

# OIL

## THE OLD WAY

by JEANNE MILLER



Can you name a substance that people use for making medicines, soap, and cosmetics; for oiling machinery; for fueling lamps; for conducting religious ceremonies; and for cooking? If you lived in the Mediterranean region in ancient times, you could answer “olive oil.” In fact, with the possible exception of oiling machinery and fueling lamps, a modern-day American could give the same answer.

The first step in making olive oil the old way is to pick the olives by hand. The pickers stand on ladders and comb the branches with their fingers or small rakes, causing olives to drop into a tarp spread below. (Some producers use tractors with clamps that grab the tree and shake the fruit down, but this method can damage the olives and is probably not good for the tree either.)

They gather up the olives in baskets to await washing and crushing. It's important to crush them within 48 hours, before their own heat causes them to ferment, spoiling their oil.