

GoingPlaces

[Fun things to do and see in Texas and beyond]

[DEEP IN THE HEART]

A Different Kind of Oil Boom

Rows of olive trees grow in the sloped, limestone-rich soil belonging to **Texas Hill Country Olive Company**, about 30 miles west of Austin in Dripping Springs. The olives typically appear each April, and over the next several months, they turn from green to orange-red to a deep, dark purple. Then comes harvest time. Beginning in September and continuing into November, workers pluck the five varieties by hand. Delicate, buttery Arbequina olives are frequently picked first. Missions, which make for rich, spicy oil, are often last. The fruit is pressed within 72 hours of harvesting, according to standards for true extra virgin oil. Texas Hill Country offers guided tours and tastings, and if you're fortunate enough to arrive as olives are being pressed (call or email in advance to find out), you might sample minutes-old, fresh-from-the-mill unfiltered oil. "When it's that fresh, it's very herbaceous," says Cara Gambini, who runs the business with her father, John. "It's grassy and peppery. Your mouth lights up." —*Cynthia J. Drake*

IF YOU GO

Texas Hill Country Olive Company
2530 W. Fitzhugh Road, Dripping Springs
Tours available Fridays and Saturdays, \$6
(512) 607-6512; store@texashillcountryoliveco.com
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