



Why Olive Oil and Ice Cream is Dreamy

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Bi-Rite Olive Oil Ice Cream scoop photo credit Bi-Rite Creamery

The unexpected marriage [of ice cream and olive oil rocketed to viral TikTok stardom](#) earlier this year. But although the origins are murky, the winning combination of ice cream and olive oil has been around for at least the last twenty years if not longer. Why does it work and what are the keys to making the perfect pairings? We spoke to master ice cream chefs to find out.

Why it Works



Humphry Slocombe Olive Oil Cake ice cream photo credit Humphry Slocombe

Groundbreaking ice cream brand Humphry Slocombe’s cofounder Jack Godby shares that he’s been crafting olive oil flavors since they first opened in 2008, mainly with [McEvoy Ranch](#) olive oil. Says Godby, “Most often with just a little citrus zest added but sometimes with an inclusion such as rhubarb or a jam swirl. As for why olive oil works in ice cream, he says, “It just does. It’s unctuous and both familiar and unexpected,” Olive oil is featured prominently as an ingredient in the [Humphry Slocombe Ice Cream Book](#), published in 2012.



Salt & Straw Arbequina Olive Oil Ice Cream photo credit Salt & Straw

“Ice cream is one of the best ways to fully appreciate the flavor of high-quality olive oil,” says Tyler Malek, co-founder of craft ice cream company [Salt & Straw](#), whose Arbequina Olive Oil flavor is a

cult favorite. “The sweet, simple richness of cream and sugar is the perfect backdrop to let grassy, tropical flavors do their thing.”

When paired, olive oil’s fatty voluptuousness joins forces with the dairy’s buttercream. In its inclusion of more than one type of fat, the dish is a cousin of other decadent Mediterranean recipes like mozzarella Caprese salad dressed with a drizzle of olive oil or pesto where olive oil mingles with pine nuts and cheese.

“Fats always taste good with more fat,” says Bruce Hill, who was one of the first to introduce the public to organic, soft-serve ice cream paired with olive oil at [Restaurant Picco](#) in Larkspur, California in 2005.

The union of olive oil and ice cream doesn’t just taste good, however. Unlike most ice cream toppings which are high in sugar and saturated fats, olive oil is packed with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that are actually good for you. The treat may still be a little too rich to be considered “healthy” but, from a nutritional standpoint, it’s a better dessert choice than most.

What Olive Oil Goes with Ice Cream?



Picco ice cream photo credit Joshua Lurie and FoodGPS

At specialty scoop shops like Salt & Straw, San Francisco's [Bi-Rite Creamery](#), and Humphry Slocombe, olive oil and ice cream are wedded together before they're packed into pints. You don't need an artisan creamery to enjoy the combination, though. All you need is the right olive oil.

"I highly recommend [using] a grassy, fruitier extra-virgin olive oil—usually called a "finishing oil"—to give the ice cream an overall flavor balance," says Bi-Rite Creamery managing partner and pastry chef, Kris Hoogerhyde. Hill has used EVOO from California producers [DaVero](#) and [Gold Ridge Organic Farms](#), whose [Picholine blend](#) he says "superbly" complements the slightly different flavor and texture of soft-serve. Read more [about Gold Ridge Organic Farms](#). At Salt & Straw, they've found that the Spanish olive varietal Arbequina produces a delicate, slightly grassy taste with a hint of pineapple-like tropical flavor that works well with the ice cream's sweetness.

"We love olive oil from Oregon's [Durant Olive Mill](#), nestled in the Willamette Valley," Malek explains. The family farm, pioneers of new olive growing techniques, "leans into the colder climate in Oregon and presses their oil each Fall to create an olive oil that doesn't develop the spicy, bitter flavors you taste in California olive oils."

Godby was a pastry chef in fine dining before focusing on ice cream. He recently worked with [Rich Table](#) to develop Olive Oil Cake ice cream, a limited-release flavor. He shares, "We often work with local chefs on collaborative flavors. They are usually based on flavor profiles they are known for. The Rich Table flavor using [Stonehouse](#) olive oil is such an example. It's a nice fruity olive oil that we included in the base and we added an olive oil cake and a little lemon zest too." The result? A nostalgic cake and ice cream combo with a sophisticated vibe. The olive oil, along with citrus and a touch of salt marry perfectly and cut the sweetness. Salt adds yet another dimension to olive oil and ice cream.

How Much Olive Oil & Salt?



Bi-Rite Creamery Olive Oil Ice Cream with drizzle

Just a tablespoon or so of olive oil drizzled over a serving of ice cream strikes the ideal balance. Hoogerhyde recommends adding a sprinkle of flaky sea salt on top. “It really helps round out the sweetness, hits all the taste buds, and that little crunchy texture is delightful,” she says. When it’s added to soft-serve ice cream, which is dispensed at a higher temperature than scooped ice cream, the combination blends even more easily, shares Hill.

“Olive oil tastes different when combined with sweetness,” he explains. “It brings out more of the grassy and floral notes while suppressing the bitterness and throat bite.”

What Flavors of Ice Cream Pair with Olive Oil?

While vanilla ice cream is a classic foundation for olive oil, it’s hard to go wrong with other flavors too, especially fruity ones. “Strawberry or lemon are great because the oil helps bring out the fruitiness in the ice cream,” says Hoogerhyde. Herbacious flavors, like Bi-Rite’s honey lavender or basil also work well with a drizzle of olive oil. And don’t underestimate chocolate ice cream. Eating it topped with olive oil brings a whole other layer to the experience. In the Humphry Slocombe Ice Cream Book, the authors suggest a splash of olive oil on top of their Chocolate Smoked Salt ice cream.

Nor are you restricted to choosing EVOO as your topping. “It’s also great to experiment with different olive oils, especially ones that have citrus in them,” Hoogerhyde says. “Adding that little punch of citrus highlights it all.”

How to Add Olive Oil to Homemade Ice Cream



Ice Cream Olive Oil photo credit Bi-Rite Creamery

If you're making ice cream from scratch, you can add a drizzle on top or add anywhere from a couple of tablespoons to a 1/4 cup of olive oil to the recipe before freezing instead. You can even use as much as 1/2 a cup of olive oil without it being too overwhelming, says Hoogerhyde, depending upon the recipe. Salt & Straw includes the recipe for Arbequina Olive Oil Ice Cream in [Salt & Straw Ice Cream Book](#), Bi-Rite includes a recipe for Mandarin Orange Olive Oil Ice Cream in [Sweet Cream and Sugar Cones](#), while Humphry Slocombe includes recipes for Rosemary's Baby and McEvoy Olive Oil ice creams in their book.

While the olive oil and ice cream combo may not have hit the freezer section of your local supermarket yet, we imagine it's only a matter of time before it does.

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