Oleaphen

June 2026

THE FRUIT IS SET

The olives are on the trees. After a flowering season that kept all five families watching the weather every morning, the fruit has set, and it has set well. Production looks strong across every grove.

Right now the olives are small and green, and the pit inside has only just begun to form. This is the part of the year almost no one thinks about, and it is the part that decides everything.

The tree lays its polyphenols down in the fruit during this window. The precursor compounds, the same oleuropein and ligstroside we have written about in recent months, build up now and keep climbing until the pit hardens. That is the moment concentration peaks. Everything we do between now and then serves that single fact.

Summer has arrived. We are in the low 30s Celsius (high 80s Fahrenheit) and climbing steadily, with 40°C (104°F) expected by the end of the month. The heat is with us this year, not against us. A measured amount of stress is part of how the tree makes what it makes.

Nick Schizas and Nicolas Netien Founders

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COMPOUND OF THE MONTH

OLEOCANTHAL, REVISITED

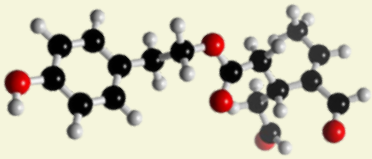
We opened this series in November with oleocanthal. Six compounds later it is worth returning to, because it is both the most studied molecule in olive oil and the most misunderstood.

Start with where it comes from. Oleocanthal is not in the olive. You can analyse the fruit on the tree all summer and you will not find it. It is created at the mill, during malaxation, when the crushed paste is slowly mixed before the oil is separated out. Two enzymes act in sequence on ligstroside, last month's compound, first removing a sugar, then a methyl group. What is left is oleocanthal. This is why the work happening in the groves right now matters so much. June builds the ligstroside in the fruit. The mill turns it into oleocanthal in September.

It also explains something the industry rarely admits. A high total polyphenol number does not mean high oleocanthal. Push malaxation one way and you get an oil heavy in oleuropein aglycone that tests above 1,500 mg/kg yet carries very little oleocanthal. The only way to know is a full breakdown by a Lab analysis that lists oleocanthal on its own line. Our last harvest measured 1,248 mg/kg of oleocanthal, which is 55 percent of total phenolic content. Most oils that call themselves high-phenolic sit between 10 and 25 percent.

In November we focused on the COX pathway, the mechanism oleocanthal shares with ibuprofen (Beauchamp, Nature, 2005). The research has widened considerably since. Beyond inflammation, peer-reviewed work has examined oleocanthal in:

- Cardiovascular function: acute effects on platelet behaviour in healthy adults (this month's study, below)
- Brain ageing: clearance of amyloid-beta across the blood-brain barrier, so far in cell and animal models (Kaddoumi, ACS Chemical Neuroscience, 2013 and 2015)
- Metabolic health: antioxidant and inflammatory markers in people with prediabetes (the APRIL trial, Clinical Nutrition, 2023)
- Cancer cell signalling: the HGF/c-Met pathway in laboratory cell lines (Elnagar, Planta Medica, 2011)



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THE SCIENCE IN ACTION

MONTHLY STUDY HIGHLIGHT

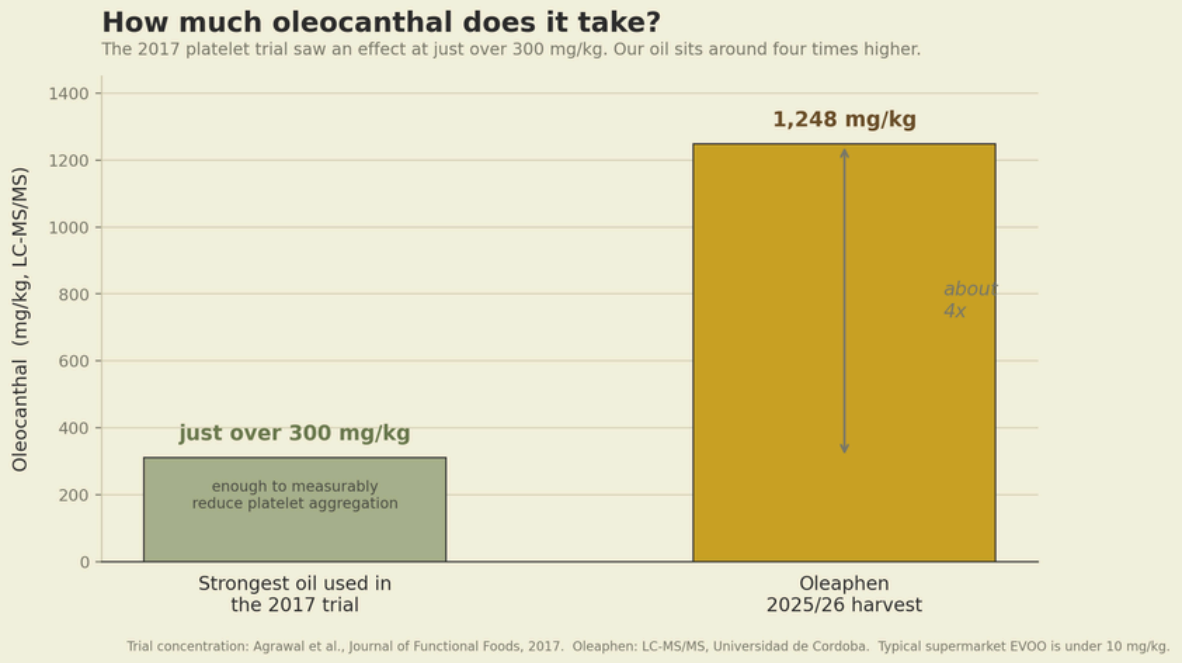
OLEOCANTHAL-RICH EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL DEMONSTRATES ACUTE ANTI-PLATELET EFFECTS IN HEALTHY MEN IN A RANDOMIZED TRIAL

This month's study is the one piece of human research that looked directly at oleocanthal and the cardiovascular system, rather than at olive oil in general.

In 2017, Agrawal and colleagues at UC Davis published a randomised, controlled crossover trial in the Journal of Functional Foods. Healthy adult men were given oleocanthal-rich extra virgin olive oil, and the researchers measured how readily their platelets clumped together afterwards, the first step in forming a clot.

The oils richer in oleocanthal reduced platelet aggregation, and the size of the effect tracked most closely with how much oleocanthal each man had consumed.

The detail worth holding onto is the dose. The most oleocanthal-rich oil used in the trial contained just over 300 mg/kg, and that was enough to register a measurable effect on platelet behaviour. Our last harvest tested at 1,248 mg/kg, roughly four times that concentration. The study did not test our oil and we are not claiming an outcome from it, but it gives a sense of what even a few hundred mg/kg appears able to do on a pathway that matters.



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FROM THE GROVES

JUNE IN CYPRUS: HOLDING THE BALANCE

With the fruit set, the work shifts almost entirely to protection. The threat now is the olive fruit fly. As the olives grow it searches for fruit to lay its eggs in, and a single generation left unchecked can take a real share of a harvest.

Most growers reach for pesticides. We do not. Instead the families are out spraying zeolite, a food-grade mineral, across the trees. It settles as a fine pale film over the fruit, a physical barrier that makes the surface hard for the fly to recognise and lay on. It does a second job on the leaves, where it works like a sunscreen, reflecting some of the harsh light and easing heat stress as we climb toward 40°C (104°F).

Zeolite costs more than a chemical spray and it has to be reapplied after rain or heavy dust. We accept that. A pesticide does not choose its targets. It takes the olive fly and the lacewing and the bee without distinction, and most of the insects in our groves are working for us. The balance across the soil and the canopy is the thing we are really farming. Lose it, and the numbers in the lab report eventually follow.

CLOSING NOTE

The 2026 harvest is on track for September and October. If the weather holds and the fly stays manageable, this could be the strongest crop the five families have produced. Existing customers and subscribers will hear from us first, with access opening ahead of the general waitlist.

Thank you for reading, and for your patience while the trees do their work. Olive trees set the pace, not venture capital.

Nick and Nicolas