The World of Olives - Its Varieties and Uses by Treeves

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The slight bitter pungent taste of olives on your pizza or pasta or the pickled ones that get along with almost anything and everything is one irresistible taste that I long to eat forever. As I watched a continental food show on my Verizon FiOS TV with recipes of cured olives, I yearned to taste the olives that took me back to the days of my childhood visit to Morocco where I first tasted the glorious green olive and from then, never stopped guzzling this heavenly fruit and its products. The olive or the Olea europaea is a species of a small tree native to the coastal Mediterranean Basin and requires a long, hot growing season to properly ripen the fruit. History traces the cultivation of Olives, some thousands of years ago in the region of Syria. Their implications have been tacked in many civilizations by archeologists and have enriched the human race with its distinguished uses.

Olive trees, with a lifespan of over thousand years might have seen many generations and kingdoms arise and perish. This handsome tree with silvery grey-green foliage is a beauty to the eyes and is grown in the backyards of several communities because of its lack of untidy bark and leaf shedding, ability to withstand the battering of storms, salt water, heat and cold, and their evergreen nature. The olive tree is a symbol of joy, peace and happiness and makes an excellent gift especially the ornamental one that does not bear fruits.

The olive or the fruit of the olive tree is the oldest food known and has been eaten for centuries with a wide variety of food applications since olden days. Ever since people have learned the usage of this inedible olive inventing endless ways of curing, flavoring, and marinating it and growing enormous variety of olives. Olives are cultivated in the coolÂ winter areas of Queensland through New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania in theÂ south, and across to South Australia and Western Australia. Some of the well-recognized varieties of olives are Alfonso, Arbequina, Ascolane, Atalanti, Elitses, Farga Aragon, Gaeta, Kalamata, Manzanilla, Liguria, Lugano, Nafplion, Nicoise, Ponentine, Picholine and Sevillano mostly named after the region in which they are grown. Olives are divided into two types- green olives and black olives. Green olives are plucked before they ripen and undergo caustic soda treatment before brining, whereas ripe black olives are cured in water.

Olives rich in health protective nutrients such as antioxidant and anti-inflammatory nutrients have got a wide spectrum of healthy applications. It is believed that olives cured and pickled, are suppose to curb the sweet cravings when dieting. The olive leaf extract is used as a relief for most of the health conditions like various infections and disorders. Olive leaves are used for simple home treatments of common cold or flu to serious illnesses like certain cancers. The traditionally cured olives offer a host of health benefits ranging from vitamin deficiency to chronic diseases like asthma, osteoarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis to heart disease. Olives are rich in iron, vitamin E and copper, and are an excellent source of fiber. The nutritional content of Hydroxytyrosol in olives is known to prevent cancer. The healthy monounsaturated fats have been found to reduce the risk of atherosclerosis and increase HDL (good) cholesterol. The vitamin E found in olives is a fat-soluble antioxidant that neutralizes damaging free radicals, along with polyphenols and flavonoids, which have anti-inflammatory properties. Apart from the numerous health benefits obtained from the leaves and fruit of this plant as well as from olive oil this versatile fruit , high in energy, adds a burst of flavor and nutrition to any dish.

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Tina is a food blogger and freelance writer. She likes to write about the multi-purpose usage of olives and olive tree and loves the various food recipes shown the TV channels by a Verizon FiOS TV based on olives and olive oil.

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