

# POSTCARD

## Tuscany



We drizzle it on salads, pour it over pasta and dip chunks of bread into it, but have you ever thought about what goes into making olive oil? [Yolanda Zappaterra](#) finds out

I've had my share of *Alice in Wonderland* 'eat me' or 'drink me' moments – those times when curiosity has overcome all other inhibitions to entice me to try fermented shark in Iceland, fried grasshoppers in Mexico and yak butter tea in northern India.

But drinking olive oil? Never. Dripped it into my ears, rubbed it on my kitchen worktops, even used it as a paint remover – yes. But drunk it – no.

That's about to change, as I settle into my seat for my first extra virgin olive oil tasting, as part of a small-group tour in a rustic farmhouse-style setting in a winery in Tuscany.

Tucked into the southeastern part of the Chianti Classico region, and with roots in the 13th century, Fèlsina Winery prides itself on producing PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) wines and oils drawn from carefully cultivated, tended and monitored plants, all produced in clearly defined ways.

Knowledgeable vintner Chiara, one of a growing number of female wine experts in the region, has just taken us through samplings of intensely flavourful Pecorino Toscano PDO cheese and Prosciutto Toscano PDO, as well as Fèlsina's excellent PDO wines, explaining the very strict conditions and specifications that regulate how these are made.

Now, we're moving on to the oils. They include monocultivar oils (those made from just one type of olive) and a Pagliarese DPO oil, made from a crop of just 1,100 olive trees dedicated to its production.

Over the next hour or so, we sample pendolino, leccino, moraiolo and raggaiolo oils carefully, learning to identify individual flavours, from artichoke and hazelnut to bell pepper and almonds; admire the breadth of colours, from straw-yellow and vibrant lime to intense, dark greens; note how surprisingly different the textures and viscosity are; and understand how all these combine to give a good indicator of what you should and shouldn't do with them (in culinary terms, that is – I daren't ask which would be best for oiling my worktops).

Leaving with a beautiful selection box of all four monocultivar oils, the sun setting over the dusky hills and their stark cypress trees, I am enchanted by what has been a surprising yet utterly charming experience – and, unlike some of my past *Alice in Wonderland* moments, a hugely enjoyable one. **TW**



### BOOK IT

Fèlsina Winery offers daily tours taking in the historic cellar, with wine tasting and olive oil tasting, from €20 per person. The winery is also featured on Expressions Holidays' five-day Wine Tour of Tuscany trip, which costs from £2,890, including BA flights, four-star hotel, guide, transport and some meals. [felsina.it](http://felsina.it)



TOP: Traditional olive oil making in Italy  
ABOVE: Old cellar building at Fèlsina Winery

PICTURES: Shutterstock; Colin Dutton