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**Children and adults consumer preference: “traditional” vs. green flavors virgin olive oils**

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Mediterranean region consumers have a great exposure to virgin olive oil and tend to use it on a daily basis. However, consumers preference is not always clear for a product that is strongly dependent on cultural traditions, education and culinary habits. Moreover, nowadays product value is becoming more and more entwined with the emotional benefits it can offer to consumers, and "need" is defined by pleasure and experiential enjoyment.

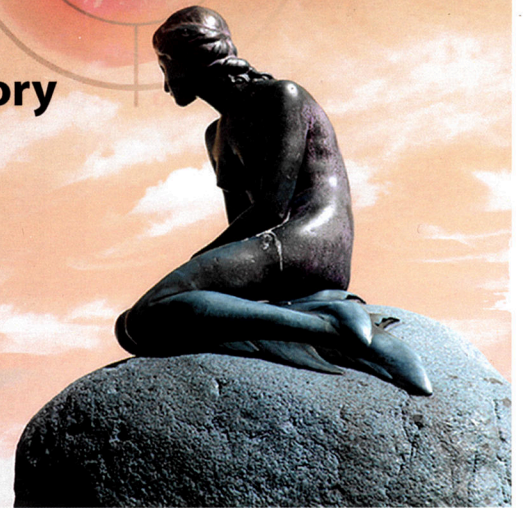
The present study was designed to evaluate children and adults consumer preferences for olive oils with intense green flavor vs. the “traditional” virgin olive oil. Samples representing three virgin olive oils produced in Castelo Branco Region (Portugal) were chosen, being one a “traditional” with 3.0 median of fusty defect and the other two extracted from olives of the cultivars ‘Galega Vulgar’ and ‘Cobrançosa’ in early stages of ripening with intense (median >5) green odor. Consumers recruited at a local fair, 100 children (6-10 years old) and 100 adults, were asked to smell the samples and rank them by overall preference.

The results showed that adults preferred the “traditional” whereas children chose olive oils with intense green flavors. Consumers who were experienced, local, or familiar with a particular type of olive oil tend to consider the oil with fusty defect a “characteristic quality” and this is a key factor that drives purchasing and preference, while these factors did not seem to influence children, less knowledgeable, and less experienced with this type of olive oil. No differences between the two types of green flavor olive oils were assembled for adults, which seems to be a good feature in what concerns the blending of monovarietal oils. Furthermore, an understanding of the importance of the characteristics of extra virgin olive oil, in order to make healthy choices, can be instilled on children.

Keywords: sensory, consumers, oil, *Olea europaea*

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