



Greetings to all of our olive-oil loving friends from busy Chianti!

We are glad to report that Lady Summer has made up for her rather shaky (and very wet) start by lavishing upon us lots and lots of very welcome sunshine! Therefore we are confidently looking forward to an extremely good harvest this year, which should eventually translate into some truly outstanding oil! Of course our standard is always high, but when nature is as generous as she's been so far the result might be truly spectacular. Just make sure you don't miss it – order now! As you know we always ship the new oil by the beginning of

December, and since quantities are limited we might not be able to accommodate latecomers. Please do order early and remember that our unique olive oil makes a wonderful Christmas present for your friends and family so be generous!



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Want to watch our olives grow? Look us up on Google Earth!
Search "Pornanino" or put our Coordinates: N 43° 27.226', E 11° 20.658'

We'd love to hear from you! Here's our email address oliveoil@chiantionline.com

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Pornanino's olive grove diary

The alarm clock is set to go off any day now. With a near-perfect season so far, Matteo has high hopes for this year's harvest. Everything plays out over the next few weeks, though, and the stakes are high.



It's actually more of an orange alert as yet. Taking into account the last several years, Matteo predicts that the olives won't be ripe for picking until the last week of October, at the earliest. But he also knows how important it is to plan ahead; with little time to spare, operations must run as smoothly as a well-oiled (you bet!) machine. Everyone is ready to spring into action. Together with Matteo and his (extended!) family there will be a plethora of friends and acquaintances who join in for a day or two for the fun of it. They all actually seem to enjoy toiling in the fields – city bred people, go figure them!

For the time being, though, things are still on hold as Matteo prowls the slopes, peering intently at his beloved trees, squeezing and prodding the olives to gauge how long it will take for them to reach just the exact degree of ripeness he's looking for. This is really important, because if you pick them

too early the oil content will be low and the flavor harsh and bitter, but if you wait too long natural oxidation will have set in – you get more oil, but lose on flavor and shelf life. It's a matter of striking the right balance, and always bearing in mind the golden rule of olive oil making: high quality olive oil comes from perfect olives.

By October, with the worse of summer heat gone, bearing away the risk of hailstorms, all Matteo has to do is replenish the soil with nutrients and keep an eye on the olives. Once they're ripe they will cling to the tree for about two weeks before dropping to the ground of their own accord. People once used to drape nets under the trees to catch them, or beat the branches with wooden poles and then raked up the fallen fruit. So much easier, right? Unfortunately the quality of the olives is impaired if they are left too long on the tree – and you only get high quality olive oil from perfect olives. So how do we know when the time is right to pick them?

Well, olives are technically called drupes – fruits with a stone, just like prunes or peaches. And just like them, they gradually change color and get softer to the touch. Now, olives come in many different varieties (in Italy we grow over 470 cultivars). All of them are green most of their life, even those that will turn black when completely ripe. Matteo, who grows four different varieties, has learnt by experience how to read the signs. Remember, he wants his olives slightly unripe. So he checks every day, noticing how the purplish tinge darkens to blue-black, and the acid green mellows to a deep, golden hue. Waiting for the right time. Aiming for perfection.

Which is very nice, but so much HARD work! It's hell, granted, but you can't expect magic to be effortless, can you? We feel deeply privileged being allowed to help Nature work its wonders, and wouldn't want it any other way.

Would you like to do your share? Then just order a plentiful supply of our wonderful Pornanino new oil, brush a few slices of freshly toasted bread with our green gold and enjoy! So much work but well worth it, don't you agree? Mmm, yes. Definitely. ♦

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Chianti through the seasons

Most people travel to Tuscany in the summer. And miss the subtle charm of the offseasons.

Of course visiting the Chianti area during the summer months makes perfect sense. While it can be hot during the day, evenings are pleasantly cool - just perfect for an al fresco dinner. And you'll never have problems sleeping like a baby, even though air-conditioning is unheard of outside of the fancier hotels. Houses are still made of thick stones, which keep out the heat so that inside it's always fresh. Also, you can count on extra long daylight hours and the cheerful bustle of fellow travelers to spice things up a bit in the usually sleepy little towns. On the down side, though, it can get a little too crowded at times.



So let's have a look at the pros and cons of planning a trip to Chianti in the off-season. Autumn is a personal favorite of ours, and a time when there's a lot going on. With most of the tourists gone, people get down to the serious business of producing wine and olive oil, as they have been doing for countless generations since well before the area became an international attraction. October is harvest time for grapegrowers and an anxious time at that, since a whole year's toiling in the fields could be wasted if it rains too much before the bunches have been brought in. A hailstorm could spell disaster, but rot and mould can be just as harmful. Yet harvesting too soon would result in inferior wine, so it really is a gamble and it's no wonder that when it's over, whole communities celebrate with centuries-old country fairs.

In November the spotlight is trained on the olive groves, with truly hectic activity going on to pick, press and bottle the new oil as quickly as possible. Then, when the job is done, peace descends on the countryside as people anticipate the coming of Christmas. Autumn in Tuscany is a wonderful time, with crystal clear skies and the most beautiful fall colors turning the woods all shades of gold. It's a season for connoisseurs who shy away from the summer crowds and just perfect to soak up the ageless mystique of the place, undisturbed. When dusk begins to gather, shrouded in mist, you can do as the natives do and contemplate the pleasures of life in front of the fireplace, with roasted chestnuts and a glass of Chianti wine.

Despite shrinking daylight hours and plummeting temperatures, Chianti in December is guaranteed to make you feel as if you'd just stepped into a living nativity scene, as farmhouses and villages up and down the hills all light up in preparation for Christmas. There are many Christmas markets offering local foodstuff and handicrafts, and it's worth having a look around the churches to compare the presepi, as crèches are called in Italian. This is a much older tradition than Christmas trees and Santa. Some nativity scenes are as elaborate as miniature villages, with flowing streams and waterfalls, moving figurines, houses, workshops, cobbled little streets. Since most churches in Chianti have been around for a thousand years, it's not uncommon for them to harbour very ancient presepi.

To be quite honest we don't feel we can recommend January and February, as everything just seems to go to sleep (including people). Also, most dirt roads are likely to be frozen over, which makes driving around neither safe nor pleasant - there are quite a number of dirt roads in Chianti ... Things definitely pick up around Easter. Easter holidays are a favorite for Italians, who by this time have done enough hibernating and are looking forward to being outside in the sunshine. May is just gorgeous, with the countryside awash in a thousand shades of green and wild flowers blooming away like mad. It's the perfect time for a hike and you really shouldn't miss it if you plan to walk or bike it, particularly since from mid-June onward it can get uncomfortably hot, and dusty on the dirt roads. ♦

Click to order now ►►



Ordering Pormanino Extra Virgin Olive Oil: how it works

You've never ordered our wonderful olive oil before and you'd like to know how it works? Then read on, and hopefully we'll have the pleasure of welcoming you into the selected ranks of our Pormanino friends. If you are an old hand have a look anyway: you might discover something new!

Let us explain. In an ideal world olive oil should be the golden fluid that comes out of the crushed fruit of the olive tree. These days, with world demand hitting the ceiling, most of the stuff that's marketed as "first cold pressed extra virgin olive oil" is either inferior grade or not exactly what it claims to be. Which doesn't necessarily mean it will make you ill, unless you've come across a downright scam – and there are quite a few around. Quite simply, most commercial olive oil has been processed and refined to the point that it's no longer the precious gift from nature it's supposed to be.

Imagine the difference between a canned orange drink and a freshly squeezed juice. It's not really the same, is it? And the taste is not the same, either. Tradition teaches us that olive oil, the genuine article, is beneficial to our health in several ways, and modern science has confirmed it. Of course it won't do your waistline any good if you are not careful, like any other fat, but taken in moderation it will make your body happy. And your taste buds too! But it needs to be the genuine article, because the heat and chemicals used for industrial processing will spoil both the flavor and vitamins, even assuming that the quality of the olives it was made from was adequate.



Perfect oil comes from perfect olives. Matteo started making oil as a hobby, having retired to a neglected estate in the heart of the Chianti region of Tuscany. And he soon vowed he would do things by the book, even if it cost more in terms of hard work and expenses. He doesn't use any chemicals and tends to his groves himself, with the help of his family. And when autumn comes, they harvest by hand and cold-press the olives themselves and bottle the oil within a few days, working non-stop to make sure that neither the olives nor the new oil are left lying around too long to oxidise – which is a nicer way of saying "spoil".

In Tuscany olives are usually harvested sometime in November and the "new oil" is greeted with much the same enthusiasm as a newborn. The proud possessors of a few olive trees (most of the population) take their crops to communal mills to crush and then discuss the merits of the vintage of the year against past years,

as if it were wine. Unless it's been tampered with, natural olive oil will change over time. It starts peppery and sharp and stronger and then mellows as it matures. Just like vintage wine. If you pay attention, you'll see it changes colour slightly as the chlorophyll slowly subsides.

This is why we ship it out as soon as it's bottled. We like all of our friends to enjoy the thrill of the new oil as Italians have been doing for countless generations, savouring the green, earthy flavour of a juice so freshly squeezed that you can still faintly taste the sap. And we want you to be able to appreciate the subtle changes as it matures and mellows. Just treat it right: don't leave it exposed to air, sunlight and heat. Keep the bottle well corked up in a cool, dark place and use it up within 2 years. If you have some left don't throw it away, though, as all it will have lost is flavor and vitamins. Use it for frying instead.

Now you know why we usually ship our olive oil once a year, at the beginning of December – in time for Christmas. But this means you only have this one chance to order your yearly supply, as by January it might well be sold out! We have a tiny production since everything is done by hand, and we are very proud that the community of Pormanino olive oil lovers is growing all the time.

So please order your olive oil now, as we would really hate it if you couldn't get it later on. We've been working hard to give you some truly amazing olive oil this year. Don't you dare miss it! ♦

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Grandma Lia's olive oil recipes

Wish you were here to celebrate the harvest season with us in our Chianti paradise! If you can't make it on time, though, don't despair. Just don your apron, dive into the kitchen and cook the perfect Tuscan feast for your friends and family. For starters, thank heaven for the good things in life with a glass of Chianti wine and lots of crisp bruschettas drizzled with the zesty, feisty, freshly pressed 2021 Pornanino extra virgin olive oil!

Ribollita (serves 6)

- ✓ Half a white cabbage
- ✓ Half a Savoy cabbage
- ✓ Black cabbage (6 leaves)
- ✓ 1 onion
- ✓ 2 spring onions
- ✓ 1 celery stalk
- ✓ 1 carrot
- ✓ a handful of flat leaf parsley
- ✓ a handful of basil
- ✓ 2 medium-sized tomatoes
- ✓ 1 can cannellini beans
- ✓ 8 slices of bread
- ✓ Pornanino Extra Virgin Olive Oil



Wash the vegetables. Chop the onion and spring onions, slice the carrots and celery. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a pan (earthenware is best) and brown the vegetables. Wash the tomatoes, peel and roughly chop them. Wash and slice the cabbage. Add to cooking vegetables, season with salt and pepper, cover with water and simmer over a very low heat for about one hour, adding more water if necessary. Drain the canned beans, puré half of them and stir into the simmering soup (you can use fresh or dried beans if you prefer. Separately boil them, reserving their cooking liquid for the ribollita instead of using water). Just before taking the soup off the heat add the reserved whole beans, as well as the chopped parsley and basil. Toast the bread slices. Line the bottom of a tureen with 4 toasted bread slices and cover with half the soup. Drizzle generously with olive oil. Layer the remaining toasted bread on top and finish with the remaining soup and another drizzle of olive oil. Leave overnight if possible and reheat before serving. If the sauce looks too thin reduce it by boiling fast.

Castagnaccio/Chestnut cake (Makes a 10 in round tin)

- ✓ 11 oz chestnut flour
- ✓ 2 oz sugar
- ✓ a pinch of salt
- ✓ 2 tbs of Pornanino Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ✓ 2 cups water
- ✓ ¼ cup raisins
- ✓ ¼ cup pine nuts
- ✓ 1 sprig of rosemary



Set the oven to moderate, about 350° F. Put the chestnut flour, sugar and a pinch of salt in a bowl and gradually add the water and extra virgin olive oil, stirring all the time.

You should get a thinnish, smooth batter. If it looks too thick add a little water. Dust the raisins with flour and incorporate into the mix.

Lightly grease a baking tin with the extra virgin olive oil, pour in the chestnut mix and scatter on top of it the pine nuts and rosemary needles.

Drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil and bake for about 30 minutes. Serve cold, accompanied by whipped cream.

Don't risk running out of your secret ingredient, Pornanino Extra Virgin Olive Oil: [Click to order](#) ►►

Tell us if you like our recipes! Is there a recipe you'd like Grandma Lia to work out for you? [Let us know](#)