

Recipes from *The Last Chance Olive Ranch*

From haute cuisine to robust peasant suppers, olive oil is an essential ingredient in all kinds of recipes. But it's important to obtain the best and freshest oil you can find. Experts tell us that olive oil should be used within two years of its pressing; after that, the healthful nutrients are damaged, the flavor deteriorates, and the oil becomes more acidic. Extra virgin olive oil can last longer because it has a lower acidity to start with. If you can, buy your olive oil fresh from a grower or a specialty retailer with a high turnover, and choose a bottle from the darkest corner of the shelf. In your kitchen, store it on a cool, dry, dark shelf, away from the heat of your stove, and retire it to other uses when it's no longer at its flavorful best. You'll find a list of other uses for olive oil at the end of the recipe section.

Chunky Gazpacho

Gazpacho is a soup (usually with a tomato base) made of raw vegetables and herbs and served cold. It originated in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia. It is widely eaten in Spain and Portugal. As a summer soup, it is refreshing and cool.

1 large can (28 oz.) stewed tomatoes, undrained
1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
1 cup chopped cucumber, peeled and seeded
1/2 cup chopped red onion
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/4 cup sliced pimento-stuffed green olives
1/4 cup fresh arugula, chopped
1/4 cup fresh parsley, finely chopped
1/4 cup fresh basil, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoons lemon juice
1 teaspoon soy sauce (or more to taste)
salt and pepper

In a glass bowl, combine tomatoes with the rest of the ingredients. Stir well, breaking up tomatoes. Cover and refrigerate for at least 24 hours and as long as 3 days. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve cold. Serves 4.

Sofia's Lemon and Olive Oil Dressing

1 tablespoon salt
3 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Using a mortar and pestle (or the back of a heavy spoon and a small, sturdy bowl), make a paste of the salt and minced garlic. In a 1-cup lidded container, blend lemon juice and olive oil. Add the salt and garlic mixture and put on the lid. Shake well. Use as a dressing for fresh greens, sprinkling optional grated Parmesan or lemon zest on top of salad before tossing

Marinated Olives

- 1 1/2 cups black olives
- 1 1/2 cups green olives
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 4 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons dried rosemary
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
- 1 tablespoon grated orange peel
- 1/2 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper

Mix all ingredients in a large bowl with a cover. Refrigerate for at least 1 day and up to a week, stirring occasionally. Let stand for 1 hour at room temperature before serving.

Cornish Game Hens with Mushroom and Herb Stuffing

- 2 Cornish game hens
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Stuffing

- 1 cup wild rice
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 10 fresh Chanterelle (or your favorite) mushrooms, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup green onions, chopped
- 2 tablespoons dried rosemary, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Sprinkle the Cornish hens inside and out with salt and pepper and set aside. Cook the rice according to the directions on the package. Heat 2 tablespoons of butter in a medium skillet. Add the mushrooms, garlic, and green onions and sauté for 5 minutes or so. Add the rosemary and thyme and mix well. Add the mushroom-onion-herb mixture to the rice and blend. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stuff each hen with the rice and mushroom mixture and tie the legs together with string. Brush the birds with olive oil. Bake until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees F (40-45 minutes), basting occasionally. Let the hens sit for 5-10 minutes before cutting the string and serving.

Andrea's Lemon Olive Oil Cake

Yes, you can use olive oil in a cake! This rustic cake is light and lemony—and extra lovely with a bit of lemon verbena. If you don't have that herb in your garden, try one of the other lemon herbs: lemon thyme, lemon balm, or lemon basil. For the oil, you can use either extra-virgin, regular, or light olive oil. Extra-virgin yields a stronger flavor.

- 1 cup flour
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh lemon verbena leaves (can be omitted)

- 4 large eggs, separated

3/4 cup sugar (divided into 1/2 cup and 1/4 cup portions)
3/4 cup olive oil
1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon salt

For glaze:

2 cups sifted powdered sugar
2-3 tablespoons lemon juice
Thin Lemon slices for garnish

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9" springform pan with cooking spray. (If you don't have a springform pan, a 9"x13" glass oven dish will do.) In a small bowl, mix flour, lemon zest, and lemon verbena and set aside. With an electric mixer, in a large bowl, beat together egg yolks and 1/2 cup sugar until thick and pale, about 3 minutes. Add olive oil and lemon juice, beating until just combined (mixture may appear slightly curdled). Using a spatula, fold in flour mixture until just combined.

In a separate large bowl, beat egg whites with 1/2 teaspoon salt until foamy, then gradually add 1/4 cup sugar. Continue to beat until egg whites just hold soft peaks, about 3 minutes. Gently fold egg whites into the egg yolk mixture, one third at a time. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake until golden and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, 30-35 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes, then remove the sides of the springform pan and cool completely. Cool completely, then remove bottom of pan and transfer to a serving plate.

For glaze, mix lemon juice and powdered sugar. Pour over cooled cake. Garnish with twisted lemon slices. This cake keeps well for several days.

China's Rosemary Focaccia

Focaccia is a flat Italian peasant bread, rather like a very thick pizza crust. For toppings, you can use onions, cheese, meat, or chopped veggies.

1 (1/4 ounce) package active dry yeast
3/4 cup warm water
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons finely minced fresh rosemary
coarse salt

In a large bowl, dissolve the yeast in 1/2 cup of the warm water, and let sit 10 minutes until bubbly. Add flour, salt, and warm remaining water. Mix thoroughly with a wooden spoon and then your hands.

Transfer to a floured work surface and knead until smooth (3-4 minutes). Place in an oiled bowl, cover with a damp towel, and let rise until doubled, about 1 1/2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Punch dough down and place on an oiled baking sheet, forming into a rectangle about 9x13". Press your fingertips into the surface to create dimples, then drizzle with the oil and sprinkle with coarse salt and rosemary. Bake about 20 minutes or until golden. Serves four—okay to double.

Cass' Apple-Pecan Crisp

Olive oil—especially a mild-flavored variety—can be substituted for butter or margarine in most recipes for baked foods. It goes well with fruit, especially citrus, and chocolate. Here is a basic substitution guide:

- 1/4 cup plus 2 tbsp. of olive oil for 1/2 cup of butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup of olive oil for 2/3 cup of butter
- 3/4 cup plus 1 tbsp. of olive oil for 1 cup of butter

Apple Filling:

2 1/2 pounds apples (about 6)
4 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon flour
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 cup brown sugar

Crisp topping:

1 cup flour
1/2 cup rolled oats
1/3 cup brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup olive oil
1/2 cup chopped pecans (you can substitute walnuts or almonds)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Peel and core the apples. Slice thin. Combine in a bowl with the lemon juice, flour, cinnamon, allspice, ginger and sugar. Spread the apple mixture in an oiled 12-inch baking dish.

To make the crisp topping: Combine the flour, oats, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt in a bowl. Add the olive oil and stir with a fork until the mixture is crumbly. Stir in the chopped pecans.

To assemble and bake: Spread the crisp the topping mixture on the filling and pat it down gently. (The filling will shrink during baking.) Bake until topping is golden and filling bubbles, about 50 minutes. Serve hot or cold.