



INTERNATIONAL
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COUNCIL

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THE MARIO SOLINAS QUALITY AWARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL FOR QUALITY EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OILS FROM THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

RULES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION – NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

organised by the INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL

SINGLE EDITION FOR 2026

The Mario Solinas Quality Award, the international competition for extra virgin olive oils of the International Olive Council (IOC), is based on Decision No DEC-III.4 /121-IV/2025, which the Council adopted on 8 July 2025. Pursuant to this decision, the competition was launched in the 2000–2001 crop year in the wake of the Council's 1993 decision to memorialise and pay tribute to one of the most important advocates of the sensory analysis of virgin olive oil, the late Italian Professor Mario Solinas.

Its chief objective is to select the extra virgin olive oils entered for the competition from north hemisphere that display the best organoleptic characteristics in each of the categories established in these rules.

COMPETITION RULES FOR NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

Extra virgin olive oils presented by registered individual producers, producers' associations and packers may be entered for the competition and the batch must come from the participant's country.

1. Eligible oils

Only extra virgin olive oils that are produced in the competition crop year and comply with the requirements stipulated for this grade in the IOC trade standard applying to olive oils and olive pomace oils shall be eligible for entry.

- Two categories of producer can enter:

- Large-scale producers: entries must be from a homogenous batch of oil from the 2025/2026 crop year, stored in a single tank of at least 4 000 litres.
- Small-scale producers: entries must be from a homogeneous batch of oil from the 2025/2026 crop year, stored in a single tank of at least 1 000 litres.

- For packers, entries must be from a homogenous batch of oil from the 2025/2026 crop year, stored in a single tank of at least 15 000 litres.

Note: Virgin olive oil production must be the main activity of producers and account for at least 75% of their activity.

Each competitor/registered name may participate in only one category and may enter only one extra virgin olive oil. If after the competition the IOC finds that any company participated with more than one sample, under a different company name, it will be disqualified.

Types of olive oil company:

- Small-scale producers: the volume of olive oil produced is less than 20 000 kg/year
- Large-scale producers: the volume of olive oil produced is more than 20 000 kg/year
- Packers: the volume of olive oil packed is more than 25 000 kg/year. The batch must come from the participant's country. A packaging company, which owns the competing brand, can only enter a single oil to the competition.

2. *Responsibilities of competitors*

Competitors shall be required:

2.1. To complete the registration form (Annexe 1);

2.2. To arrange for a notary¹ to carry out the following:

- To collect representative samples of the batch of oil entered for the competition, comprising seven (7) samples of 500 mL each, collected in coloured glass containers of the same capacity. The container holding each sample shall be closed with a tamper-evident cap, which shall be sealed by the notary, and shall bear a label showing a code number created by the participant comprising digits and two letters. The rules to be observed for sample collection shall be as laid down in standard ISO 5555 “Animal and vegetable fats and oils – Sampling”;
- To seal the tank holding the entry batch of oil until the competition is over. The completion of the competition will be notified either in writing by the Executive Secretariat or when the list of winners is posted on the IOC website.

2.3. To arrange for the notarial¹ deed to be drawn up stating:

- The name and address of the competitor and the registration number of the company: If any company has more than one registered name, it can participate with only one of them;
- The location and identification of the tank holding the batch of oil entered for the competition;

¹ Or equivalent legal figure.

- The volume of the batch of oil entered for the competition;
 - Category: small-scale producer, large-scale producer or packer: Producers must prove that virgin olive oil production is their main activity (at least 75% of their activity). For this, they are required to submit an affidavit within the notarial deed confirming this condition.
 - The batch must come from the participant's country;
 - The procedure for collecting, sealing and identifying the samples;
 - That the tank holding the batch of oil entered for the competition has been sealed.
- 2.4. To send one of the 500 mL samples to a laboratory recognised by the IOC for 2025/2026² in order for it to be chemically tested and for the corresponding quality testing certificate to be issued confirming that the oil is extra virgin based on the following parameters:
- Free acidity
 - Peroxide value
 - Absorbance in ultra-violet ($K^{1\%}$): 270 nm, 232 nm and ΔK
 - Fatty acid ethyl esters (FAEEs)
- 2.5. To send one of the 500 mL samples to an olive oil tasting panel recognised by the IOC for 2025/2026³ in order for it to undergo organoleptic assessment according to the IOC method for the organoleptic assessment of virgin olive oil in force and for a certificate to be issued indicating the median of the intensities of the fruitiness attribute and whether the fruitiness is green or ripe.
- 2.6. To send the following documents and samples to the IOC Executive Secretariat (Calle Príncipe de Vergara, 154, 28002 Madrid, Spain) by **17 February 2026**, stating "Mario Solinas Quality Award, International Extra Virgin Olive Oil Competition" on the envelope:
- The registration form
 - The notarial deed concerning the collection of the samples and the location and sealing of the tank
 - The chemical testing certificate and sensory analysis certificate issued respectively by a laboratory and a tasting panel holding IOC recognition for 2025/2026
 - The document on the traceability of the batch

^{2,3} The lists of laboratories and panels awarded IOC recognition for 2025/2026 will be adopted by the IOC Council of Members in November 2025, after which they will be posted on the IOC website:

<https://www.internationaloliveoil.org/what-we-do/chemistry-standardisation-unit/#recognition-laboratories>

- Three of the 500 mL samples, properly packaged to avoid breakage during transportation
 - Declaration on honour that the participant does not participate in or own other companies or company names that have submitted samples in this competition
- 2.7. To be responsible for all shipping costs and the costs of all necessary customs and storage management until the samples and documents are received by the Executive Secretariat of the IOC.
- 2.8. To keep the remaining two 500 mL samples. These samples will remain at the disposal of the IOC Executive Secretariat in case any of the other samples should be spoiled or lost.

Note: The IOC will not be responsible for customs clearance of samples, nor will it take any action or pay any fees for this purpose.

3. Stages of the competition

- 3.1. After receipt of the samples, the IOC Executive Secretariat shall assign a secret code number to each of the oils entered for the competition. Such code numbers shall be written on an opaque, self-adhesive label that shall completely cover the original identification label.

It shall classify the oils from large-scale producers (batch volume $\geq 4\,000$) according to the intensity of the median of the fruitiness attribute and the type of fruitiness (see document COI/T.20/Doc. 15) awarded by the panel that issued the sensory analysis certificate:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Median fruitiness</u>	<u>Batch volume</u>
<u>Robust green fruitiness</u>	$Me > 6$	$\geq 4\,000$ litres
<u>Medium green fruitiness</u>	$3 < Me \leq 6$	$\geq 4\,000$ litres
<u>Delicate green fruitiness</u>	$Me \leq 3$	$\geq 4\,000$ litres
<u>Ripe fruitiness</u>		$\geq 4\,000$ litres
<u>Small-scale producers</u>		$\geq 1\,000$ litres
<u>Packers</u>		$\geq 15\,000$ litres

The IOC reserves the right to perform physico–chemical check analyses and, if appropriate, to disqualify any oil that fails to comply with the parameters stipulated in the IOC standards.

- 3.2. Entries shall be analysed by an international panel. The members of the panel shall be appointed by the Executive Secretariat from among the leaders of panels that are recognised by the IOC.

The international panel shall use the assessment sheet given in Annex 2 for this analysis and shall then calculate the median of the total scores awarded by each member of the panel.

If the panel considers that an oil does not belong to the category to which it has been pre-assigned, it may classify the oil in another category.

The international panel shall select the winner of the Mario Solinas Quality Award in each group according to the scores obtained and shall propose a second and third prize winner in each group from amongst the remaining finalists. In the case of a tie, a sample of both olive oils could be sent to a laboratory recognised by the IOC for 2025/2026 in order to reevaluate their free acidity and the peroxide value. Then, the oil with the lowest free acidity shall be chosen. If the tie continues, the oil with the lowest peroxide value shall be chosen.

The minimum score to win a prize shall be 70 for the robust and medium green fruitiness olive oils, 65 for the delicate green fruitiness olive oils, and 60 for the ripe fruitiness.

The international panel reserves the right to award a number of prizes in proportion to the number of entries received for each of the categories.

The decision of the international panel shall be final and shall not be open to appeal.

4. Closing date for registration

The closing date for registration and presentation of samples shall be **17 February 2026**.

5. Award of prizes

The prizes for the winning oils shall be awarded by the Executive Director of the IOC or other authorities during an official ceremony.

6. Prizes

The prizes shall comprise a medal (gold, silver or bronze) for the winners in each category who will also receive a diploma. The three finalists in each category will receive a finalist diploma.

In categories with a small number of participants, the number of winners will be determined by the international panel and will be proportional to the number of participants in each category (does not exceed 20% of the number of participants in each category).

The winners may only mention the prize on the label of packs belonging to the same batch as the winning sample, in accordance with the rules specified for its display in Annex 3.

The results of the competition shall be published on the IOC web site (www.internationaloliveoil.org).

7. Acceptance

Participation in the Mario Solinas Quality Award implies acceptance of these rules.

THE MARIO SOLINAS QUALITY AWARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL FOR QUALITY
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OILS
2026 EDITION

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

2025/2026 crop year

Registration form

Name of competitor/registered name

Address

Post code

City/town

Country

Telephone

Sample identification
number:

Batch volume:

Category:

☐ Small-scale producer

☐ Large-scale producer

☐ Packer:

E-mail:

Contact:

Registration deadline: 17 February 2026

Done at on2026
(Signature)

Send to:
International Olive Council, calle Príncipe de Vergara 154, 28002 Madrid – Spain; Tel.: 0034 91.590.36.38

**THE MARIO SOLINAS QUALITY AWARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL FOR QUALITY
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OILS
2026 EDITION**

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

SENSORY ASSESSMENT SHEET

SAMPLE CODE:			
TASTER IDENTIFICATION No:			
DATE:			

Perceived defects : NO/YES If YES, please write the name of defect/s:

N.B. In case of the defects perception, do not fill in the next section.

<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">A. DIRECT OLFACTORY ANALYSIS (40 points)</th> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">FRUITY DESCRIPTION: Green ☐ Ripe ☐</td> </tr> <tr> <th style="width: 80%;">PARAMETER</th> <th style="width: 20%;">SCORE</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Fruity (0-10) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Complexity⁽¹⁾ (0-20)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Balance⁽²⁾ (0-10)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">PARTIAL SCORE A</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">B. RETRONASAL, GUSTATORY AND TACTILE ANALYSIS (45 points)</th> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">FRUITY DESCRIPTION: Green ☐ Ripe ☐</td> </tr> <tr> <th style="width: 80%;">PARAMETER</th> <th style="width: 20%;">SCORE</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Fruity (0-10) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sweetness (0-5) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bitterness (0-5) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pungency (0-5) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Astringency Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Complexity⁽¹⁾ (0-10)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Balance⁽²⁾ (0-10)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">PARTIAL SCORE B</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">C. FINAL OLFACTORY-GUSTATORY SENSATION (15 points)</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="width: 80%;">PARAMETER</th> <th style="width: 20%;">SCORE</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Harmony⁽³⁾ (0-10)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Persistence⁽⁴⁾ (0-5)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">PARTIAL SCORE C</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	A. DIRECT OLFACTORY ANALYSIS (40 points)		FRUITY DESCRIPTION: Green ☐ Ripe ☐		PARAMETER	SCORE	Fruity (0-10) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐		Complexity ⁽¹⁾ (0-20)		Balance ⁽²⁾ (0-10)		PARTIAL SCORE A		B. RETRONASAL, GUSTATORY AND TACTILE ANALYSIS (45 points)		FRUITY DESCRIPTION: Green ☐ Ripe ☐		PARAMETER	SCORE	Fruity (0-10) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐		Sweetness (0-5) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐		Bitterness (0-5) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐		Pungency (0-5) Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐		Astringency Delicate ☐ Medium ☐ Robust ☐		Complexity ⁽¹⁾ (0-10)		Balance ⁽²⁾ (0-10)		PARTIAL SCORE B		C. FINAL OLFACTORY-GUSTATORY SENSATION (15 points)		PARAMETER	SCORE	Harmony ⁽³⁾ (0-10)		Persistence ⁽⁴⁾ (0-5)		PARTIAL SCORE C		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">FLAVOUR DESCRIPTION (DIRECT OR RETRONASAL OLFACTORY SENSATIONS)</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="width: 70%;">Descriptors</th> <th style="width: 15%; color: blue;">Direct</th> <th style="width: 15%; color: blue;">Retronasal</th> </tr> <tr><td>Green</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Grass</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Olive leaf</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Apple (green/ripe)</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Almond (green/ripe)</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Tomato (green/ripe)</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Tomato plant</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Banana (green/ripe)</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Artichoke</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Citrus fruits</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Fig leaves</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Flowers/Floral</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Hot spices (pepper, etc)</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Sweet spices (anise, ...)</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Aromatic herbs</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Camomile</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Eucalyptus</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Exotic fruit</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Leafy vegetables</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Pine kernel</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Soft fruit</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Vanilla</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Walnut</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	FLAVOUR DESCRIPTION (DIRECT OR RETRONASAL OLFACTORY SENSATIONS)			Descriptors	Direct	Retronasal	Green			Grass			Olive leaf			Apple (green/ripe)			Almond (green/ripe)			Tomato (green/ripe)			Tomato plant			Banana (green/ripe)			Artichoke			Citrus fruits			Fig leaves			Flowers/Floral			Hot spices (pepper, etc)			Sweet spices (anise, ...)			Aromatic herbs			Camomile			Eucalyptus			Exotic fruit			Leafy vegetables			Pine kernel			Soft fruit			Vanilla			Walnut											
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(1) Complexity: increases with the number and intensity of aromas and flavours

(2) Balance: The intensity relation among the evaluated olfactory fruitiness descriptors or gustatory attributes.

(3) Harmony: increases when attributes are balanced

(4) Persistence: length of time that retronasal sensations persist after the sip of olive oil is no longer in the mouth

*Descriptors of direct or retronasal olfactory sensations as described in COI/T20/Doc. N° 22

DESCRIPTORS OF DIRECT OR RETRONASAL OLFATORY SENSATIONS

Green: Complex olfactory sensation reminiscent of the typical odour of fruit before it ripens

Grass: Olfactory sensation typical of freshly mown grass

Olive leaf: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of the odour of fresh olive leaves

Apple: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of the odour of fresh apples

Almond: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of fresh almonds

Tomato fruit (green/ripe): Olfactory sensation typical of tomato fruits

Tomato leaf: Olfactory sensation typical of tomato leaves

Banana: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of the characteristic odour of banana

Artichoke: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of artichokes

Citrus fruit: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of that of citrus fruit (lemon, orange, bergamot, mandarin and grapefruit)

Fig leaf: Olfactory sensation typical of fig leaves

Flowers: Complex olfactory sensation generally reminiscent of the odour of flours, also known as floral

Hot spices (pepper, etc): Olfactory sensation mainly of green peppercorns or of fresh green peppers

Sweet spices (anise, etc): Olfactory sensation of green anise or of fresh sweet red peppers

Aromatics herbs: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of that of aromatic herbs

OTHERS:

Camomile: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of that of camomile flowers

Eucalyptus: Olfactory sensation typical of Eucalyptus leaves

Exotic fruit: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of the characteristic odours of exotic fruit (pineapple, banana, passion fruit, mango, papaya, etc.)

Leafy vegetables: Olfactory sensation typical of leafy vegetables (i.e. chicory, etc.)

Pine kernel: Olfactory sensation reminiscent of the odour of fresh pine kernels

Soft fruit: Olfactory sensation typical of soft fruit: blackberries, raspberries, bilberries, blackcurrants and redcurrants

Vanilla: Olfactory sensation of natural dried vanilla powder or pods, different from the sensation of vanillin

Walnut: Olfactory sensation typical of shelled walnuts

THE MARIO SOLINAS QUALITY AWARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL FOR QUALITY
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OILS
2026 EDITION

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

RULES FOR DISPLAYING THE AWARD ON THE LABEL
OF THE WINNING EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

1. Mention of the Award on packs of the winning extra virgin olive oil

The winner of the first prize of the Mario Solinas Quality Award in each of the groups may mention the prize obtained for this year's edition on the packs of extra virgin olive oil belonging to the source batch of the winning sample. The winners of the second prize and third prize in each group may do likewise.

Such mention is dependent on the submission of a request to this effect by the winner, which should be addressed to the IOC Executive Secretariat, and on the notification of the number of packs that will be filled with the extra virgin olive oil from the source batch of the winning sample.

2. Display of the prize: official label

Each of the prizes shall be displayed on a numbered, self-adhesive official label not larger than 7cm² bearing the mention of the prize and the year it was granted.

3. Delivery of the official prize labels to the winner

Winners who submit a request to mention the prize on packs of the winning extra virgin olive oil will be supplied with official, numbered labels by the Executive Secretariat. The number of official labels provided will coincide with the number of packs notified by the winner and will be delivered after prior payment.

In the event of failure to comply with the requirements specified in this Annex the winners concerned may not enter for future editions of this competition and the competent authorities will be notified.

4. Prize-winning oils

Winners shall in no event receive any financial contribution. Winning companies shall reserve 50 litres of the prize-winning batch, which may be acquired by the IOC, and which shall be bottled exclusively for the IOC in different formats to be agreed by the parties. These oils shall be used by the IOC for their institutional, training and promotional activities.

