

The Art of Blending Olive Oils

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Overview

Blending is an age-old practice. Successful outcomes depend on experience, ability, and curiosity. It helps if you have patience and a desire to experiment too. To blend is to combine various aromas and flavours to create something new. The word blending is used widely in the worlds of wine, whiskey, coffee, and extra virgin olive oil.

Blending consists of selecting components with varying characteristics, and combining them to achieve the right balance, to achieve a product with results superior to the single parts.

Lets taste some EVOO!

Who here blends?

Why do you blend?

Why do we blend Olive Oil?

- To improve flavour, balance, structure or all three for an oil - useful when oils lack their own personality but work well in combination with others
- Make a specific style: milder, medium, more robust/ peppery, sweeter, fruitier.
- Maintain the same final profile: Consistency and stability from year to year.

Why do we blend Olive Oil?

- ▶ Increase shelf life by adding more robust oils (giving higher polyphenol/biophenol levels)
- ▶ Market needs - What does your consumer want? You may need different blends for different customer demands
- ▶ Extend supply, especially in difficult years - In poorer years, such as this year, an oil may be improved with blending.

Blending Basics

- A good oil can be ruined if blended with a poor or defective oil.
- Excellent oil can be created by blending good oils.
- Blending can only remedy small inadequacies.
- Oils with very different flavour profiles usually do not blend well.

What can we blend?

When the ultimate goal is to create a more complex, balanced and harmonised oil, there are many different blending options:

1. By variety
2. Early or late season oils
3. Different parts of the grove or different grove locations
4. Different seasons
5. Other growers or neighbor's oil

How can we blend?

1. Co-milled

Some blends are produced with varieties of olives that are harvested and milled together at the same time in a single period.

Common in small olive groves where it is impossible to separate the olives by variety, or in centuries-old or ancient olive groves where it is common to find many different olive cultivars.

How can we blend?

2. In-tank blending

Many larger producers have the ability to either mill varieties separately and/ or mill olives at different stages of ripeness. Some blends are done post processing and settling.

Single varieties and batches are processed and stored in separate tanks. This leaves the grower with a number of different oils, each containing different aroma and flavour profiles.

The oils are then sampled and small sample blends are created.

Once the final blend is agreed – a larger blend is made by adding the correct amount of each oil into a clean tank and agitating/pumping over to make sure the blend is even.

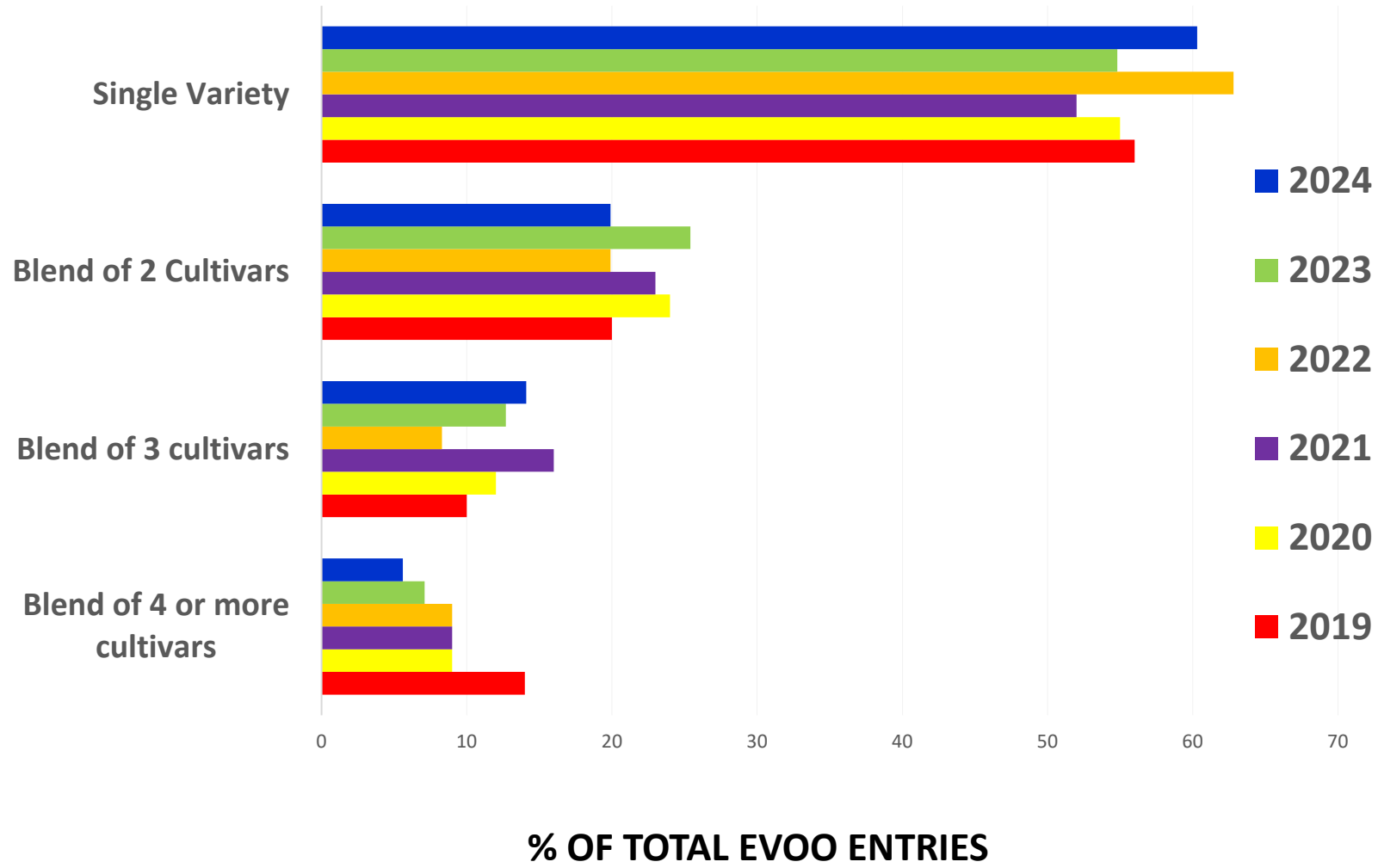
AIOA Statistics

This year oils were made from one or more of 30 varieties (34 in 2023), with origins in Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Israel, and Australia.

Oils entered in the 2024 show were made from:

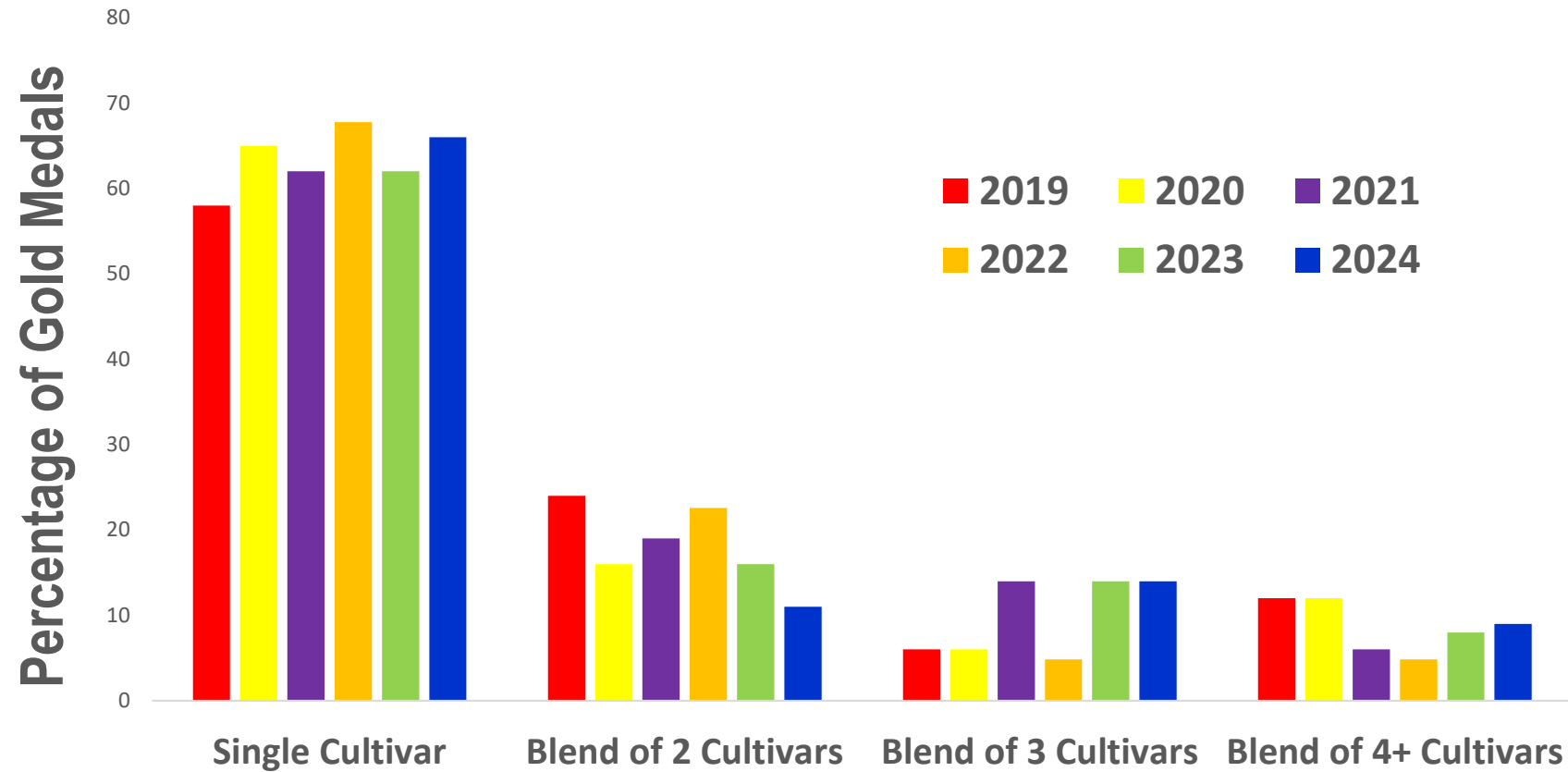
- A single cultivar, **60.2%** of entries
- Blends of 2 cultivars, **19.8%** of entries
- Blends of 3 varieties, **14.2%** of entries and
- Blends of 4 or more cultivars, made up **5.6%** of entries

% OF EVOO ENTRIES MADE WITH ONE OR MORE OLIVE CULTIVARS



AIOA Statistics

NUMBER OF CULTIVARS IN GOLD MEDAL OILS



Blending method

- 1. Be Prepared** – funnels, small bottles, oil samples, measuring tools, writing materials, labels, tasting cups, water/apples, calculator/spreadsheets
- 2. Understand end user needs/wants.** Are your oils going to food service, foodies, newbies or friends? Do they want big and bold or more subtle?
- 3. Taste the oils.** Make detailed notes. Taste again. Taste again. Make more notes about all components - aroma, mouthfeel, flavour, bitterness, pepper, astringency, finish, length
- 4. Compare** the best and weakest components of each oil
- 5. What is the desired outcome?** Have an idea of what aroma/flavour/style of oil you wish to create?

Blending method continued.

- 6. Review** the components of each oil in view of the outcome desired.
- 7. Produce a small experimental blend.** Evaluate the resulting blend and confirm the recipe or repeat the process until you have the final blend you are happy with.
- 8. Replicate** the best blend at a later time or day. Assess your new sample with a fresh palate and compare it with your previous tasting notes. Make any adjustments needed.
- 9. Record keeping** - Keep good records of each blend made including pros and cons of each one.
- 10. Keep reference oils.** Keep a little of each blend for reference along the way.

Things to Consider

- 🍇 Make sure you have enough tasting supplies on hand for everyone tasting (apples, tasting cups, spittoons, water etc.).
- 🍇 Prepare and taste your oil samples in an environment free of environmental odours (cleaning sprays, cigarettes/vapes), or personal odours (shampoo, perfume, aftershave, scented lotions, etc).
- 🍇 Taste between breakfast and lunch– your palate is at its brightest.
- 🍇 Refrain from eating and drinking at least an hour before tasting oils
- 🍇 Be aware of palate fatigue. Take regular breaks.

Things to Consider cont.

- 🍋 Be careful with bitterness and pepper. If all component oils are strongly bitter, a mild oil will be lost. This is also true of other characteristics.
- 🍋 Do not overdo a blend. Too many flavour components can result in muddled aromas and flavours that are difficult to decipher
- 🍋 Do you have storage and tanks for keeping different oils before and after blending
- 🍋 Do you have the ability to harvest singular varieties
- 🍋 Do you have facilities for blending – agitators, pumping over, ability to measure ratios

Things to Consider Cont.

- 🍋 Consumer expectations/demands
- 🍋 Remember that although extremely important, flavour is not the only consideration when creating a blend. Balance, bitterness, pepper etc all play an important part.
- 🍋 If buying from other groves – check chemical analysis, taste the oils before you buy, know when it was harvested, make sure it has been stored correctly. Transport logistics.
- 🍋 Need to think about what you do with the remaining oil that is not used in your blend.

Exercise 1- Adding complexity

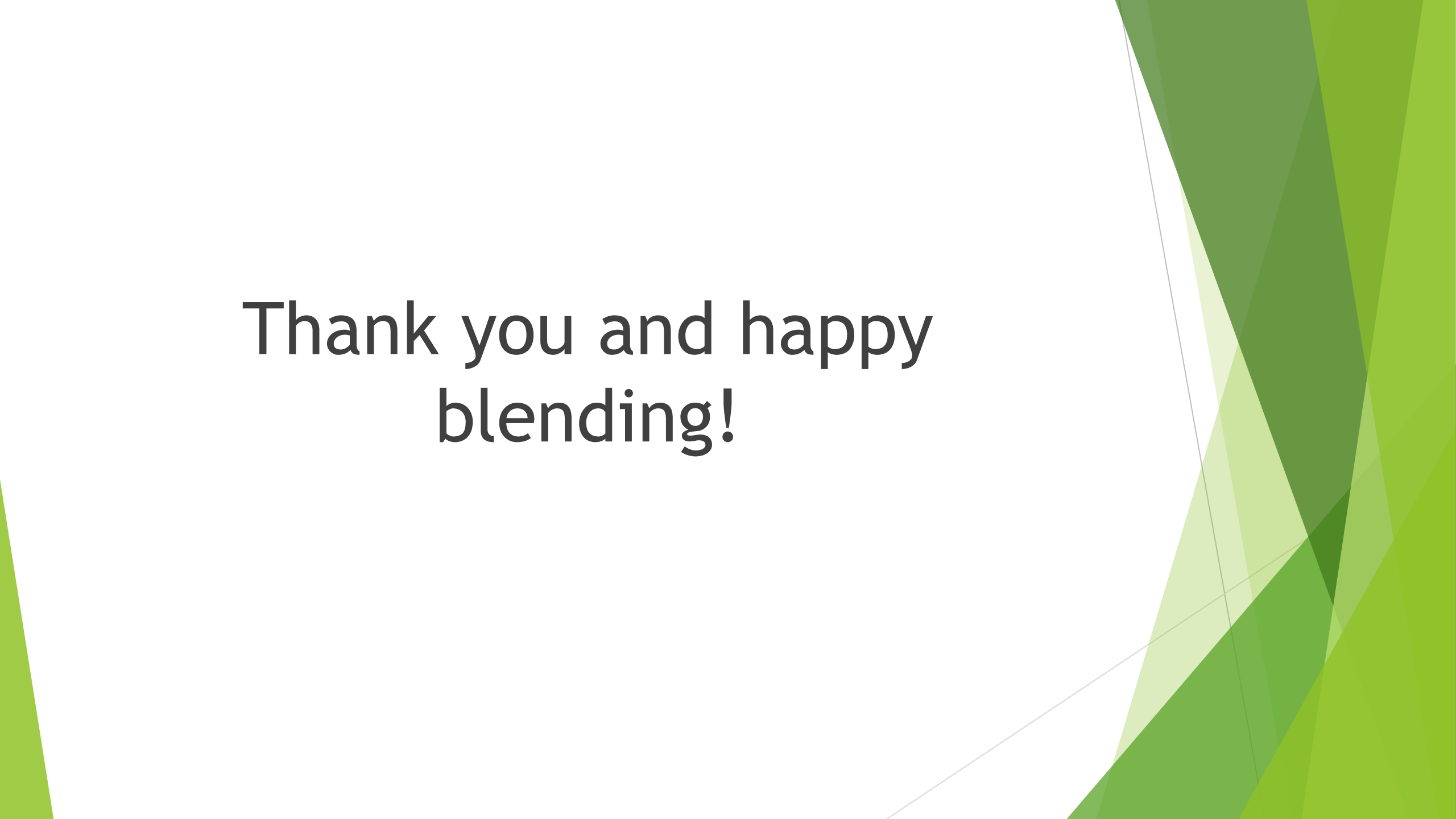
- ▶ 4 oils in front of you.
- ▶ Taste each oil. Make notes for each oil.
- ▶ What are the results?
- ▶ Which oil is most interesting
- ▶ Which oil it the simplest?
- ▶ Why are they different?

Exercise 2 - Create your own blends

On each table:

- A Base oil
- A selection of 2024 single varietals
- Plastic cups/stirrers
- Labels so you can record what your blend is
- Use your note pads to take detailed notes

Thank you and happy
blending!

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the frame, with some extending towards the left. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.