

# *Olive Oil benefits*

## *- by appointment of his Majesty the King*

Olive Oil has been known and consumed profusely since the time of the Romans and the Greeks, and prior to it, the Egyptians, that favoured its utilization not just as a cooking media, but also as ointment for the skin, the hair and as purging and cleaning agent for wellbeing. Our ancestors did not know anything about its contents of poly-unsaturated acidity and the richness in vitamins, but knew empirically that it was good for the health. The (today called) virgin olive oil (extracted by natural drip or pressure, without chemical agents) kept on being used for this purposes, natural and unadulterated during centuries.

We have to advance, nevertheless, to the early years of the XVII Century to see the innovative utilization of the olive oil. Since the invention of the soap, in the antiquity, the raw ingredients were pig's lard and natural caustic soda, obtaining from plant-burning. The soap made during these centuries was coarse and very astringent for the skin, as an effect of the properties of the ingredients, which, even being natural, "burned" the skin, biologically and chemically, provoking irritation, scaling, dandruff and dryness in sensitive people. To be honest, soap was known and used, but, in general, the hygienic habits of the population on those centuries were not ... up to scratch, so to say, so the solution to the dryness of skin and irritation, passed by just, not using soap!

This was the case of Louis XIV, King of France in the XVII Century. He was of strong nature, but had a very sensitive skin, featuring often eczema and dermatitis. During one trip to his domains in Provence, (South of France), he stopped over in Marseille. Lodged in the *chateau* of one of his counts, he was bathed by the service, –at that time the King would have at

last two servants that would soak, scrub, rinse and pat-dry him – after which, to his amazement, he did not experience the typical rash and skin de-scaling. He asked what was the magic of the soap – to what he was answered that it was made with olive oil, instead of with pig's lard. Everybody knew it on the region! The Marseillaise had only copied the original recipe from the Syrians's, who, for centuries, had been making Alph's soap, with olive oil.



The King was so happy with the results that ordered a full load of the "*savon de Marseille*" (Marseille's soap) to be shipped immediately to Versailles, in Paris, to be used upon his arrival. To

protect and copyright (on those times!) the quality of the product, the King provided the soap with a "DOC" (Denomination d'Origin Controlée) and uniqueness of naming "Marseille Soap" to the products that would be made with at least 73% of olive oil. Since then, Marseille Soap was "by appointment of his Majesty the King". More than 300 years later, all the skin and wellbeing benefits of this olive-oil therapy can be also found in naturally made soaps...but beware of the ones industrially made...sometimes, they only contain the perfume of the "Marseille Soap", that of citronella, a natural fragrance from some plants, with additional benefits –as it repels mosquitoes...

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