

COOK'S

ILLUSTRATED

“The three best-tasting tunas were made by Ortiz”

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TASTING: Tuna Packed in Olive Oil

Given our preference for tuna packed in olive oil for salade Niçoise, we wondered if all brands are created equal. The six we found in grocery stores fell into three categories: light (made from bluefin, yellowfin, or skipjack tuna, or a mixture thereof), white (made from albacore tuna), and imported “white tuna” (made from bonito tuna).

As we found in an earlier tasting of tunas packed in water, our panel of tasters did not care for light tuna. The representative brands, Cento Solid Pack Light Tuna and Pastene Fancy Light Tuna, were thought to have “potent” and “metallic” flavors with a “bitter finish,” as well as “chewed” and “unpleasant” textures. Surprisingly, our albacore contender, Dave’s Albacore Fillets, came in dead last. “It’s like eating nothing” was the comment that summed up all others.

The three best-tasting tunas were made by Ortiz, a small Spanish company. Ortiz cans primarily Northern bonito white tuna fished off the coast of Spain, a tuna not used by American packers. Europeans consider this tuna to be of highest quality because of its extremely white meat, tender texture, and full, clean flavor. The superior flavor is attributed to the migratory nature of the bonito tuna, a high-energy fish. High energy is equated with a high oil content, which in turn is equated with flavor—and lots of it. Although each of the three Ortiz tunas consists of the same ingredients—bonito del norte, olive oil, and salt—they have markedly different textures, and it was this characteristic that distinguished them and produced a winner. —Shannon Blaisdell

1st PLACE



ORTIZ Bonito del Norte “Ventresca”

Ventresca refers to the underside of the fish, where fat is more concentrated. These small fillets blew all other contenders out of the water with their “silky texture” and “fresh flavor.”

2nd PLACE



ORTIZ Bonito del Norte (tinned)

The “flaky,” “tender,” and “pleasant” texture of this “intense and delicious” tuna was perfect for Niçoise.

3rd PLACE



ORTIZ Bonito del Norte (jarred)

The large, dense chunks of tuna were somewhat “dry” and a tad “tough,” but the flavor was great: “light,” “clean,” and “mild.”