

{ FOOD }

Olive on Tap

Around the room, customers read description cards aloud: “Moderate pepper and bite with a clean finish,” and “Green-apple notes with hints of almond.” This may sound like a wine tasting in action, but it’s actually a tasting with a decidedly more culinary bent: olive oil. Tasting bars dedicated to the Mediterranean nectar of the gods have popped up from coast to coast, and whether you’re serious about cooking or just serious about, well, sampling these little nerve centers of flavor, they give customers a chance to taste and compare. “People love coming to our store to learn, socialize and try the different products,” says Charlie Ruehr, co-founder of **PURE MOUNTAIN OLIVE OIL** in New York. “We share recipes with customers, and customers share cooking ideas with each other.”

With shiny metal canisters of artisanal oils and glass bottles ready for filling, these shops offer not only olive oils but balsamic vinegars, with suggestions for their complex pairings. While the olive oils (infused with anything from garlic to truffles) are dashing on their own, when served in tandem with vinegars enlivened by flavors like grapefruit or espresso, a whole different level of foodie bliss is revealed. Trust us: Try one of these tasting bars, and you’ll never be able to return to the grocery-store variety of olive oil again. Here’s where to get your taste on:

PURE MOUNTAIN OLIVE OIL

Rhinebeck and Tarrytown, N.Y.

Knowledgeable employees at both locations north of New York City share information on the benefits of olive oil and the process behind making it. www.puremountainoliveoil.com

THE OLIVE BAR

Campbell, Calif. (just outside of San Jose)

The friendly staff offer an international selection; they also import high-quality coconut oil. www.theolivebar.com

BOSTON OLIVE OIL COMPANY

Boston

The company boasts artisanal cooking products in the heart of dignified Newbury Street. www.bostonoliveoilcompany.com

SCARBOROUGH FARE

Beacon and New Paltz, N.Y.

Less than two hours north of Manhattan, these two Hudson Valley locations let you bring your own jars if you like. www.scarboroughfarenp.com

—RANI LONG



{ DRINK }

High-Tech Wine List

In a time when restaurants boast about how many bottles of wine they have in their cellars, diners have never been more thirsty — or more overwhelmed. How is one supposed to choose the right bottle as she flips through a wine list that more closely resembles Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (at least in length, anyway)? Enter the **IPAD WINE LIST**. That’s right. Restaurants around the country — from Wolfgang Puck’s Cut in Las Vegas to The French Laundry in Yountville, Calif., and Per Se in New York — are raising the bar quite literally by outfitting patrons with iPads preloaded with a wine list. In the mood for chardonnay? Simply tap on the varietal and all the chardonnay selections are filtered for you. Always wanted to try a wine from Greece? Tap! Love cheval blanc? Tap! Search by producer, grape, varietal, region and even price. It’s educational, too: The mobile wine lists equip diners with a wealth of information, from the taste of a certain grape to the story behind the winemaker.

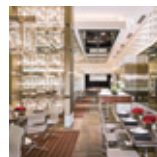
—KATE PARHAM

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