



Olive Leaf Tea

by: Mark Hanly MD

Introduction

I grew up in a part of the world where drinking iced tea was unknown. However, it took me only a few hot days of a Georgia summer to realize what a wonderful refreshing drink, well-made (that means not out of the packet– instant type) iced tea can be. Indeed after 20 years here in the South I consider myself a connoisseur of iced tea. This is another reason why I am so excited about the possibilities of genuine olive tree farming here in Southeast Georgia. Olive trees are so much more than just the fruit or olive oil. Oh yes! Have you ever tried olive leaf tea?

Olive leaf tea has been consumed in the Mediterranean for over 5000 years. Used for centuries in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean it was recognized as having value as a calmate, and fever fighter. Indeed during the hostilities between France and Spain at the early part of the 19th century Spanish military doctors discovered that if an infusion of olive leaves was administered to soldiers with high temperatures they received significant relief. This was eventually written about by a French physician (Colonel E. Pallas) who discovered the “Spanish secret” while in the French army and used it to great effect while treating patients on the battlefields of the Iberian peninsula.

Although the empirical use of olive leaf tea and olive leaf extracts has continued for centuries it was only in 1908 that the main active ingredient (Oleuropein) was isolated and named by Drs. Bioulquelot and Vintilesco (C R Acad Sci 147: 533-535, 1908). Since this time however a large array of scientific data has been accumulated related to the value of olive leaf tea or other olive leaf extracts containing oleuropein and a new discovered ingredient oleanolic acid.

Benefits

As a physician I give little credence “treatments” unless supported by scientific data. So what benefits have been ascribed to the use of olive leaf tea or olive leaf tea extract in scientific literature?

Blood-Pressure

Taking olive leaf extract may help to lower your blood pressure and potentially treat hypertension. Olive leaf contains the constituent oleuropein, which may be the active component responsible for many of the herb’s actions, including decreasing high blood pressure, says the University of Michigan Health System. Even though research on olive leaf extract’s ability to treat high blood pressure has involved mostly animal and test tube studies, with only very small clinical trials in humans. The University of Michigan cites an animal study that found that oleuropein lowers blood pressure and dilates the coronary arteries. Small human studies have also yielded results indicating that oleuropein can reduce blood pressure. In a small study of 40 sets of twins with high blood pressure, one sibling from each pair of twins took 1,000 mg of olive leaf extract daily and the other twin took a placebo for eight weeks, Drug Digest notes. At the end of the trial, the twins who took olive leaf extract had decreased blood pressure, while their siblings’ blood pressure remained high.

Recipe



Take 10–20 mature, unblemished leaves from a healthy plant

Rinse in water and gently dry



Place in a cool dry area for 3 to 7 days until fully dried



When needed place 10 to 15 dried leaves per cup of water into a container and boil for 5 minutes



Remove from the stove and let the leaves steep in the boiled water for 2–3 minutes until the fluid becomes a beautiful golden tan color and serve



You may add sugar if you wish and drink warm, but the tea is delicious cold as well

Reduction in Predisposition to Blood Clot Formation

Olive leaf extract helped to decrease blood platelets' "stickiness," or ability to form clots, Drug Digest says. A test tube study also found that oleuropein suppresses the oxidation of LDL, or "bad cholesterol," in the blood, which can lead to atherosclerosis, the University of Michigan notes.

Treating Diabetes

Olive leaf extract has been shown to lower blood glucose. The oleuropein contained in olive leaf extract appears to stimulate the release of insulin and promotes increased glucose use in the body, says Drug Digest. But unfortunately, the only evidence for this claim is from animal studies. The effectiveness of olive leaf extract in lowering high blood glucose levels has yet to be seen in human clinical trials, says the University of Michigan Health System.

Treating Infections

You might also use olive leaf extract to fight infections. Olive leaf extract may have antiviral, antibacterial and antifungal properties. Olive leaf extract may also slow down or stop the growth of certain viruses and skin fungi (Antiviral Res. 2005 Jun;66(2-3):129-36. The olive leaf extract exhibits antiviral activity against viral haemorrhagic septicaemia rhabdovirus (VHSV); Biochemical-and-Biophysical-Research-Communications. 2003; 307(4): 1029-1037, 2003 Anti-HIV activity of olive leaf extract (OLE) and modulation of host cell gene expression by HIV -1 infection and OLE treatment).

