

# *The* RARE WINE CO.

## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 328

Spring 2019 Edition: The Great Olive Oils of Tuscany

PUBLISHED SINCE 1992

## The Quest for Essence

### *The Cream of the 2018 Tuscan Olive Oil Harvest*



**M**other Nature has not been kind to Italian olive growers in recent years. And her harshness reached a crescendo in 2018, causing a supply crisis that made U.S. headlines this weekend.

Tuscan olive growers have been among those hardest hit. This past spring, temperatures plummeted precisely when the region's most important olive variety, Frantoio, flowered, virtually wiping it out for the year.

Even a grower as meticulous and perennially blessed as the Grati family had a difficult time in 2018. Typically, we choose oils from all three of their olive groves: Vetrice, Monte and Prunatelli. This year only Vetrice gave us the kind of vividly spicy, intensely aromatic oil we prize. Yet, just three kilometers away, across the Pontassieve Valley, Selvapiana had a superb harvest throughout their groves.

Such disparities existed all over Tuscany. One grower would struggle to produce half their normal crop, while it was business as usual at a neighboring estate. It had to do with specific microclimates, when the grower chose

to harvest, and how many of their trees were of the Frantoio olive variety.

The growers' problems started in early March, when a devastating freeze swept across Italy, killing trees in Puglia, while wiping out most of Tuscany's Frantoio crop just as it was flowering, in all but the highest-elevation areas.

But the Tuscan growers had two saving graces. First, their Moraiolo and Leccino trees were unaffected, as they flower later. In fact, they produced an unusually large number of flowers, promising a bumper crop. (That crop was later reduced by May rains.)

The second saving grace was that olive flies (*mosca*) were not a big problem this year, so the olives that made it to maturity were of good size, purity and concentration, despite a warm, dry summer.

### The September Test

But as in so many years, the real test comes in September, when all it takes is a few cool, fresh nights for the olives to develop their aromatic power. But ►



► if the nights continue to be warm, the resulting oil aromas are not nearly as intense.

September 2018 was not as cool as growers would have hoped. And the problem was compounded by a sharply reduced crop of the Frantoio olives that give many Tuscan oils their signature perfume. So, to achieve any kind of aromatic intensity in their oil, growers had to rely on their Moraiolo and Leccino trees in the coolest, most sheltered and highest-elevation microclimates.

Fortunately, such sites exist at most of the estates with which we work. We chose oils specifically from these sites, satisfying ourselves with about half the volume of oil we normally buy. For us, it's a year of fine quality but real scarcity.

### Greatness at your Fingertips

Once again, we can offer our own special selections from iconic producers like Rufina's Grati family, Valeria Ronconi at Melograno, Federico Giuntini at Selvapiana, Gionni and Paolo Pruneti and, of course, the revered Giorgio Franci. Our lineup is literally a "who's who" of top Tuscan oil producers.

We've brought 2018's high spots together in two power-packed 6-bottle assortments. The first set focuses on Rufina, just to the east of Florence, whose oils are deservedly famed for the way they combine elegance with intensity. The other assortment brings together iconic oils from other parts of Tuscany, including Chianti Classico, Montenero and Pratomagno.

Each 6-bottle assortment has been discounted by more than 10% from our already low prices. Consequently, with these two assortments, you'll end up paying considerably less per bottle than you would for lesser-quality oil from other sources. We're able to do this because we buy directly from the growers and in substantial volumes.

Our ever-popular **Mother Lode** will save you even more: a whopping 21% off our already low individual bottle prices.

As always, each oil was personally selected by us on the

ground in Tuscany in November, during a series of 14-hour days of tasting. This is a ritual we've been loyal to since 1995. It enables us to hand-select the very best pressings from the best olive groves. And in most cases our pressings are available nowhere else in the world.

Every bottle is shipped in our own temperature-controlled container directly from Tuscany to our Bay Area temperature-controlled warehouse.

### Our Guarantee of Quality & Authenticity

Every oil in this year's offer has been vetted to represent the best of the 2018 Tuscan harvest. We chose carefully, and we chose well.

Few American oil merchants can honestly make the claim that their oils are not only 100% estate-grown, they are personally selected by us *in situ* during the harvest, often from individual olive groves.

In contrast, many other merchants and importers don't actually have the chance to taste their oils before buying—often despite claims to the contrary. Instead they accept whatever the producers send them.

At best, these are often a blend of *all* the lots harvested over a 60- to 90-day period, whether they be good or bad. And at worst, the blend will include oil bought from non-estate sources. Such oils will lack both personality and longevity, and they may even be flawed.

With good reason, wine and food writers have consistently praised The Rare Wine Co.'s Tuscan oils as the best, and most fairly-priced, available. And it will never be more true than in the coming months.

On the pages that follow, you will find our selections. Each oil captures the beauty and nobility of Tuscany's ancient olive oil-making tradition. These are very exciting olive oils: buy them with the knowledge that you are buying the year's very best. ■



# Summary of this Year's Offers



## 6-bottle Rufina Assortment

See page 4 for details.

**\$145.00**

reg. \$163.80 [buy](#)



## 6-bottle Chianti & Beyond Assortment

See page 5 for details.

**\$165**

reg. \$183.70 [buy](#)

## Oils Offered Individually



### Franci Grand Cru

See Page 6 for details.

**\$39.95** bt.

[buy](#)



### Carnasciale

See Page 8 for details.

**\$39.95** bt.

[buy](#)



### Selvapiana

See Page 8 for details.

**\$29.95** bt.

[buy](#)



### Il Poggione 3-Pack

Three one-liter bottles

See Page 9 for details.

**\$99.00** 3-pack [buy](#)



### Frascole 2-Pack

See Page 7 for details.

**\$54.95** 2-pack [buy](#)

And for passionate olive oil lovers ...

## The Mother Lode

Save **21%** off our low individual bottle prices.

[buy](#)



**Two x 6-btl Rufina Assortments • Two x 6-btl Chianti Classico & Beyond Assortments**  
**One Il Poggione 3-Pack • 3 btls each of Franci Grand Cru & Carnasciale**  
**3 bonus btls: Vetrice, Frascale Passatoio & Frascale Ventaio • A grand total of **36** btls.**

**Mother Lode Price: \$875.00 • If bought individually: \$1,118.55**

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# The Rufina Assortment

*Terroir* says it all in this 6-bottle set of Rufina gems:



## 1. Selvapiana Vasca #2

This legendary Rufina producer is always in the first rank with its powerful extra virgin oils. This year's offering was harvested during the second half of October and has a medium green color, a nose of citrus zest, lime and mint. Green artichoke, grilled scallions and hot pepper on the palate evolve into a long, complex finish, with amazing persistence. This oil typifies everything we love about great Rufina oil.



## 4. Frascole Passatoio

Passatoio takes its name from the path that joins two small hillside oliveti at 500M elevation. The poor, rocky soil of this area slows the natural olive production of the trees, but the resulting oil has a tension that is truly remarkable. This year's selection, harvested on October 25, is a brilliant green with vibrant notes of artichoke, pea pods and mint. While complete and balanced in the mouth, it finishes with an herbal, spiciness that goes on and on.



## 2. Vetrice Vasca #1

Once again, the Grati family impresses us with their Frantoio-based blend. Benefitting from their providential, high-altitude sites, the oil we selected this year was from one of their first harvests, on October 18. Medium green, this oil is utterly seductive. Compact artichoke and bitter orange flavors on the palate develop salinity and menthol notes in the mouth. The finish is equally complex with hot, spicy notes. A wonderful Tuscan oil.



## 5. Frascole Ventaio

Ventaio is the hillside grove that surrounds the winery, named for the steady wind that blows on this southwest facing slope. This is a drier site than Passatoio, but the soil is deep and, given the exposition, the trees tend to ripen evenly. Ventaio's oil, harvested on October 30, has a sparkling green color and a fresh, floral nose with hints of white jasmine, chlorophyll and pepper. On the palate, this generous oil bursts with Moraiolo character of freshly cut grass and peppermint. The finish is quite spicy, with true depth and persistence.



## 3. Colognole “Mons Iovis” Vasca #2

The Colognole estate dates from the late 1800s, when it was a hunting retreat for wealthy Florentines. In the early 1900s, olive trees and vines were planted. Thanks to the estate's extraordinary altitude—700 meters above sea level—the prized old Frantoio trees not only avoided the spring frost, they also developed lovely aromatics thanks to cool September nights. Our favorite 2018 pressing was that of October 26. It produced an oil boasting aromas of freshly-cut grass and menthol, a creamy palate, and a persistently spicy finish.



## 6. Il Giardino Vasca #2

The Pavi brothers are classic *contadini*, producing organic, unfiltered oils from their family-owned *oliveti* on the Ancona hillsides. Our favorite oil this year is their October 20th *misto*, which melds the sweet, fruitiness of Leccino with the fierce spiciness of Frantoio. The nose features green notes of freshly chopped bitter herbs. Deep and rustic on the palate, the finish is correspondingly long, with a classically peppery finish.

# The Chianti & Beyond Assortment

What you'll find in this 6-bottle set:

## 1. Melograno Misto (Chianti Classico)



The revered Valeria Ronconi laments that there was little to no Frantoio this year due to the early frost at flowering. That said, she is a master in difficult conditions, and her blend of Moraiolo, Leccino and Pendolino is outstanding. Celery green in color, this oil has subtle floral and citrus zest notes in the bouquet. On the palate, the flavors are reminiscent of another time with green *pomme*, chervil and a hint of lanolin. The oil is rich and pungent with a long, peppery finish.

## 2. Castello di Volpaia (Chianti Classico)



The Castello di Volpaia estate is a jewel in the Radda hills. The Mascheroni family tends their 12 hectares of trees organically, harvesting by hand. We are fortunate to be able to hand-select our oil from tiny lots from their highest elevation trees. This is a classic Tuscan oil, with green artichoke and celery flavors accented by nuances of *herbes de provence*. Salinity and bitterness balance the long, spicy finish.

## 3. Sàgona Vasca #3 (Pratomagno)



Our favorite 2018 oil from Sàgona was their Moraiolo-dominated blend harvested between 10/21 and 10/26. Tucked away in the Pratomagno mountains, this estate is among Tuscany's most rugged—with ancient trees growing alongside grapevines, wild herbs and field crops. This diversity shows in this oil's exuberant bouquet of celery and wild artichoke. An oil with deep color and personality, the bold chlorophyll notes are balanced by the palate's richness and white pepper in the finish.

## 4. Franci Villa Magra Vasca #32 (Montenero)



Giorgio Franci's high-elevation *oliveti* are north of Montalcino. Each year, he lets us craft our own blend with just enough Moraiolo and Leccino to give depth, complexity and harmony to the green-edged Frantoio. In 2018, the Frantoio trees were largely spared the frost damage that burned its way across the Chianti zone. And so we were able to choose an October 23rd pressing of 60% Frantoio and 40% Moraiolo from some of Franci's oldest trees. The nose is very spicy with scallion, pepper and wasabi notes. Green artichoke and daikon radish comes through on the palate with a saline edge. Watercress and white pepper return in the long, hot finish.

## 5. Pruneti Moraiolo Vasca #7 (Chianti Classico)



Many consider 2018 The Year of Moraiolo, having benefitted from its later flowering and slightly shorter growing season. The Pruneti brothers pride themselves on being among the best growers of this finicky variety, and they excelled in 2018. This oil has a rich green color and vibrant notes of wheatgrass and freshly chopped parsley. The palate is round and creamy, with warm, radish notes leading to a moderately spicy finish.

## 6. Pruneti Frantoio Vasca #11 (Chianti Classico)



Pruneti's Frantoio Vasca #11 is the biggest and boldest of Gionni and Paolo's 2018 oils. An exquisite green color, and zesty artichoke and pepper notes in the bouquet, help this oil stand out next to any dish. On the palate, spicy watercress flavors carry through on the long, intense finish. An absolute gem of an oil, and a noble survivor of 2018's Frantoio olive devastation.



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# Franci Grand Cru

## Montenero d'Orcio

**V**illa Magra Grand Cru is the crowning achievement of Tuscany's most revered olive grower, Giorgio Franci.

Year after year, in major oil competitions in Italy and abroad, Villa Magra Grand Cru sweeps the field.

Villa Magra Grand Cru is the last oil that Giorgio blends. In the weeks following the harvest, he watches about a dozen tanks that he believes have the potential to be part of the year's Grand Cru blend.

This year's Grand Cru is one of our favorite versions of this oil in our 15 years of importing it. As always, it is rich and full-flavored, but with incredible purity and balance. It has the green artichoke and pepper that is typical of Franci's oils, and it has the depth and concentration that can only come from old Frantoio trees. The palate wows with its size and complexity.

We suspect that this year's oil judgments will again choose the 2018 Grand Cru Italy's top oil—just as they always have in the past.

### Giorgio Franci

If there's a superstar in Tuscan oil, it is Giorgio Franci. From childhood, Giorgio was groomed to take over his father's *frantoio* south of Montalcino. But unlike other young Tuscans in a similar position, he gravitated to the world of food and wine that existed outside Tuscany.

He hung out with elite winemakers and chefs and came to understand the concept of *terroir*. He learned that superior technique can make the difference between mediocre and transcendent, and he acquired the skill to blend and taste like a great winemaker. Since his first harvest in 1995—coincidentally our first year importing Tuscan oil—he's become Italy's most revered oil maker.

Each year, we look forward to our visit with Giorgio, not only to see what wonders have come out of his state-of-the-art presses, but we also relish his take on the year's harvest, which is one of the region's best-informed.

As Giorgio's global following grows, consider yourself fortunate to have direct access to his greatest oil. **Two-bottle limit.**

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**Franci Villa Magra  
Grand Cru**  
**\$39.95 500ml**

[buy](#)

This year's Grand Cru bears the hallmark grace we associate with Giorgio's oils. Remarkably complete, this pure Frantoio oil stands out with its amazing texture and depth of flavor. The nose is classic Frantoio with chlorophyll, artichoke and freshly cut grass. Big, dense and mouth filling, the complexity of flavors grows with the long, peppery finish. One of the greats ... and deservedly sought-after.



# The Frascaole Grand Crus

## *Single-Grove Oils from a Superb Rufina Estate*

Frascole is one of our more recent discoveries, having joined our oil portfolio with the 2015 harvest. On our first visit to the estate in November of that year, we immediately fell in love, not only with Frascaole's oil, but with the Lippi family who owns this historic estate.

Each year, we return to taste; and each year, we're knocked out by their oil. Unfortunately, production is tiny, and so we have to plead for as much as they'll give us. That was again the case in 2018, a year of beautiful oil here.

In fact, the 2018 Frascaole oils were so good, we asked the Lippi's to not blend the oil from their two best groves, Passatoio and Ventaio. We asked that the oils be bottled separately for us. And so, for the first time ever, we can offer single-cru oils from these two remarkable *oliveti*.

We're pleased to offer them not only on their own as a two-pack, but as part of our even more heavily discounted Rufina Assortment.

### The Setting

Frascole is tucked away in the hills above the town of Dicomano, in Rufina's Mugello Valley. These hills have been farmed for millennia. The ancient Etruscans originally settled the area, establishing it as a valuable strategic and agricultural site. The Romans then arrived 300 years later, building large, mixed-agriculture estates with grapes, olives and field crops. As for the Frascaole estate, some buildings have survived from at least the Middle Ages.

Frascole has been in the Lippi family for three generations, and they continue to nurture the property's history of mixed agriculture, still farming crops like fava beans, barley and oats, whose pollination is believed to be crucial to making great organic olive oil. Wildlife abounds in this idyllic spot, and wild boar are routinely seen grazing on grapes and olives left after the harvest. Their olive trees are a classic mix of 65% Frantoio, 20% Moraiolo, 10% Leccino and 5% Pendolino.

### The Harvest

The 2018 growing season was picture-perfect here. The

weather remained relatively cool until the end of June. It was a warm July, and unlike the last few years there were no problems of excessive heat or drought. August and September were relatively dry, though, which sped up ripening and increased yields. With such perfect conditions, the Lippi's were able to begin their harvest in mid-October, and both of our oils were harvested well before the November rains.

### The Oils

**Passatoio** takes its name from the path that joins two small hillside *oliveti* at a 500-meter elevation. The poor, cobble soil of this area slows the natural olive production of the trees, but the resulting oil has a tension that is truly remarkable. This year's selection from Passatoio was harvested on October 25th. It is a brilliant green with vibrant notes of artichoke and mint. While complete and balanced in the mouth, it finishes with an herbal spiciness that goes on and on.

**Ventaio** is the hillside grove that surrounds the winery, named for the steady wind that blows on this southwest facing slope. This is a drier site than Passatoio, but the soil is deep and, given the exposition, the trees tend to ripen evenly. Ventaio's 2018 oil, harvested on October 30th, has a sparkling green color and fresh, fruity nose with hints of white jasmine, chlorophyll and pepper. On the palate, this oil is generous and bursting with freshly-cut grass and peppermint. The finish is quite spicy with notable depth and persistence.



### The Grand Crus of Frascaole 2018

*1 500ml bottle each of  
Passatoio & Ventaio*

**\$54.95 2-pack**

[buy](#)

Orders received by noon PST on Friday 3/15 will ship the week of 3/18.



# Two Great Oils Available Individually

## Carnasciale

Carnasciale's proprietors, Bettina and Moritz Rogosky, not only produce Il Caberlot, the legendary Super Tuscan. They also make one of the region's iconic extra virgin olive oils.

The tiny amount of beautifully crafted oil comes from the 500 trees that have survived on the property since the 1860s. This was more than a century before the first Caberlot vines were planted.

Most of the surviving trees are of the Frantoio variety. Fortunately, the estate's high-altitude spared the trees any damage from last year's frost, allowing Carnasciale to make one of the year's few glorious Frantoio-based oils, drawing on olives harvested in late October.

In its distinctive ceramic bottle, the 2018

edition has all the elegance and character we associate with this perennial favorite.

### Il Carnasciale

**\$39.95 500ml** [buy](#)

Carnasciale's 2018 extra virgin is a quintessential blend of Frantoio, Leccino and Moraiolo olives. It may have the deepest color of any of our 2018 oils. The nose is packed with scents of chives, freshly cut hay and lime zest, while the palate is classically cool, reflecting the high level of polyphenols in the oil. The long and spicy finish confirms the oil's pedigree of a high-altitude *terroir* and an early harvest.



## Selvapiana

*Also available in the Rufina Set*

Each year, we anxiously await our Selvapiana visit. It's an important estate to visit early, not only because it's among our favorites, but because it's often feast or famine.

Perhaps two or three years a decade, Selvapiana has no oil to sell us, because of poor harvest conditions. That happened twice recently, in 2012 and 2014. But in other years, like 2018, Selvapiana enjoys a healthy crop of well-colored, intensely aromatic and flavorful olive oil. It underscores just how important micro-climate is to Tuscan olive growers.

When Selvapiana nails it, their oils are among the best. And the 2018 is a classic Selvapiana extra virgin—heaven-made for bruschetta, fetunta and fresh mozzarella.

Buy it on its own or as part of our incredibly well-priced 2018 Rufina Assortment.

### Selvapiana

**\$29.95 500ml** [buy](#)

This legendary Rufina producer is always in the first rank with its powerful extra virgin oils. This year's offering was harvested during the second half of October and has a medium green color, a nose of citrus zest, lime and mint. On the palate, artichoke, grilled scallions and hot pepper evolve into a long, complex finish, with amazing persistence. This oil typifies everything we love about great Rufina oil.





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# The Il Poggione 3-Pack

**A**mong all of our oil estates, our history with Il Poggione is the longest, dating back 34 years, to 1985. And since 1995, Il Poggione's wonderful olive oil has been a staple of our portfolio, offering a price-quality rapport that is unparalleled.

The estate was heavily impacted by the spring frost that ravaged Frantoio trees in the region. As a result yields were only half normal levels.

But it could have been even worse. Two winters earlier, in 2016, the estate performed a strict tree pruning, to get more of their very old trees into a classic "vaso" shape, for better air circulation and more even ripening.

The pruning couldn't save this year's Frantoio crop, but it did help the trees survive the frost—preventing the kind of destruction visited on Southern Italy.

Meanwhile, the estate's old Moraiolo trees thrived, as they flower later. And so, the oil

we selected was a blend of very old Moraiolo trees that dot the Il Poggione landscape.

Il Poggione's extra virgin oils have always been a bargain in their one-liter bottle, and that continues to be the case. Stock up!

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## 2018 Il Poggione Cisterne #1 \$99.00 3-pack

*3 one-liter bottles* [buy](#)

This predominantly Moraiolo blend is fresh, green and generous, easily making friends with a variety of foods from simply grilled bread to pasta e fagioli to bistecca fiorentina. Freshly chopped parsley and thyme are accented with salinity and spice, which carry through on the long, savory finish. In its 1-liter bottle, this is arguably the single greatest value in Tuscan extra virgin olive oil, as it has been for the past quarter century.



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**All olive oil orders will ship separately from wine orders.**

**All orders received by noon PST, Friday March 15th  
will ship the week of March 18th.**

**Orders received after Friday will ship  
within two business days of receipt.**

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# The Differences Between Good & Great

Just as subtle differences in grape source and vinification can profoundly influence the quality of a wine, there are factors that separate great olive oils from merely good ones. Here are the most important of them.

**Microclimates:** Olive oil is produced throughout the Mediterranean, but many feel that the greatest oils of all are produced in Tuscany's interior hills—from old trees in poor soil and cool microclimates.

While coastal Tuscany produces some of the region's greatest wines, we believe that interior olive groves typically produce better oil. So, long ago we restricted our search for great oils to areas well away from the sea.

**Ripeness:** The time of harvest is crucial, with the best Tuscan oils made from olives that are harvested in October or early November, while many are still green. Olives at this stage of ripeness produce an oil with a green color and intense flavors of artichoke and freshly cut grass.

These “early-harvest” oils also have extraordinary structure—plus the ability to withstand the four enemies of olive oil: age, heat, light and air. In fact, a good early-harvest oil, if properly stored, can easily keep for two years, and often even longer. In contrast, most commercially available olive oils (including many expensive ones) already show noticeable deterioration six months after the harvest.

The explanation is that early-harvest olives have substantially more antioxidants. Consequently, Tuscan olive oils that have a greenish color hold up much better after opening, maintaining their fresh aromas and flavors.

So, why not harvest all the olives early and produce only great oil? The answer is “time and money.” Most growers prefer to wait until the olives offer little resistance and can either be swept from the trees or fall to the ground on their own.

Early picking also produces much less oil from the same weight of olives. Our growers often obtain only one to two liters of olive oil per tree; the big commercial olive oil producers, who harvest later, can produce many times that amount from a single tree.

“Surely the best  
American source for  
fine Tuscan olive oil.”

*Ed Behr, The Art of Eating,  
on The Rare Wine Co.*

**Speed of Pressing:** It is crucial that the fruit arrive at the *frantoio* (the press house) speedily and unbruised. Otherwise, the olives will oxidize and develop a high level of oleic acid.

The International Olive Oil Council (IOOC) has adopted oleic acid as a standard measure of quality; a high percentage indi-

cates overripeness, damage or that olives have sat around too long before pressing. The IOOC permits the “Extra Virgin” label only if an oil has less than one gram of free acidity, expressed as oleic acid, per 100 grams of oil (one percent).

In fact, top Tuscan oils have a fraction of the permitted level of oleic acid. This is due to their early harvest and the great care that goes into making them.

**Method of Extraction:** Olive pressing basics have changed little in recent years: the entire olive (skin, pulp and pit) is crushed, ground and worked into a paste. The oil is extracted from this paste, exposing it to as little heat and oxygen as possible. But while the essentials haven't changed much, many improvements have been made to the processing equipment, to obtain purer, cleaner oil, with a high level of polyphenols and a minimum of oxidation.

**Age:** Top Tuscan oils have a window of optimum usability that is greater than for other oils—and they can often age for several years when well stored. In estimating ageability, look to variables such as pepperiness, green color and depth of flavor in the young oil. Generally, the more intense these characteristics, the better the prospects for extended aging.

**Keeping Oil Fresh:** Great Tuscan oils withstand heat and light better than other oils, but they still deteriorate if abused. Unopened bottles should be stored in a cool, dark place like a wine cellar. Once opened, they are best kept in a cool, dark cupboard away from the stove. Following these rules, your oils will remain fresh and vibrant.



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# Tuscan Olive Oil & Food

One of the many popular misconceptions about olive oil is that it is best used for frying and salad dressings. True, the destiny of cheap oils may be to fry with, and the métier of light oils is to dress a salad. But a rich, aromatic top-rank Tuscan oil has a higher calling.



Great Tuscan olive oils come into their own when drizzled over foods, especially if the foods are warm. While fine Tuscan oils are wonderful for frying or sautéing, pouring a great oil over something warm magnifies its aromas, unleashing all of its power. Perhaps the most classic use for extra virgin olive oil is *fettunta*—grilled bread, drizzled with oil and served warm. (Before drizzling the oil, it is common to rub the bread with a garlic clove; the bread's warmth melts the garlic.)

Even applying Tuscan oil to cold foods can be a sybaritic experience. Take something as simple as fresh mozzarella bathed in a rich Tuscan oil, seasoned just with salt and freshly ground pepper. Add some crusty bread to sop up the cheese-infused oil and ... Mamma mia!

The Tuscans understand intuitively how to use their oils, and many of their methods are amazingly simple. For example, they drizzle their *olio* over grilled fish or meat; gently-cooked white beans or chick peas; raw vegetables like sliced fennel or baby artichokes; steamed asparagus; bruschetta of fresh tomato, basil and minced garlic; fava beans with pecorino cheese; and any hearty, thick soup.

For more uses of Tuscan extra virgin oil, consult any good Tuscan or Italian cookbook.

Orders received by noon PST on Friday March 15rd  
will ship the week of March 18th.

## A Labor of Love

“A top source of extremely fine Tuscan olive oils.” Matt Kramer on The Rare Wine Co.

Our awakening to the glories of great Tuscan oil came in the mid-1980s, when we had dinner one April night at the venerable Montalcino estate, Il Poggione.

They were rightly proud of their extra virgin olive oil, encouraging us to pour it on every dish short of dessert. It was exhilarating. We dipped and drizzled with abandon: over the thick Tuscan soup, on fennel bulbs, over the grilled meat, and on thick slices of toasted bread.

We didn't realize at the time that we were enjoying a precious commodity, as great Tuscan oil can only be made from tiny yields, and by harvesting early. A

tree in the hills near Florence—harvested in November—may yield only a liter of olive oil. Compare this to the commercially farmed trees along Tuscany's coast—harvested much later—which produce 20+ liters of oil per tree.

After our experience at Il Poggione, we were shocked to discover just how difficult it was to find comparable oils in the United States. Even the expensive oils available here didn't come close to matching Il Poggione's. In fact, most of the oils we found were tired, the result of being too old or improperly stored. We were also frustrated by the fact that few labels revealed the olive source or year of production.

We took matters into our own hands. Beginning in 1995, we began importing our own selections. Each November, we taste on site, before the oils are blended—selecting pressings that offer the most character, structure and balance.

We also have the trade's strictest standards: offering only ruthlessly selected single-estate oils, providing clear and informative labels, shipping under strict temperature control, and offering the new oils as soon as they are pressed and bottled.

If we've become America's best source for Tuscan olive oil, these are the reasons why.

We are not responsible for typographical errors. All items and prices subject to availability.  
Request a copy of our terms of sale or read them at [www.rarewineco.com](http://www.rarewineco.com). © 2019 The Rare Wine Co.