

Review of olive oil defects

NY, May 2025

WHY DO WE TASTE?

We taste by mandate of an IOC regulation, which includes tasting as a fundamental requirement for the classification of virgin olive oil. Our job is irreplaceable.



It's all here...

Sensory attributes of EVOO depend on the content of minor components -volatile (aroma) and phenolic (taste) compounds- and what we do with this during cultivation, harvest, extraction and storage process.

Only 2% of the olive composition makes the whole difference.

Terroir



Cultivar



**Moment and
type of
harvest**



**Maturation
level**



**Olives storage
and time
between process**



**Extraction
process**



**The olive oil “speaks”
through sensory
assessment: it tells you
the story about the
whole chain**

**Storage
conditions**



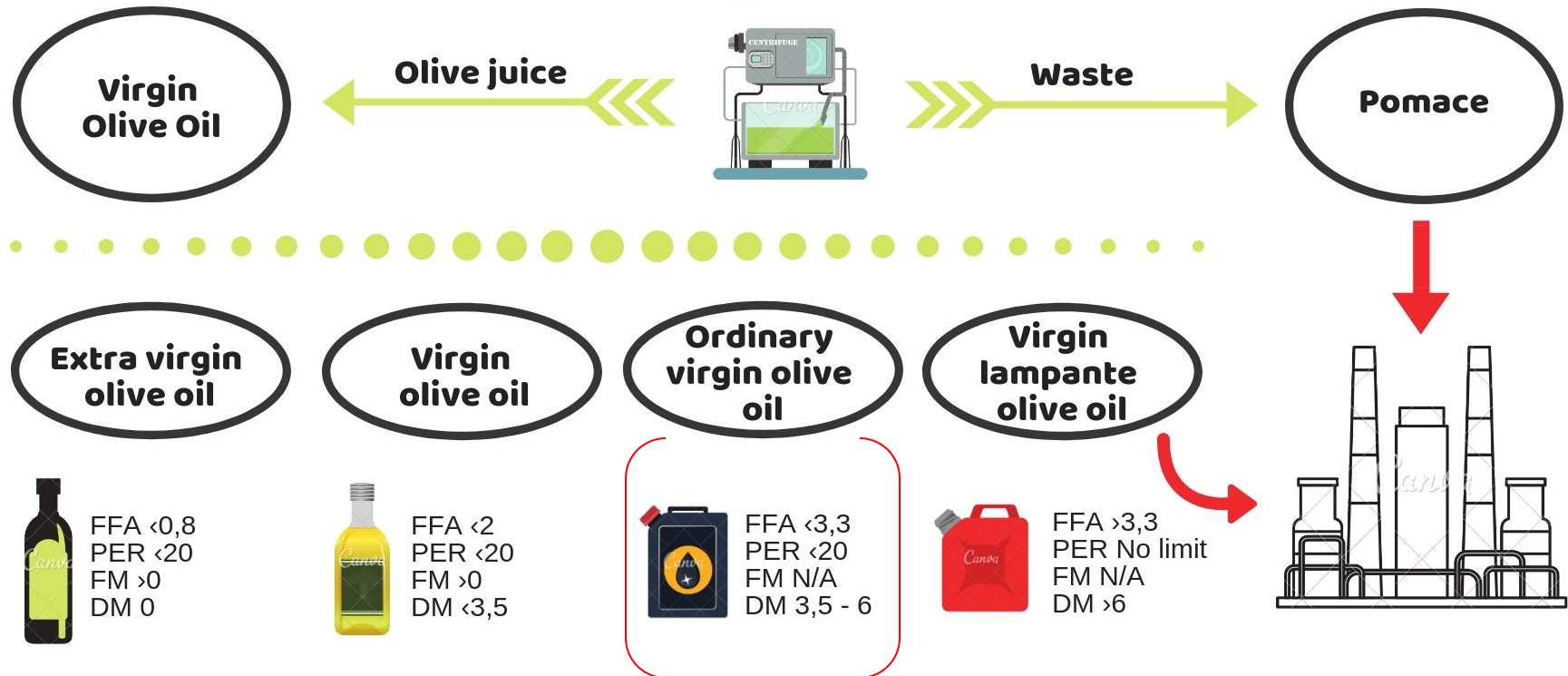
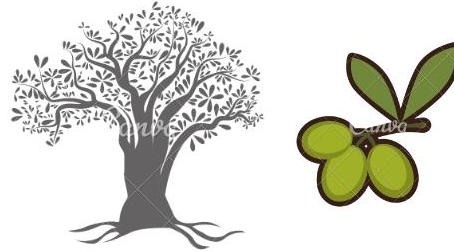
**Agronomical
practices**



Olive Oil Times
EDUCATION LAB

IOC standard talks about **fruitiness** and **defects**

Both are
"organoleptic"
concepts



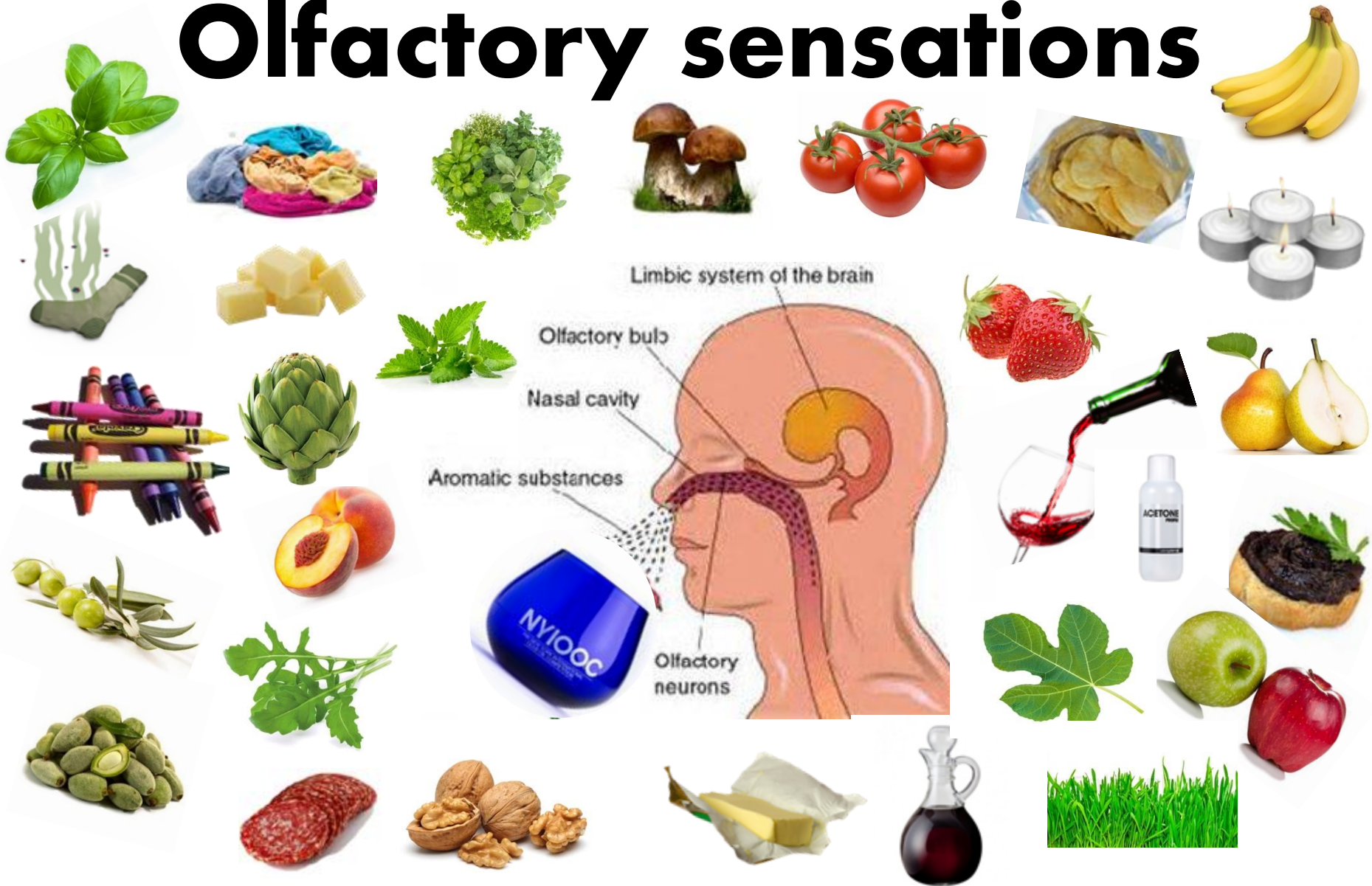
Please, REMEMBER



- Free fatty acids
- Peroxides
- Polyphenols
- Traces

- Negative attributes (defects)
- Positive attributes (frutiness, bitterness, pungency)

Olfactory sensations



Negative attributes (COI/T.20/Doc. No 15/Rev. 10 2018)

If we cannot identify one of them, there is no defect.

Fusty / muddy sediment	Characteristic flavour of oil obtained from olives piled or stored in such conditions as to have undergone an advanced stage of anaerobic fermentation, or of oil which has been left in contact with the sediment that settles in underground tanks and vats and which has also undergone a process of anaerobic fermentation.
Musty - humid - earthy	Characteristic flavour of oils obtained from fruit in which large numbers of fungi and yeasts have developed as a result of its being stored in humid conditions for several days or of oil obtained from olives that have been collected with earth or mud on them and which have not been washed.
Winey – vinegary – acid sour	Characteristic flavour of certain oils reminiscent of wine or vinegar. This flavour is mainly due to a process of aerobic fermentation in the olives or in olive paste left on pressing mats which have not been properly cleaned and leads to the formation of acetic acid, ethyl acetate and ethanol.
Rancid	Flavour of oils which have undergone an intense process of oxidation.

Frostbitten olives (wet wood)	Characteristic flavour of oils extracted from olives which have been injured by frost while on the tree.
Heated or burnt	Characteristic flavour of oils caused by excessive and/or prolonged burnt heating during processing, particularly when the paste is thermally mixed, if this is done under unsuitable thermal conditions.
Hay-wood	Characteristic flavour of certain oils produced from olives that have dried out.
Rough	Thick, pasty mouthfeel sensation produced by certain old oils.
Greasy	Flavour of oil reminiscent of that of diesel oil, grease or mineral oil.
Vegetable water	Flavour acquired by the oil as a result of prolonged contact with vegetable water which has undergone fermentation processes.
Brine	Flavour of oil extracted from olives which have been preserved in brine.
Metallic	Flavour that is reminiscent of metals. It is characteristic of oil which has been in prolonged contact with metallic surfaces during crushing, mixing, pressing or storage.
Esparto	Characteristic flavour of oil obtained from olives pressed in new esparto mats. The flavour may differ depending on whether the mats are made of green esparto or dried esparto.
Grubby	Flavour of oil obtained from olives which have been heavily attacked by the grubs of the olive fly (<i>Bactrocera oleae</i>).
Cucumber	Flavour produced when an oil is hermetically packed for too long, particularly in tin containers, and which is attributed to the formation of 2,6-nonadienal.

