

McEvoy's Olio Nuovo: An Olive Oil for the New Year



Olio Nuovo ('new oil' in Italian) is like an *extra* extra-virgin olive oil. In Italy and California, when the olives are harvested and crushed in late October/early November, a special tasting is held and the growers select a blend from these first pressings to bottle up, unfiltered, and sell immediately as olio nuovo. (Normally, the oil is held in tanks for a few months to allow the sediment to settle and the flavor to mellow.) Much like Beaujolais Nouveau, the seasonality and limited availability of this delicious oil are a cause for celebration.

Read on for what makes Olio Nuovo so special and a few tips on how to cook with it.



McEvoy Ranch in Northern California has just released their Olio Nuovo, bottled straight from the fall 2010 olive harvest. They sent me a sample to taste a few weeks ago and my kitchen has been bathed with it since. With its intense flavor and bright green color ("it kind of looks like fake absinthe" drawled a dinner guest), this oil is quite distinct from everyday extra-virgin olive oil. But the intense, grassy flavors are balanced by a creamy, butter mouthfeel and an exciting whoosh of pepperiness when you swallow. Not too much pepper, mind you, but just enough to be interesting.

If you're like me, you might have a tendency to hoard something like this and only bring it out for special occasions. But that would be a mistake. It's the freshness that makes this oil so special, so you must use it up right away. McEvoy recommends to use it up no later than March, as the unfiltered sediment will begin to spoil after then.



Olio Nuovo is not an oil you will want to subject to high heat or hide in a Bolognese sauce. Consider it a finishing oil and drizzle it over dishes just before you bring them to the table. Or use it on a salad, brushed on bruschetta, or tossed with pasta and fresh garlic. Anything that highlights its flavor. The little recipe card that came with the sample recommends drizzling it on Dungeness crab (for a real NoCal treat) or over roasted cauliflower soup.

My favorite way so far is to split open a hot baked potato and douse it with Olio Nuovo and sprinkle it with truffle salt and some fresh black pepper. So simple, yet so alive with flavor. A real treat.

- If you live in the Bay Area, you can purchase Olio Nuovo at the McEvoy Ranch shop in the Ferry building. Or you can order it online from their web page. It runs \$22 for 357ml or \$42 for 750ml.