

# Villetta Mimma Vittoria

## Gourmet Premium Quality Extra Virgin Olive Oil

### Produced For the New York Olive Oil Co-op

Founded in 1920's by Michelangelo Pellegrino & Maria Antonia Frisina. The Pellegrino's produce Organic Olive Oils in Italy along the Tyrrhenian coast in the foothills of Aspromonte. Proprietors of over 5000 olive trees, some are from 20 to over 300 years old. Pellegrino farming methods comply with European certification bodies. Pellegrino Certified Organic Oil has a brilliant dark green hue, scent of green olive, a wonderful buttery texture and subtle peppery finish. Through traditional farming methods the Pellegrino's maintain a special relationship with: Mother Earth and her resources.

The Pellegrino produced Villetta Mimma Vittoria's gourmet premium quality extra virgin olive oil is certified organic, unblended and has a natural acidity below 0.3%.

**Zone of Production:** Seminara, Reggio Calabria, Italy – between the base of the Aspromonte National Park and the Tryannian Sea.

**Production:** Organically farmed. Hand harvested in late October and early November by the Pellegrino family. The Leccino olive fruit varieties are cold pressed, milled in Pellegrino's own ecological mill and decanted naturally to insure the very highest quality.

**Characteristics:** A remarkably balanced and delicately fragrancd oil, slightly fruity with a touch of peppery after-taste that will diminish after a few months. The gourmet oil is a deep green hue. Bottled in a clear bottles (so that NY Co-op members) can see the color, following orders will be placed in dark glass to protect the precious liquid from alterations by the light.

**Shelf life:** Two years from the time of harvest.

When looking at a bottle of a quality olive oil, a lot of information is displayed - and some missing. To reduce packaging costs, a booklet will be printed on recycled paper with all the Nutrition, History and Facts. Subsequent dark glass bottle shipments for NY co-op members will not have a label.

Below is a small summary on what to look out for and what it really means - but remember... The cost of an organic extra virgin olive oil will always be higher than a non-organic. It is a superior product that has not been tainted by chemicals or pesticides.

**"Max. Acidity 0.3%":** This refers to the proportion of oleic acid, a monounsaturated fatty acid: the lower the acidity, the finer the oil, up to a point. The difference between two and three hundredths of 1%, for example, is indistinguishable. Remember, if the label says "Extra Virgin", the acidity of the oil must be less than 1%. High acidity is produced when the oil is made of the olives that have dropped from the tree and have burst open on the ground; or if the fruit is stored too long before pressing. However if it is less than 0.3% (three-tenths of one percent), the co-op member is in the presence of perfection.

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Villa Rental in Southern Italy – Where the Sea Meets the Sky

**"First pressing"**: The olives were only pressed once and hence only the best quality oil was extracted. In addition, the olives did not lie around indefinitely before pressing.

**"Cold Pressed"**: This means that during the milling process, no thermal processes were carried out. Applying heat can yield more oil from the olives, but obviously has an effect on the flavor and quality of the oil.

**"Filtered" or "Non-Filtered"**: If the label says, "unfiltered", it means that the oil has been left to naturally decanter and remaining sediments will slowly settle on the bottom on the storage tank before bottling. A light deposit might be present at the bottom of the bottle. If the label says "filtered", the oil has undergone a filtering process to remove all minute particles of olive.

**"Produced by"**: A single producer or is the oil a blend of many.

**"The color of the bottle"**: A dark bottle is by far preferred as it protects the oil from alterations caused by light. Leaving some oil in a transparent jar and exposed to light or near a source of heat for a couple of days for instance, will alter the taste of the oil immediately.

**"Organic Farming"**: If written and with the EU logo for organic farming indicates that the olives have been grown and the oil produced according to the strict guidelines issued by the EU, and continuously inspected by the local representatives.

The price of extra-virgin olive oil varies greatly. Two factors are influential: where the olives are grown and which harvesting methods are implemented. Certain locations yield more bountiful harvests; consequently their oil is sold for less. Olive trees planted near the sea can produce up to 20 times more fruit than those planted inland, in mountainous areas like Calabria. It is in these geographic areas that the olive trees' habitat is pushed to the extreme; if the conditions were just a little more severe, the trees would not survive. Extra-virgin oils produced from these trees have higher organic scores.

### **Organic Farming at The Pellegrino Estate**

Organic farming uses modern, yet natural, plant-protection methods, which avoid the use of pesticides.

Olive production has always been an integral part of the agriculture at The Pellegrino's. Back in the late 1990's the family took the first step towards organic agriculture, by monitoring the parasite activity, thus attacking them only when required, and not as traditionally dictated by the calendar.

The next and final step was to totally remove the usage of chemical products. The grass is mechanically cut and used as fertilizers alongside with other organic compost. Even the leftovers from harvesting and pruning are useful to fight parasites, whilst the remains from the oil pressing - are all composted and returned to the soil.

The resulting pure gourmet olive oil sold to Villetta Mimma Vittoria rental clients is thus the product of olives picked from trees that have remained organically grown for ages.

The Pellegrino's have in excess of 5,000 Olive trees. They are designating 300 trees for the New York Gourmet Olive Oil Co-op.

Our organic trees:

Just as fine wines are made from a vast variety of grapes that determine their flavor, so are fine olive oil also made from a vast variety of olives that produce distinct differences in flavor. Some oils are made from a single fruit. Other more complex oils are made from several types of olives. The actual proportions that makes a specific oil unique is a closely guarded secret.

At The Pellegrino farm, the 300 Olive trees designated for the New York Co-op will bear the Leccino olive variety:

**Leccino** - A self-sterile tree with a high and constant production, where ripening is early and uniform. The oil has a fine spicy taste.

#### **The Olive Tree:**

A low knotty trunk characterizes the olive tree. The leaves are colored a beautiful gloss green, silvery white on the underside. The trees can grow to 15 meters, but on average they are pollarded at between 5 and 7 meters to ease the harvesting. Olives need very little water, and can search it out at great distances from the tree.

Olive trees have an almost titanic resistance, a vital force that renders them nearly immortal. Despite the near 10 degree winters and burning summers, despite truncations, they continue to grow, proud and strong reaching towards the sky, bearing fruit that nourishes and heals inspires and amazes. Temperate climactic conditions, characterized by warm dry summers and rainy winters, favor plentiful harvests; stone, drought, silence, and solitude are the ideal habitat for the majestic olive tree.

The best olive oil comes from the juice of olives from low growing trees, with a lot of room and sun so that the fruit can mature correctly and so that each tree receives sufficient moisture and nutrients from the soil. In biological farming only natural fertilizers are used, watering is carried out sparingly. In contrast, volume producers cram many more trees per acre, for high production and ease in harvesting by machine and obviously also use chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

The olive tree is a slow growing tree, which fills during the first 7 years of its life and has a growing productivity between the age of 7 and 35 years. From 35 to 150 years the tree reaches maturity and full production and beyond 150 years the olive tree starts aging with a remarkable productivity for centuries and sometimes for thousands of years. The olive trees production is cyclical with more production in one year and significantly less

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Between April and June a multitude of small, white perfumed flowers appear in groups under the preceding year's leaves. They only last a few weeks. One olive is born for about 20 flowers.

In late October the harvesting starts; the olives must be picked before they become fully ripe as the resulting oil will be rich in un-saturated fat, anti-oxidation substances and with lower acidity and better organic properties. Olive groves require care throughout the year and the work is labor-intensive. Almost all operations are totally manual and that is the most important reason for the higher prices of olive oil.

For all olive growers, the most feared enemy is the Olive Fly (*Dacus Olei*). In certain years this insect can destroy the entire crop. The larvae cause premature fruit drop and yield reduction.

An infestation seriously affects oil volume, alters its color and increases acidity. Farmers use against the fly anti-parasites, poisoned bait and certain parasites of the olive fly that attack its larvae during summer. There is absolutely no use of pesticides at The Pellegrino Olive Orchard Farm.

An interesting usage of the natural resources to fight parasites, are the leftovers from the pruning of the trees. The branches are left on the ground near the tree, as the parasite *Phlebotribus scarabeoides*, which is constantly looking for an olive tree to lay its eggs in, will use the cut-off branch instead of infesting the tree. A month later, once the egg-laying season is over, the branches are collected and burnt. (hence if you've ever traveled to southern Italy and smelled the burning sensation in the air, this will make sense).

(Excerpt from EU definition of organic farming)

Increased consumer awareness of food safety issues and environmental concerns has contributed to the growth in organic farming over the last few years. Organic farming has to be understood as part of a sustainable farming system and a viable alternative to the more traditional approaches to agriculture. Since the EU rules on organic farming came into force in 1992, tens of thousands of farms have been converted to this system, as a result of increased consumer awareness of, and demand for, organically grown products. The sustainability of both agriculture and the environment is a key policy objective of today's common agricultural policy (the 'CAP'): 'Sustainable development must encompass food production alongside conservation of finite resources and protection of the natural environment so that the needs of people living today can be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. 'This objective requires farmers to consider the effect that their activities will have on the future of agriculture and how the systems they employ shape the environment. As a consequence, farmers, consumers and policy makers have shown a renewed interest in organic farming.

## How The Pellegrino's Make Gourmet Extra Virgin Olive Oil

### Harvesting:

The picking of the olives starts in late October usually, but by planning strategically, the Pellegrino family only really commences the harvest of the olives from the trees just before they are ripe and firm (when a little bit of purple starts showing on the olive) and definitely not soft.

In accordance with the organic farming principles and to obtain a superior gourmet oil, all the olives are harvested by hand. The family employs experienced hand pickers to harvest the trees. Hand picking protects the olives from bruising, which triggers acidity, and it also protects the trees.

Only ripe, undamaged olives are suitable for the very best oil. Split, very unripe or over-ripe olives reduce the fruitiness of the oil and contribute to its bitterness.

At times a carpet of press-able olives lie freshly fallen under the trees but they are left on the ground. Olives should never be picked from the ground, as microorganisms naturally present on the ground facilitate mould contamination.

In some places, permanent orange nets are hung under the trees, to pick up the olives as they fall, however this is not a method endorsed by the Pellegrino family, as windfall olives are usually overripe, bruised or attacked by the Olive Fly and can only be used for bulk oil.

### Transporting:

The picked olives are temporarily stored in small breathable crates with punctured sides (to optimize the ventilation) only half filling the crates to avoid any bruising of the olives from the weight of those above.

At sun-set, when the day's picking is finished, the olives are taken to The Pellegrino's own ecological mill and pressed immediately.

If the fruits were stored for the following day, they would start to undergo chemical modifications that increase the degree of the oil's acidity and oxidation, hence to maintain an exceptionally high quality oil, the milling commences at sunset into the early hours.

## Milling:

In the old days The Pellegrino's were running a large olive mill, grinding olives not just for the farm itself but also for the whole county. The granite stones crushing the olives were operated originally by manpower; then came a mule to help out. Oil and vegetable water was extracted by pressure from the mash, which was packed into large containers and had boiling water poured over it; the oil was then collected using gravity, since it floated.

Old people at in town still remember when a separator was introduced in the 50's, not all customers were initially happy about it, though quickly everybody appreciated the great technological improvement.

In the early 70's the mill was regretfully dismantled partially due to high running cost but mainly due to a change in regulations for the residue disposal, as both cake and vegetable water in such large quantities are polluting substances, harmful for the environment.

They were gloomy days when taking the fruits to the local oil factory! The real difficulty was to avoid contamination of the Pellegrino olives with other fruits. Those were the days where the majority of the growers were hauling their warm, sometimes fermenting, sacks of olives to the local factory.

Monitoring the hygienic conditions of the equipment used in the traditional pressure method is very problematic. Unhealthy olives processed just before The Pellegrino's cherished fruits would have produced a deleterious effect on the quality of the end result. Hence a mill using a new generation continuous flow extraction plant had to be selected.

Today's knowledge on olive oil is of course much improved compared to 30 years ago, though it confirms as a fundamental certitude that the olive characteristics are by far the most important factor determining the quality of the extra virgin olive oil.

Having an organic farm The Pellegrino's whole process of making extra virgin olive oil has to be totally controlled; from fertilizing and pruning the trees to harvesting the fruits and extracting the oil, down to the storage and the bottling of the oil. That is the reason why The Pellegrino's are once again running an olive mill.

As timing is so important to achieve a faultless end result, olives are collected and processed the same day. On return from harvesting the fruits undergo an accurate selection rejecting as much as possible all the olives not suited to grant the best quality extra virgin oil. The leaves are then removed and the fruits washed before an elevator takes them to the low speed hammer grinder. The crushed olives fall directly in the low velocity blender (centrifuge) to begin the kneading phase. The low speed is needed to minimize the heating naturally produced during the operations.

The next phase, the oil extraction is performed with a 2-step horizontal decanter. It is very important that the juice is obtained as gently as possible without the influence of heat that reduces flavor and nutrient content of the oil. The 2<sup>nd</sup> step decanter returns oil on one end and wet cake on the other. There is absolutely no harm to the environment with this method. On the contrary as it produces little quantity of vegetable water the waste can be easily composted and returned to the field as an excellent fertilizer.

In the 19th century a stone mill was crushing the olives, today there might be less romance, though when The Pellegrino's freshly picked olives are disappearing into a sanitized-clean stainless steel machine (conform to current EC manufacturing norms) the family has the guaranty of a superb extra virgin olive oil.

### **Storage:**

Once the "liquid gold" has been obtained, it has to be stored under optimal conditions until bottled. In the temperature controlled cellar of The Pellegrino's Palazzo there are several large upright stainless steel containers ready to house the fresh olive oil.

Ensuring a correct storage at all times is a very important operation as it prevents the olive oil from oxidizing and consequently becoming rancid. It is highly dependant on parameters like temperature and humidity, but can also be influenced by the atmosphere where the oil is stored; in fact, olive oil acts like a sponge and as such absorbs all the odors present in the storage atmosphere. So the optimal place is a dry, cool, well-ventilated place far from direct light and sources of heat - like the cellar under The Pellegrino's Palazzo.

Here the oil undergoes the natural decantation, where sediments will slowly settle at the bottom and removed from the oil before it gets bottled.

### **Bottling:**

The Pellegrino's oil is filled directly from the storage tanks into 25 liter tin cans, hence avoiding any potential contaminations, and immediately plugged. Upon ocean cargo transportation to the USA the cans will be stored in temperature controlled rooms ready for bottling. The first orders will be sent in clear bottles and have a small booklet attached to it (with raffia), with history of the oil, where, why and how it was made. Subsequent bottles will be in dark glass and no labels.

Olive oil is time, heat, and light sensitive. The maximum shelf life of a high-grade olive oil is two years. If stored properly, protected from heat and light, the oil will maintain its fruity aroma throughout its shelf life.

As the oil has not undergone any filtration, but only natural decantation, a slight sediment may form at the bottom of the bottle, but this only indicates the quality of the extra virgin olive oil from Villetta Mimma Vittoria.

## Health and Cooking Tips

### Health

Fats and oils are an essential part of a balanced diet. The actual nutrition data on the product are indiscriminate, since the caloric content is the same for all olive oils: 9 calories per gram (0.035 ounces).

However, a general belief seems to be that seed oils are lighter than olive oils (obtained from the fruit not the seed); this is false.

The fat content is the same for all oils, therefore, as far as the caloric content is concerned, all oils provide the same quantity of energy, that is to say, in one sense, they are equally fattening. However, from a nutrition point of view, olive oils are to be preferred, because of its optimal composition

Olive oil is easily digested - and quickly and completely absorbed by the system. In addition, trace components like chlorophyll help the absorption, and the aroma and taste stimulate our appetite - an important assist for the digestive process.

#### Some of the proven health benefits are:

- \* has a positive effect on the digestive tract, protecting the stomach lining and stimulating bowel movements;
- \* it does not clog arteries, as it helps reduce excess cholesterol in the blood.
- \* is particularly suited in the diet of infants for its low acidic composition, which renders it very close to the composition of fat in mother's milk
- \* validly contributes to the fight against osteoporosis and constipation, very frequent in the elderly.
- \* it is an effective defense against gastritis and gastric ulcers
- \* it allows for increased vitamin absorption, A, D and K, but in particular vitamin E.
- \* it aids the prevention of coronary heart disease.
- \* it reduces the number of incidences of breast cancer and cancer of the intestines.
- \* it can also be used as a lotion. It helps disinfect the skin and soothe inflammations.

The circulatory system is aided by a diet that includes olive oil - reducing the risk of arteriosclerosis and other circulatory ailments. The non-saturated fats, which make up olive oil, not only are cholesterol-free, but also have actually been shown to reduce cholesterol levels.



(15.5% saturated fatty acids, 77.0% monounsaturated fatty acids and 7.1% polyunsaturated fatty acids.)

For further information on how healthy Olive Oil is - please search out the EU information page.

### **Cooking tips:**

The gourmet extra virgin olive oil from Villetta Mimma Vittoria is extremely versatile, it will endow a salad and raw dishes with a touch of Mediterranean flair, it can be sampled alone on a piece of bread, or perhaps be the final touch on a bowl of soup or other dish, its most simple use is in cooking, to roast, grill or fry food. It is particularly suited to entrées or added to lemon and vinegar over a salad. It is ideal for pastries and baking as it gives exceptionally workable and light dough.

The oil can also be used in preserves like grilled vegetables, wild mushrooms or goat cheese. The reason for this lays in the fact that olive oil preserves the food from oxidation and natural ageing process, as the oil subtracts the oxygen inside the containers and thus the preserves last longer.

Contrary to myth, olive oil is very good for frying, as its critical temperature - that of molecular deformation - is around 210-220°C. In fact, its composition of fatty acids will not be modified after thermal treatment, even at a temperature of 200°C for 3 hours.

At home olive oil must be kept in a clean place, protected from light, at a temperature between 12° and 24° Celsius (54° - 75° F.).

### **Olive oil tasting**

Like fine wine, olive oil flavors are unique and can be appreciated with a little practice. (before starting, slice plain crusted bread into pieces large enough for dipping.)

1. Pour generous amount of each olive oil into individual glass bowls; notice variety of hues by holding bowl against a white background.
2. Cleanse palate with glass of water and piece of bread before each tasting.
3. Before tasting, swirl oil around in bowl to release more aroma; hold bowl under nose and inhale, allowing self to be enveloped in bouquet; take notice of intensity of each variety.
4. Begin with generously dipping piece of bread in mildest olive oil to avoid distorting flavors of oils to follow; before swallowing, take some air into mouth to help release flavors; notice smoothness of oil, and enjoy intensity of aftertaste

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