

Olive Odyssey: Searching for the Secrets of the Fruit That Seduced the World

Julie Angus



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When Julie Angus visits her relatives in Syria, where they continue a centuries-old tradition of making olive oil, she understands that the olive is at the very core of who they are. Her curiosity piqued, she begins to wonder about the origins and history of this fruit that has meant so much to them. Angus, her husband, and their ten-month-old son embark on a Mediterranean voyage to retrace the route of the Phoenicians and discover who ate the first olive and learned to make oil from it, why it became such an influential commodity for many of the greatest civilizations, and how it expanded from its earliest roots in the Middle East. As they sail the dazzling waters of the Mediterranean, Angus and her husband collect samples from ancient trees, testing them to determine where the first olive tree originated. They also feast on inky black tapenades in Cassis, nibble on codfish and chickpeas creamed in olive oil in Sardinia, witness the harvesting of olives in Greece, and visit perhaps the oldest olive tree in the world, on Crete.

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