

An *Oil* for Life

Word Focus

crush: to press something very hard and break it

harvest: to pick and collect crops

fresh: not preserved or old

improve: to make something better

Maria Alcalá of Madrid speaks for many Mediterranean people when she says that "a meal without olive oil is boring". (1)

— knows when the Mediterraneans first fell in love with olives because it was before people wrote and kept records. However, there is some evidence that people began growing olive trees around the Mediterranean Sea approximately 6,000 years ago. The Mediterranean countries still (2) 99% of the world's olive oil with Spain being the world's biggest producer.

From ancient times (3) today, the basic process of producing the oil is the same. First, farmers crush the olives. Then, they take the liquid and separate the oil from the water.



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Many olive growers keep their ancient traditions and still harvest the olives (4) hand. "We harvest in the traditional way", says Don Celso, an olive farmer from Tuscany, Italy. "It is less expensive to do it with machines but it's more a social thing. Twenty people come to help with the harvest and we pay them in oil".

Ancient civilisations used olive oil (5) money and medicine. They even used it during war – they would heat it up and drop it down on the enemy! (6) days, it is still used in religious ceremonies as it was in ancient times. It is also great for making fish and cheese stay fresh. There are even olive oil lamps and olive oil soaps.



One important study showed that Mediterranean people have the (7) hearts in the western world. This is partly to do with frequently using olive oil. Other studies have shown that using olive oil can help to protect people from some types of diseases. The world is beginning to understand the advantages of using olive oil and it isn't an unusual thing to see on dinner tables outside the Mediterranean region anymore. The olive oil producing countries now sell large (8) of olive oil to countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and North and South America.

Olive oil improves the lives of people everywhere when it is part of a well-balanced (9). Ancient people knew about its benefits and modern science has confirmed them. Luckily, the Mediterranean people are happy to (10) their secret with the world.



Exam Task

Read the text and choose the correct word for each space. For each question, mark the correct letter, a, b, c or d.

1 a Anyone	b Everyone	c No one	d Someone
2 a better	b want	c buy	d produce
3 a since	b for	c through	d until
4 a by	b in	c on	d with
5 a as	b at	c on	d of
6 a There	b These	c This	d Those
7 a lightest	b lowest	c healthiest	d smallest
8 a amounts	b groups	c lots	d numbers
9 a food	b dish	c diet	d plate
10 a give	b offer	c share	d show