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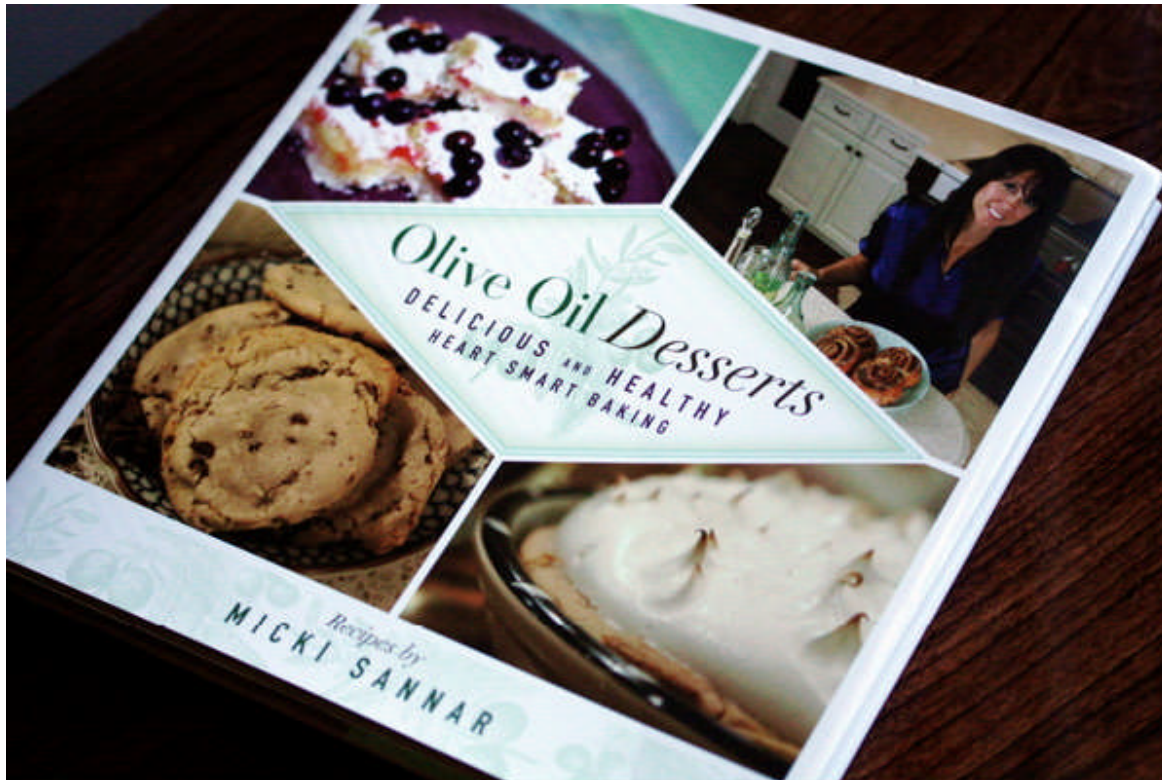
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[Olive Oil Desserts: Delicious and Healthy Heart Smart Baking](#)

by [Lori Writer](#) on October 20, 2009



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Micki Sannar, author of [Olive Oil Desserts: Delicious and Healthy Heart Smart Baking](#) [150 pages, hardcover, Mikko Publishing], writes: “My own high cholesterol and a desire for healthier home baking led me to create *Olive Oil Desserts*.” Sannar also writes that both she and her husband noticed a drop in LDL cholesterol when they started incorporating olive oil into their daily diet.

If the looming holidays and the resultant parade of parties and potlucks leave you to ponder the effect all of those delicious buttery cookies and flaky lard-laden pie crusts might have on your own cholesterol count or whether you’ll fit into your skinny jeans come January, *Olive Oil Desserts* might be the cookbook for you.



Lori Writer / Heavy Table

about 2/3 cup olive oil is needed to replace 1 cup of butter” in most recipes, though each recipe requires “a bit of adjusting” to get it right. She provides a brief primer on the four grades of olive oil, from extra virgin to olive-pomace oil, but says pure olive oil, which is a blend of refined olive oil and virgin olive oil, “is always best for sweet desserts.” All the book’s recipes — which include those for cakes; cookies and bars; muffins and sweetbreads; and pies and crisps — call for pure olive oil.

Sannar also suggests that if you want to substitute whole wheat pastry flour for white flour in desserts: “You can start slow by using half white and half Whole Wheat Pastry Flour or you can be very courageous and use only the pastry flour.” Recipes that are easily adapted to whole wheat pastry flour are identified.

The author also suggests: “If you plan on baking often, purchase your olive oil in bulk (in large containers). This may reduce your costs significantly.” If you plan on baking a lot from this book, we suggest [Bill’s Imported Foods](#) on West Lake Street in Minneapolis, where you can buy a gallon of pure olive oil for a mere \$28.

We were curious how desserts would fare without butter. Would pie crusts be as flaky without the water in the butter expanding to form the layers? Would cakes be as fluffy? Would cookies spread too much or not at all? Would the desserts taste as rich?

We tested five recipes from the book, with varying degrees of success. Our least successful efforts were the Lemony Squares with Blueberries and The Perfect Olive Oil Pie Crust. With the Lemony Squares, we found the flaked coconut and powdered sugar crust to be overpoweringly sweet. The lemony filling didn’t seem sufficiently lemony. We baked our Lemony Squares an additional 20 minutes beyond the 15 to 20 minutes specified by the recipe, and still found them runny in the middle. One taster suggested trying the recipe as Limey Squares, with the lime and coconut playing off of each other.

The Perfect Pie Crust, which Sannar says “bakes up light and crispy,” was unexpectedly stiff and chewy, more akin to a pizza crust, rather than delicate and flaky. We used ours for rhubarb pie and were pleasantly surprised that the pie crust didn’t deteriorate into a soggy mess overnight as many pie crusts do. Our verdict on the pie crust is that it is a workable option only if butter or lard crusts are truly off limits for you. Or if you have a pie baking emergency between midnight and 6am while Lunds is closed and you’re out of butter.



Lori Writer / Heavy Table

Our favorite recipes were the Sneakerdoodles and the Blueberry Streusel. The Sneakerdoodles were, according to one taster, “reminiscent of the snickerdoodles you get at an elementary school lunch or class party.” We liked the balance of sweet and buttery (achieved, surprisingly, with butter extract) and the soft and chewy texture. The recipe was simple and easy to follow. We found that the delicate dough was easier to roll into balls after a time-out in the refrigerator.

We tried the Blueberry Streusel two ways: exclusively with white flour and, a second time, substituting whole wheat pastry flour for half the white flour (since this recipe was designated as one that is easily adapted). Both methods yielded a streusel that was airy and moist. During preparation, the crumble topping, a combination of flour, powdered sugar, cinnamon, salt, and olive oil, was perplexingly more like a paste than a crumble, and had to be pinched off and scattered about the surface of the cake. However, after the streusel had been baked and topped with the glaze, it all worked together. The biggest surprise was that, after a side by side comparison of the two versions of the streusel, we preferred the version made with half whole wheat pastry flour, as it was denser. We would try this recipe again, though, and I might add a couple of teaspoons of lemon zest to give it another flavor note.



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The final recipe we tried was Honey Cakes, which has the world’s most healthful sounding ingredient list: toasted sesame seeds, whole wheat pastry flour, salt, pure olive oil, and honey. Not flashy or overly sweet, this dessert would be best enjoyed cut into small squares as an accompaniment to tea. If you’re looking for a sticky sugar bomb, this is not the dessert for you.

Overall, we liked this book, and the author’s cheery and earnest dedication. Our success rate with the recipes was better than half, with our complaints centering around matters of texture and the occasional lack of complexity. But, we don’t think anyone at your office Halloween party will notice that your Sneakerdoodles were made with olive oil and instead of butter. If they were like our tasters, they’ll probably just ask for another.



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Sneakerdoodles

Excerpted from [*Olive Oil Desserts: Delicious and Healthy Heart Smart Baking*](#)

Serves 26 to 30

⅔ cup pure olive oil
1½ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon butter extract
2¾ cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1½ teaspoons cream of tartar
½ teaspoon salt

CINNAMON SUGAR

½ cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Lightly coat large cookie sheets with olive oil cooking spray.
2. In mixer bowl add olive oil, sugar, eggs, milk, and vanilla & butter extracts. Blend until creamy.
3. Add flour, baking soda, cream of tartar, and salt. Blend until well mixed.
4. Roll dough into ping pong sized balls. Roll in cinnamon sugar and place on prepared cookie sheets.
5. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until cookies are spread out and tops are light brown.

CINNAMON SUGAR PREPARATION

In small mixing bowl, add sugar and cinnamon. Mix until combined.