

THE OLIVE FRUIT



TIPHANI STEINHOFF-WOLKINS
IWC VICE PRESIDENT
CONTRIBUTOR

Known around the world is the Cretan's passion for olives, it is embedded in their culture and cuisine. The mind can quickly conjure up visions of olive tree orchards filled with the dripping fruit, while the Mediterranean sun steadily beats down. The olive is as synonymous with Greece as mythology, and cherished as its symbol of peace, wisdom, and prosperity. And that is where this story begins...



German born, **Nicole Katrantzis**, who has since made Switzerland her adopted home, married into a Greek "olive" family. For generations the family has cultivated olive trees and distributed their olives to producers in the region. A couple of years ago, they decided to produce their own extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) from their harvest under their own family label...Domaine Katrantzis. To assist with the family business, Nicole trained in Zurich and became a certified olive oil sensory expert and is a member of The Swiss Olive Oil Panel (SOP).

Every autumn the Katrantzis family gathers at their family home on the Greek Island of Lesbos to manually harvest their olive trees together. Lesbos is located just 5 nautical miles from Turkey and remains relatively unspoiled by the mass tourism that has invaded the other Greek Islands. Lesbos is famous for its millions of olive trees... and when I say millions, I mean approximately 11 million! The family's harvest is then pressed, produced into olive oil, bottled on the spot, and a percentage of the production sent to Switzerland for retail and commercial sales.

The family boasts that their olive oil is made from hand-harvested olives. I asked Nicole what makes 'hand-harvested' so much better. Her answer was that each olive is inspected to ensure it meets the Katrantzis standard of quality to protect the integrity of the flavor. Hand picking ensures you are getting only the best olives for the oil. She insists it makes all the difference, and I would have to agree. Their olive oil, while ideal for salads, green vegetables, grilled fish and the like, is equally incredible just consumed by the



spoonful. It is a pure flavor that just delights your tastebuds. They also avoid the use of fertilizers or pesticides, and, let's be honest, organic always just tastes better.

A question I had for Nicole was whether the Swiss use much olive oil in their everyday cooking. She replied that the country as a whole is beginning to use more and more. Any place you would be inclined to use butter you can substitute with olive oil. Not to mention, olive oil appears to be the healthier option. A little-known fact: extra virgin olive oil has anti-inflammatory properties. EVOO contains more than 36 phenolic compounds; one compound in particular, known as oleocanthal, has been shown to have powerful natural anti-inflammatory benefits. Instead of heading to your local pharmacy for a cure for aches and pains, just reach for the safe alternative already found in your kitchen! And that is just one of the many health advantages. EVOO has been shown to reduce the risk of certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, and neurodegenerative diseases. Are you sold yet?

Greek Chickpea Soup

Ingredients:

450 g dried chickpeas
2 white onions (coarsely chopped)
Extra-virgin olive oil
Salt
Pepper
2 L water



Directions:

- 1) Soak the chickpeas in water overnight.
- 2) Drain the water from the chickpeas and rinse.
- 3) Boil the chickpeas in 2 L water and remove the white "foam".
- 4) Add 2 onions, 2 spoonfuls olive oil, salt, pepper, and cook on middle heat for 1 hour until the chickpeas are soft. Add more hot water if needed.
- 5) When the chickpeas are soft, take out the onions and mash them in a blender. Add the mashed onions back into the chickpea soup.
- 6) Add 2 more spoonfuls of olive oil, and salt and pepper to taste.

Grill bread and prepare it with olive oil, dried oregano, and Greek feta cheese. Serve it all together.

If you are interested in learning more about olive oil, Nicole organizes 90-min. tasting workshops. Imparting her wisdom as a tasting expert, she helps participants discern aromas, quality, and freshness of the various nectars from around the world. You can also purchase her family's olive oil in a single bottle or 5-1 quantities. You can contact Nicole for scheduling or further information at info@katrantzis.ch or visit their website www.katrantzis.ch or on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/domainekatrantzis/>