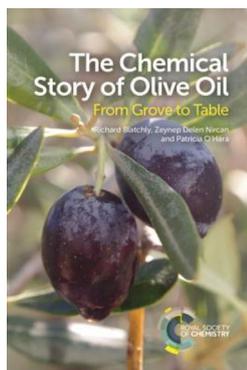


Richard Blatchly, Zeynep Delen Nircan and Patricia O'Hara: The Chemical Story of Olive Oil: From Grove to Table

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Bibliography
The Chemical Story of Olive Oil.
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It is clear from the introductory chapter of this book that the olive tree and olive oil have been important items from prehistoric times to the present. The price of olive oil was probably quoted on the Roman equivalent of the stock market 2000 years ago along with other “commodities” such as wine and wheat with honey and spices way behind.

This book is unique in many ways not least because of the large number of colour photographs and figures. Most of these are useful and informative, a few, such as two of the authors eating sardines cooked in olive oil (Figure 4.20) and Turkish wrestlers (Figure 9.9) rank as holiday snaps! There are a number of coloured chemical structures showing electron density which I did not find as clear as conventional structural representations. The book also contains numerous boxes containing potted biographies of olive growers in various parts of the world ranging from Turkey, Italy, Spain and Greece to New Zealand to South Africa.

One of the authors is Turkish and much of the information in the book concerns tree growing and olive oil production for this country although no doubt a lot of it is common to all producers. Spain produces (and uses) over 50% of world's olive oil, Italy and Greece are next with Turkey at No. 6, behind Syria and Tunisia. France is conspicuously absent from this list although one would have thought that Provence would be a suitable growing area.

The book follows a logical progression from planting and cultivating olive trees through harvesting the olives to pressing the oil to testing, evaluation and storage. Apparently, the plastic collapsible square boxes, that supermarkets sell wine in, are also ideal for olive oil although I have never seen them used as such in the UK. Although the title covers “chemical” much of the content would be more appropriately labelled “agronomical”. The book ends with some miscellaneous chapters on topics such as culinary uses and medical and even religious uses of olive oil.

It is not clear as to whom this book is aimed. I would guess 18 year olds taking a general science course. As stated above, this book is unique in many ways and certainly covers the subject most comprehensively. A thought that constantly occurred was the possibility of an analogous book with olives replaced by grapes and oil by wine. Perhaps, the authors would consider this in the future; they could visit most of the countries described here and I am sure they would enjoy themselves. As it is, the book would seem to have a limited audience and appeal.

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