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The Penn Compact in Action

Olive oil as painkiller?

Extra virgin olive oil—that staple of Mediterranean cuisine—has a lot in common with ibuprofen, that staple of pain relief.

Researchers from Penn and the Monell Chemical Senses Center recently collaborated on research which found extra virgin olive oil contains a natural anti-inflammatory agent that acts very much like the popular painkiller. After the team first identified the previously unknown compound, which they named "oleocanthal," in high-quality olive oil, Penn chemist Amos Smith created his own from scratch and proved the compound, like ibuprofen, inhibits the activity of COX-1 and COX-2 enzymes.

Though olive oil doesn't have enough oleocanthal to cure headaches, researcher say the work provides an important clue to why the Mediterranean diet, which uses liberal amounts of olive oil, is often associated with reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.

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The Penn Compact

The Penn Compact embodies Penn's vision for making our University both a global leader in teaching, research, and professional practice, as well as a dynamic agent of social, economic, and civic progress.

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Penn Fact:

Penn alumnus Nathaniel Wyeth designed the two-liter plastic soda bottle.