personal care. It is a great skin moisturizer, in part because it contains linoleic acid, a compound not made by the body, but which prevents water from evaporating. According to Leslie Baumann, M.D., author of The Skin Type Solution, consuming olives and olive oil can promote healthy skin, as can applying it directly as a moisturizer. You can also add a bit of olive oil to a warm bath for a good healthy soak. Some of the most exciting news, according to Baumann, is that olive oil also contains at least four different antioxidants, which can help “neutralize damaging free radicals that can lead to skin aging and skin cancer.” Baumann writes that in studies mice that drank extra virgin olive oil developed less skin cancer after exposure to UV light.

-Olive oil can also provide a safe and natural lubricant for a close shave. As a soothing aftershave, rub in an extra teaspoon of the stuff after rinsing off. In fact, some products from The Art of Shaving are based on olive oil.

-Olive oil can soothe chapped lips. Make your own balm by mixing olive oil and melted beeswax in a 1:1 ratio (add an essential oil if you want a nice fragrance).

-Moisturize your cuticles by soaking in olive oil mixed with water, or apply olive oil directly to cuticles before applying polish or buffing nails.

-Tame Tangled and Damaged Hair-Olive oil also has benefits for hair. Comb a bit of the stuff through dry or frizzy hair to help tame and moisturize your locks, especially in winter or on humid days. Olive oil can also provide some relief for damaged hair. In his new book Clean Body, Zen Cleaner Michael de Jong suggests treating your tresses by kneading a few tablespoons of olive oil into your scalp and hair. “Swathe your oiled-up curls with a shower cap and take a thirty minute breather…snooze, toss back a latté, whatever. Then just shampoo as usual to reveal a refurbished mane that even Fabio would envy,” he writes.

-Care for Your Cat

Just as Frank and Millie can benefit from grooming with olive oil, so can Fluffy and Mittens. According to curbly.com, add a teaspoon of olive oil to your cat’s food to help prevent hairballs, as well as promote a shiny, healthy coat. Olive oil is likely to be more gentle on a cat’s system than petroleum-based anti-hairball lubricants. Plus, it has the benefit of coming from a renewable resource, as opposed to oil from the ground.

couple in bed sleeping

-Ease Snoring

Kitties aren't the only ones who can take advantage of natural lubricating properties of olive oil (yes it can be used as a "personal lubricant," in case you were wondering). And according to AltUse, taking a sip of olive oil before heading to bed can help lubricate your throat muscles, cutting down on snoring. We won't tell if you drizzle some extra olive oil on Grandma's salad the next time she comes to visit!

- Polish Furniture and Metal (and Condition Leather)

Silverware, copper and other metal items can be polished with ketchup or toothpaste. After you're done rub a bit of olive oil on to prevent streaks, corrosion and tarnish. To polish your desk, use two parts olive oil mixed with one part lemon juice. Pour just a few drops on a soft cloth, wipe away the dust, scuffs and fingerprints, and make your desk shine. In fact this technique works well for a range of wooden furniture and objects. You can also condition and revitalize leather goods, such as baseball mitts, by rubbing in olive oil. Let set for 30 minutes, then wipe away any excess.

red zipper

-Fix Squeaky Doors

Olive oil can actually be used as a lubricant in many applications. It's safe to keep around the house, so you don't have to worry about children or pets getting into it. Try it out on squeaky doors, hinges and anywhere else you might consider using WD-40 or another lubricant. While WD-40 may work well, it's also based on hydrocarbons, so anytime we can use less of those we're taking a step toward a cleaner world.

-Fingernails. Use a bit of olive oil to moisturize cuticles, or mix oil and water and soak your hands before a manicure.

-Lubricate Measuring Cups and Spoons. Rub or spray olive oil on your measuring tools for easy clean-up of sticky substances like honey, grain mustards, and sugar syrups,

-Shoe polish**.** Rub down your shoes with just a spray of olive oil to maintain their shine.

-Personal Lubricant. It works…

-Easy clean up of garden tools. Spritz some olive oil on your tools to cut down on dirt buildup. Read more here!

- Condition leather. Rub olive oil into worn leather, such as a baseball glove, and let set for 30 minutes, then wipe away any excess.

- As a hair tonic. Comb some olive oil through your hair for the vintage look of pomade without the build-up, or add a bit to wet hair for grungy, but clean, look.

-Cure diaper rash. Gently wipe on olive oil to your baby's bottom to help with the irritation of diaper rash.

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