

Slippery customers

Olive oils of different grades and styles offer retailers a world of choice. LYNDA SEARBY spoke to delis owners and buyers at top outlets about their sourcing strategies.



Cedric Veilex,
Olive oil buyer, Selfridges

“Personally I prefer oils to be spicy and therefore I have a slight preference for Italian oils. However, a lot of our customers prefer soft oils and would get more pleasure from one of our Spanish or French varieties, so we mainly stock Italian, French, Spanish and Greek oils, which gives customers a choice of distinctive flavours.

Our best selling oil is an Italian called Seggiano. It is a single varietal oil made on the slopes of an extinct Tuscan volcano. It is complex, rich, very green and grassy, with a spicy kick. Another good seller is our most exclusive and expensive oil – the Manni oil. This organic oil was produced in collaboration with the University of Florence to create ‘liquid gold’. It’s a wonderful gift for the gourmet.

The best olive oils are labour-intensive and produced in small batches, which partly justifies the higher cost. Extra virgin is no guarantee that an oil has been extracted traditionally as these days mechanical methods prevail.

In terms of sourcing, growers come to us or we meet them at food shows. We also work with distributors who specialise in sourcing quality oils – they will contact us when something new and interesting is coming to market. Packaging is an important consideration as many customers are shopping for gift ideas.

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