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VIRGIN OLIVE OIL AS FUNCTIONAL FOOD: CHEMICAL IMPLICATIONS ON QUALITY AND HEALTH BENEFITS

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Among vegetable oils, virgin olive oil (VOO) has nutritional and organoleptic properties that make it unique and an essential component of the Mediterranean diet. VOO is a fat extracted from the fruit of the *Olea europaea* (olive tree), a traditional tree crop of the Mediterranean area, where whole olives are pressed to extract olive oil. The importance of VOO is mostly linked both to its high content of oleic acid and a balanced contribution quantity of polyunsaturated fatty acids and its richness in phenolic components, which act as natural antioxidants and may contribute to the prevention or treatment of numerous human illnesses. The VOO is mainly used in cosmetics, medicine, cooking and soaps. The health benefits of VOO include treatment for colon, breast cancer, diabetes, heart problems, arthritis, high cholesterol, weight loss, digestion, aging and cancer. It has been used by

mankind for many centuries. It is a staple ingredient for many culinary preparations and also serves a variety of therapeutic purposes. In this presentation, we summarize the state of the art of knowledge and discuss the extent to which there exists evidence for the health benefits of the chemical components of VOO. This paper provides a comprehensive review of the most significant characteristics of VOO. Processing, composition, sensory quality and health benefits are the examined aspects.

Biography

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