

Maria Alcalá of Madrid speaks for many Mediterranean people when she says that "a meal without olive oil would be a bore." No one knows when the Mediterranean civilizations initially fell in love with olives. That occurred before recorded history. However, there is evidence that the cultivation of olive trees began in countries around the Mediterranean Sea in approximately 4000 B.C., and 2,000 years after that people in the eastern Mediterranean region began to produce oil from olives. The Mediterranean still accounts for 99 percent of all world olive oil production. From ancient times until today, the basic process of producing the oil is the same. First, whole olives are crushed. Then, the liquid is separated from the solids .