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MEETING ABSTRACT OP

Back to basics, the new epoque of American gastronomy and the role of olive oil in it

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Abstract: American gastronomy has evolved through five major periods, moving from industrial standardization to today's refined, ingredient-driven culture. The Dormant Period (late 1800s–mid-1950s) prioritized mass production and convenience, with processed foods dominating the market. Olive oil was largely confined to immigrant communities. During the so-called Dark Ages (late 1950s–early 1970s), industrial food culture peaked, emphasizing frozen meals, artificial ingredients, and refined oils, while culinary diversity and quality remained secondary. The Awakening (mid-1970s–early 1980s) marked a turning point. The farm-to-table movement and the influence of Mediterranean cuisine introduced Americans to fresh, seasonal ingredients and extra virgin olive oil as a premium product. The Enlightenment period (mid-1980s–mid-1990s) further elevated culinary standards, expanding consumer awareness of quality differences in olive oil and strengthening imports from Europe. Since the early 2000s, the Period of Refinement has emphasized traceability, authenticity, and health-conscious consumption. Olive oil is now valued not only as a cooking fat but as a defining flavor component and functional food. Within this transformation, Greek olive oil holds significant potential. Greece produces a high percentage of extra virgin olive oil, particularly from the Koroneiki variety, known for its high polyphenol content and robust flavor. Although historically exported in bulk, Greek producers are increasingly focusing on branding, certification, and premium positioning in the U.S. market. Challenges remain, including market saturation, consumer confusion, and climate pressures. However, through education, storytelling, and strategic promotion, Greek olive oil can secure a stronger identity in the evolving landscape of American gastronomy.



Keywords: Gastronomy, America, Greece, extra virgin olive oil, Koreneiki

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