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## Extra Virgin Olive Oil Lecture and Tasting at Dublin Institute of Technology, Cathal Brugha Street.

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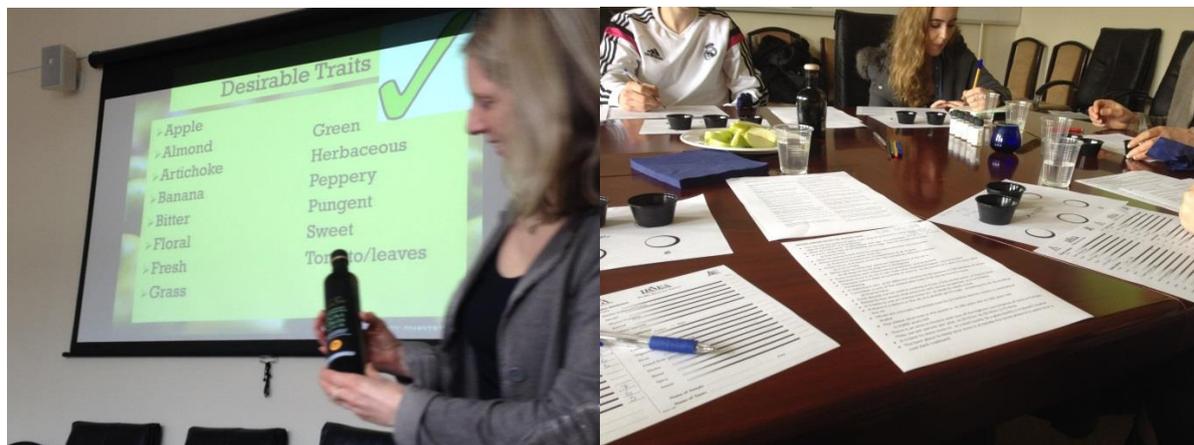
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★ Interested

On the 14<sup>th</sup> April, Karen Cryan, a qualified Olive Oil Sommelier gave a lecture and tutored tasting to a group of students from DIT's School of Culinary Arts & Food Technology. The session, organised as part of an ongoing series of extra-curricular educational events by the DIT FOOD FORUM, consisted of an interactive round table discussion concerning previous conceptions towards olive oil and its quality factors. Ms. Cryan has trained in the UK and Italy to gain her qualifications and has numerous hours of experience as a professional assessor of quality Extra Virgin Olive Oil, referred to by industry experts as EVOO for short.



A focused group of culinary students from across varying programmes within the school took part in the session which lasted approximately 90 minutes. The lecture covered the following points: growing climates, conditions of the trees, harvesting techniques, ripeness of the fruit, olive varieties, hazards and issues with healthy olives, pressing olives traditionally and by contemporary means, EU legislative boundaries defining EVOO and the wide range of faults that can occur with the oil. Best before dates, how to purchase and store olive oil as well as cooking and food pairing suggestions we also discussed at length.



The tutored tasting firstly demonstrated seven major faults commonly found in standard EVOO. These range from rancidity to mould to vinegar effect. Ms. Cryan passed around vials containing samples of these faulted oils for students to smell and analyse. This was then followed by the tasting of five oils; three of which were in perfect condition and the remaining two which

were noticeably faulted. In between tasting the individual oils, the participants ate pieces of crisp green apple and drank water to cleanse their palate. The quality attributes of oils in perfect condition were highlighted and numerous taste indicators and styles emerged. Tasting olive oils shares certain similarities to wine tasting. It is important that the oil is at the correct temperature (in the case of EVOO 25°C is standard for analysis) or at least room temperature to unlock its aromas. Many quality oils have green, fresh or even grassy aromas. On the palate the oils are savoured and air is sucked into the mouth and exhaled through the nose to reveal the full taste. The oil has an initial taste, a mid-palate texture and a finish or aftertaste. Mild to medium bitterness and peppery tastes in the throat are all deemed to be desirable qualities.

Olive oil has been scientifically proven in numerous arenas and scientific documents to be beneficial to human health due to its high level of “good cholesterol” and antioxidants and is considered to be one of the healthiest oils for use in cookery, whether that is as a cold dressing or even for frying with. Ms. Cryan suggested when purchasing EVOO, consumers should read the back label to check the best before date, adding that research from the U.S. showed that as much as 78% of oils tested were faulted or in poor condition. Among other things EVOO benefits from being stored away from heat and light. Increasingly quality oils are available in cans or dark glass containers. As top quality EVOO is an expensive commodity, it has been suggested not to buy it in bulk due to the fact that it has a shelf life. It may seem advantageous to buy 5Ltrs as opposed to a standard bottle for economic reasons but this is often counterproductive. Finally Ms. Cryan encouraged liberal use of EVOO and to avoid hoarding it or using it sparingly. She conceded that it can be expensive but added that it does not improve with age and is in a constant state of degradation.

*D.Cawley,DIT*