

## Interview

# Seamus Mullen (Chef): “The American consumer is increasingly aware of the healthy benefits of the Mediterranean diet and the role that olive oil plays in it”

- “I incorporate olive oil throughout my kitchen. Very rare is the dish that I cook and does not carry at least an olive oil dressing,” explains the prestigious New York chef to Olive Oils of Spain
- “Americans continue to distrust fats. And it is important that they know that not all are equal. The wonderful thing about olive oil is that it not only tastes exquisite but it is also super healthy”

The New Yorker **Seamus Mullen** has a remarkable experience, after more than 25 years working around Spanish culinary tradition, of which he is a good connoisseur. He grew up between stoves in Spain and the US, Seamus achieved great popularity in 2006 with **Boquería**, one of the first critically acclaimed New York Spanish restaurants. He is ambassador of the Olive Oil World Tour campaign in the US and is committed to the harmonization between food, health and well-being. A way of understanding the health that he himself has experienced. After years of suffering from rheumatic problems, Mullen stood up to adversity and, with a balanced diet and sports, has stood up to the disease, demonstrating the importance of food and lifestyle, to enjoy good health.

**In your book “Real Food Heals” you fight against the widespread idea that healthy food cannot be fun and tasty. Why do many people think that?**

Previously, the notion of "healthy food" took away all pleasure and the taste of the dish, creating a dichotomy: we like food that we should not "eat" and we don't like the food we supposedly "should" eat. The problem

is that this way of understanding nutrition introduces the idea of obligation. Taking advantage of my professional experience - and the fact that I like to eat as much as I love to feel good - I try to illustrate that the idea of healthy food and delicious food are actually complementary ideas.

**How important is the Mediterranean diet (Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO) and its star ingredient, olive oil, in your proposal for healthy and at the same time fun food?**

Well, health is like a good recipe: it requires several ingredients and for it to be a good recipe, the ingredients have to be of the highest quality. Olive oil is the main ingredient in a healthy diet. We cannot reduce the lessons of the Mediterranean diet to a single element, since the rhythm of life, stress management, the importance of community and socialization form a very important part of this way of eating. Obviously, food is the fundamental base and the product that serves as the base is olive oil.

**In fact, it seems that the Mediterranean diet is living a especially sweet moment in the United States, since even the FDA recommends it in the Dietary guidelines for America as one of the healthiest food models. Do you think that information reaches the consumer?**

Definitely. The American consumer is increasingly aware of the healthy benefits of the Mediterranean diet and the role that olive oils plays in it.

**Give us some gastronomic tips to eat healthy. What foods would they be and how should they be prepared? Any recipe you would especially recommend?**

In my opinion, to have a really balanced dish we must start with vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, chard, etc. and also a sensitive amount of natural animal proteins, be it wild fish or free-range eggs or meat. A dish that can serve as a perfect example is a simple mashed avocado with garlic, anchovies, olive oil and lemon, served with raw vegetables such as cauliflower and radish.

**How and where did you discover or become familiar with olive oil and what presence does it have in your kitchen today? Were your trips to**

**Europe and, in particular, Spain as the world's leading producer of what they call "liquid gold" decisive?**

I got to know olive oil living and working in Spain. I incorporate olive oil throughout my kitchen. Very rare is the dish that I cook and does not carry at least an olive oil dressing

**To what extent has the change in lifestyle helped you, with more exercise and better nutrition in your health?**

It saved my life. I have seen many of my colleagues die of diseases that they would have avoided with simple changes in their lifestyle. Eight years ago, I was also going the same way. My life changed when I improved my relationship with food and started exercising daily.

**More and more influential are the scientific studies that confirm that regular consumption of extra virgin olive oil helps prevent diseases, have a better quality of life and even greater life expectancy (remember the high longevity achieved by the Spanish). Do you think this ingredient should be more present in today's American cuisine?**

There is no miracle solution, but the truth is that certain foods have very beneficial effects on our health. Obviously, we cannot isolate a single ingredient and say that this ingredient is healthy, but adopting a lifestyle that includes daily movement, socialization, recovery and stress moderation and also the incorporation of powerful ingredients such as olive oil, helps us mitigate diseases and prolong a healthy life.

**Americans continue to practically restrict the use of oils to salad dressing, perhaps because they are unaware of its versatility. What advice would you give to integrate it into the gastronomic culture of the United States?**

Stop being afraid of fats. We continue to drag the false myth of "low fat life style". Therefore, Americans continue to distrust fats. And it is important that they know that not all are equal. Historically the oils we consumed in the US They were neutral oils, tasteless. The wonderful thing about olive oil is that it not only tastes exquisite but is also super healthy.

It has the virtue of enhancing the flavors of food, be it a vegetable, a fish or a dessert.

## About Olive Oils from Spain and the "Olive Oil World Tour"

**Olive Oils from Spain** is the promotional brand of the Spanish Olive Oil Interprofessional, a non-profit organization formed by all the representative associations of the Spanish olive oil sector, and whose main objective is the dissemination of the healthy product to an international level.

With the campaign "**Olive Oil World Tour**" as a tool, it has proposed to make the world a place with more flavor and urges consumers to join the European way of life (*Join the European Healthy Lifestyle with Olive Oils from Spain*).

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**LIVE OIL MAKES A TASTIER WORLD**