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SPRING 2020

Q&A

Ask the Chef

Three professional chefs answer your questions on food prep, cooking and recipes.

Q What is the difference between extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO) and olive oil?

A: EVOO comes from an unrefined "cold" pressing of the olive, without heat or chemicals. It is naturally richer in vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals, and it has a low oleic-acid (free fatty acid) content. Its aroma is more robust, and its hue is a vivid green or gold. The taste can be described as fruity, with distinctive, spicy black-pepper notes. Given the complexity of sensations and a relatively low smoke point, EVOO is usually used in salad dressings or for finishing a hot or cold dish with a drizzle or two. But it's fine to use for baking or a quick sauté.

In comparison, pure or light olive oil undergoes a refined, heat-treated and chemically extracted pressing. The processing increases oleic-acid content, decreases health benefits, and sacrifices aroma, color and taste. However, its smoke point is much higher, so it can be used as an all-purpose vegetable oil for cooking. In other words, it's an easy plant-based substitute for baking and cooking.

Chef Adam Sacks is a chef instructor and sports dietitian at Johnson & Wales' College of Culinary Arts in Denver, where he specializes in therapeutic/functional, plant-based and high-performance cuisines. He has also cooked for top-level athletes at two Olympic Games. Visit his Instagram @JWU.vegucuisine.



Adam Sacks

Q My kids love quiche, but I'm trying to avoid eggs. What is a good replacement?

A: Creating an egg-free quiche is easy and delicious! Start by draining 1 block (about 15 ounces) of extra-firm tofu. Break the tofu into chunks, and add to a blender, with 3 tablespoons nondairy milk, 2 teaspoons tamari, 1 teaspoon ground turmeric, 2 teaspoons olive oil, and any other dried herbs or spices you like. Blend until smooth, transfer to a bowl, and fold in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of shredded, nondairy cheese. Stir in extras like chopped onions, peppers, spinach or mushrooms. Pour the tofu mixture into a partially baked and cooled 9-inch piecrust. (For gluten-free, crustless quiche, pour the tofu mixture directly into a generously oiled 9-inch pie plate.) Bake at 350° for 35 to 45 minutes, until quiche starts to crack. Let cool 20 minutes. Carefully slice into wedges (quiche will be soft when warm), or refrigerate 6 hours and serve cold (quiche will firm up, once chilled).

Laura Theodore is a celebrity vegan chef and award-winning cookbook author. She is also co-creator of the Jazzy Vegetarian cooking series on public television and host of Jazzy Vegetarian Radio, a weekly podcast on Unity Online Radio. Her latest cookbook is Vegan for Everyone (Scribe, 2020).



Laura Theodore

Q If I'm cooking plant-based, what are the most important pantry staples to keep on hand?

A: These are my go-to items: **Legumes.** From black beans and chickpeas to red, green and black lentils, legumes can become the basis for many plant-based meals. Home-cooked beans will taste best, but canned are great for convenience. Lentils cook quickly and can be added to soups, salads and curries. **Grains.** Black and red rice, quinoa, and millet are full of fiber and protein and can be paired with veggies and dressings for an easy, satisfying meal.

Nuts/seeds/dried fruit. Nuts can be turned into plant-based cheeses; chia seeds can be used in place of eggs as a binding agent; raisins and cranberries give a subtle sweetness when needed.

Nutritional yeast. Savory and cheesy, it provides an added layer of umami richness to soups and stews and is especially good for

homemade kale chips and popcorn.

Tahini. A necessity when making hummus. Plus, it's a great base for dressings and sauces.

Spices. Cumin, curry powder, chili powder, garlic and onion powders, and dried oregano make meals come to life.

Maple syrup. A natural sweetener that is great for baking, as well as sauces and dressings.

Chef Meredith Haaz at The Ranch 4.0 at Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village in California is co-author of Food Food Food, a plant-based cookbook hitting shelves this spring.



Meredith Haaz



Have a cooking-related question? We have chefs who can help! Send your questions to editor@livenaturallymagazine.com.