

New_possibilities_for_the_valorization_of_olive_oil_by-products

Miguel Herrero^{1}, Temirkhon N. Temirzoda¹, Antonio Segura-Carretero², Rosa Quirantes², Merichel Plaza¹, Elena Ibañez¹*

¹Department of Bioactivity and Food Analysis, Institute of Food Science Research (CIAL-CSIC), Nicolás Cabrera 9, Campus Cantoblanco, 28049 – Madrid, Spain.

²Department of Analytical Chemistry, University of Granada, Campus Universitario de Fuentenueva, 18071 – Granada, Spain.

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* **Corresponding author:**

m.herrero@csic.es

TEL: +34 910 017 946

FAX: +34 910 017 905

28 **ABSTRACT**

29 In this contribution, the capabilities of pressurized liquid extraction (PLE) using food-
30 grade solvents, such as water and ethanol, to obtain antioxidant extracts rich on
31 polyphenolic compounds from olive leaves are studied. Different extraction conditions
32 were tested, and the PLE obtained extracts were characterized *in-vitro* according to their
33 antioxidant capacity (using the DPPH radical scavenging and the TEAC assays) and
34 total phenols amounts. The most active extracts were obtained with hot pressurized
35 water at 200°C (EC₅₀ 18.6 µg/ml) and liquid ethanol at 150°C (EC₅₀ 27.4 µg/ml),
36 attaining at these conditions high extraction yields, around 40 and 30%, respectively.
37 The particular phenolic composition of the obtained extracts was characterized by LC-
38 ESI-MS. Using this method, 25 different phenolic compounds could be tentatively
39 identified, including phenolic acids, secoiridoids, hydroxycinnamic acid derivatives,
40 flavonols and flavones. Among them, hydroxytyrosol, oleuropein and luteolin-glucoside
41 were the main phenolic antioxidants and were quantified on the extracts together with
42 other minor constituents, by means of a UPLC-MS/MS method. Results showed that
43 using water as extracting agent, the amount of phenolic compounds increased with the
44 extraction temperature, being hydroxytyrosol the main phenolic component on the water
45 PLE olive leaves extracts, reaching up to 8.542 mg/g dried extract. On the other hand,
46 oleuropein was the main component on the extracts obtained with ethanol (6.156 –
47 2.819 mg/g extract). Results described in this work demonstrate the good possibilities of
48 using PLE as a useful technique for the valorization of by-products from the olive oil
49 industry, such as olive leaves.

50

51 **1. INTRODUCTION.**

52 Functional foods are increasingly gaining interest and attention within the food industry.
53 This type of food is able to provide with additional benefits compared to a traditional
54 food. At present, it is possible to find in the market a broad range of these products,
55 including foods claiming antihypertensive, antihypercholesterolemic or antioxidant
56 properties. Nevertheless, a lot of research is nowadays focused on the possible
57 beneficial effects that some natural components might offer if consumed in the diet,
58 such as anti-cancer activities [1,2] or neurodegenerative prevention [3,4], among others.
59 These natural additives are clearly preferred by consumers over their synthetic
60 counterparts. Ideally, in order to develop a new functional food, one or more natural
61 ingredients with demonstrated activity are added to a traditional food in a way in which
62 can exert a substantial beneficial action in the organism [5]. A possibility of obtaining
63 these interesting components is their extraction from natural matrices, such as plants or
64 algae [6,7]. However, another interesting approach is the extraction of such compounds
65 from the food industry by-products, which usually are discarded or employed to
66 produce animal feed. Different food-related by-products have been already studied, and
67 different interesting compounds have been identified in some of them, such as lycopene
68 in tomato by-products [8], isoflavones in soybean by-products [9], polyphenols in
69 pomegranate peels [10], antioxidants in different plants [11], among many others. In
70 this regard, leaves from olive tree (*Olea oleuropaea*) are produced in great amounts as a
71 waste from the olive oil industry which is one of the main food products in the
72 Mediterranean basin. Although the presence of interesting phenolic antioxidants in the
73 olive leaf [12-14] is well known, this by-product is still underemployed. The
74 polyphenols present in the olive leaves have been shown to possess important

75 antioxidant [15,16], anti-inflammatory [17,18], anti-atherogenic [19] and antimicrobial
76 activities [20], and even possible anti-cancer effect [14,21,22].

77 On the other hand, pressurized liquid extraction (PLE) is a widely considered advanced
78 extraction technique which is able to efficiently extract interesting compounds from
79 natural matrices using low volumes of organic solvents, if any, as well as producing
80 high extraction yields in short extraction processes. These good capabilities are a result
81 of the particular extraction conditions used in which the extracting solvents are heated at
82 high temperatures but maintained at high pressures in order to keep their liquid state
83 during the whole extraction procedure. This technique has been already successfully
84 applied to the extraction of phenolic antioxidants from different natural matrices [6]. Of
85 particular interest is the application of PLE using water as solvent. In this case, this
86 completely environmentally friendly technique is also called subcritical water extraction
87 (SWE) or pressurized hot water extraction (PHWE). Here, the main variable is the
88 dielectric constant of water (ϵ), as a measure of its polarity. When water is heated under
89 pressure and its liquid state is kept, the dielectric constant decreases as temperature
90 increased. This decrease on the water polarity may effectively modify its solvent
91 properties, decreasing this parameter to values similar to those presented by some
92 organic solvents, such as ethanol or methanol. Thus, the application of this green
93 technique to the extraction of bioactive compounds from olive leaves could be of great
94 interest, not only for the attaining of these natural active compounds but also for the
95 possibility of re-using an important by-product from the industry. Although this
96 technique has been also briefly explored for the extraction of target compounds from
97 olive leaves [23,24], up to now, there is no published report systematically studying the
98 influence of the different extraction conditions on the extraction of phenolic
99 antioxidants from this material by using only food-grade solvents. Thus, the aim of the

100 present study was to test the PLE extraction conditions, using ethanol and water as
101 solvents, to produce phenolic-rich antioxidant extracts from olive leaves and to study
102 the phenolic composition of the PLE extracts, using advanced characterization
103 techniques, and their relationship with the tested antioxidant activity.

104

105 **2. EXPERIMENTAL.**

106 **2.1. Samples and chemicals.**

107 Olive tree leaves (variety Hojiblanca) generated as by-products from the olive oil
108 industry were dried and provided by Oleoestepa (Sevilla, Spain). After extraction,
109 cryogenic grinding of the sample was performed under liquid nitrogen. The samples
110 were stored protected from light at 4°C until their use. 2,2-Diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl
111 hydrate (DPPH, 95% purity), ABTS (2,2'-Azino-bis(3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic
112 acid) diammonium salt), potassium persulfate and caffeic acid were obtained from
113 Sigma–Aldrich (Madrid, Spain), ethanol from VWR BDH Prolabo (Madrid, Spain) and
114 methanol from Panreac Quimica (Barcelona, Spain). Trolox (6-hydroxy-2,5,7,8-
115 tetramethylchromane-2-carboxylic acid) was provided by Fluka Chemie AG (Buchs,
116 Switzerland). Folin-Ciocalteu phenol reagent and sodium carbonate (Na₂CO₃) were
117 acquired from Merck (Darmstadt, Germany) whereas antioxidant standards, i.e.,
118 hydroxytyrosol, luteolin-7-glucoside, apigenin-7-glucoside, oleuropein, quercetin,
119 apigenin and diosmetin were supplied by Extrasynthese (Genay, France). The water
120 used was Milli-Q Water (Millipore, Billerica, MA, USA). For the LC-MS and UPLC-
121 MS/MS analyses, MS grade ACN and water from LabScan (Dublin, Ireland) were
122 employed.

123

124 **2.2. Pressurized Liquid Extraction (PLE).**

125 Extractions of olive leaves were performed using an accelerated solvent extractor (ASE
126 200, Dionex, Sunnyvale, CA, USA), equipped with a solvent controller. Two different
127 solvents (i.e., ethanol and water) were used to obtain extracts with different
128 compositions. In order to avoid any possible oxidation effect and to remove the
129 dissolved oxygen, solvents were sonicated for 15 min prior to use. Extractions were
130 performed at four different extraction temperatures (50, 100, 150, and 200 °C) whereas
131 the static extraction time was maintained for 20 min. An extraction cell heat-up step was
132 carried out for a given time prior to any extraction. The warming up time changed
133 depending on the extraction temperature (i.e., 5 min when the extraction temperature
134 was 50 and 100 °C, 7 min if the extraction temperature was 150 °C, and 9 min if the
135 extraction temperature was 200 °C). All extractions were done using 11mL extraction
136 cells, containing 2 g of sample. When water was used for the extraction, the extraction
137 cell was filled with sand mixture on the top of the sample (3.0 g of sand) to prevent the
138 clogging of the system.

139 The extracts obtained were protected from light and stored under refrigeration until
140 dried. For solvent evaporation, a Rotavapor R-210 (from Büchi Labortechnik AG,
141 Flawil, Switzerland) was used for the extracts obtained using organic solvents. For
142 water extracts, a freeze-dryer (Virtis Unitop 400 SL, Gardiner, NY, USA) was
143 employed.

144

145 **2.3. Functional characterization of the PLE extracts.**

146 2.3.1. Trolox equivalent antioxidant capacity (TEAC) assay.

147 Two *in-vitro* methods were employed to determine the antioxidant capacity of the olive
148 leaves PLE extract. Trolox equivalent antioxidant capacity (TEAC) assay was
149 performed as described by Re et. al. [25], with some modifications. ABTS radical cation

150 (ABTS^{•+}) was produced by reacting 7 mM ABTS with 2.45 mM potassium persulfate
151 and allowing the mixture to stand in the dark at room temperature for 12-16 h before
152 use. The aqueous ABTS^{•+} solution was diluted with ethanol for the ethanol extracts and
153 with 5 mM phosphate buffer (pH= 7.4) for the water and water-ethanol extracts, to an
154 absorbance of 0.70 (\pm 0.02) at 734 nm. Ten microliters of sample (different
155 concentrations) were added to 1 mL of diluted ABTS^{•+} radical solution. After 50 min at
156 30 °C, 300 μ L of the mixture were transferred into a well of the microplate, and the
157 absorbance was measured at 734 nm in a microplate spectrophotometer reader (BioTek
158 Instruments, Winooski, VT, USA). Trolox was used as reference standard and results
159 were expressed as TEAC values (mmol Trolox/g extract). These values were obtained
160 from at least four different concentrations of each extract tested in the assay giving a
161 linear response between 20-80 % of the blank absorbance. All analyses were done at
162 least in triplicate.

163

164 2.3.2. DPPH radical scavenging assay.

165 The other method employed to measure the antioxidant capacity of the obtained extracts
166 was the DPPH radical scavenging method, based on a procedure described by Brand-
167 Williams et al. [26]. Briefly, a solution was prepared dissolving 23.5 mg of DPPH in
168 100 mL of methanol. This stock solution was further diluted 1:10 with methanol. Both
169 solutions were stored at 4 °C until use. Different concentrations of extracts were tested.
170 Twenty five microliters of these extracts solutions were added to 975 μ L of DPPH
171 diluted solution to complete the final reaction medium (1 mL). After 4 h at room
172 temperature, 300 μ L of the mixture were transferred into a well of the microplate, and
173 the absorbance was measured at 516 nm in a microplate spectrophotometer reader
174 (BioTek). DPPH-methanol solution was used as a reference sample. The DPPH

175 concentration remaining in the reaction medium was calculated from a calibration
176 curve. The percentage of remaining DPPH against the extract concentration was then
177 plotted to obtain the amount of antioxidant necessary to decrease the initial DPPH
178 concentration by 50% or EC₅₀. Therefore, the lower the EC₅₀, the higher the antioxidant
179 capacity. Measurements were done, at least, by triplicate.

180

181 2.3.3. Determination of total phenols.

182 Total phenols were estimated in the obtained PLE extracts as gallic acid equivalents
183 (GAE), expressed as mg gallic acid/g d.m. (dry matter) according to the Folin-
184 Ciocalteu assay [27]. The total volume of reaction mixture was miniaturized to 1 mL.
185 Six hundred microliters water and 10 µL of sample were mixed, to which 50 µL
186 undiluted Folin-Ciocalteu reagent was subsequently added. After 1 min, 150 µL of 2%
187 (w/v) Na₂CO₃ were added and the volume was made up to 1.0 mL with water. After 2 h
188 of incubation at 25 °C, 300 µL of the mixture were transferred into a well of the
189 microplate. The absorbance was measured at 760 nm in a microplate spectrophotometer
190 reader (BioTek) and compared to the gallic acid calibration curve (0.025 – 2 mg/mL)
191 elaborated in the same manner. Data were presented as the average of duplicate
192 analyses.

193

194 **2.4. Chemical characterization of the PLE extracts.**

195 2.4.1. LC-MS characterization of the PLE extracts.

196 To chemically characterize the PLE extracts obtained, a LC-MS method was used. The
197 instrument employed was an Agilent 1200 liquid chromatograph (Agilent, Santa Clara,
198 CA, USA) equipped with a DAD and autosampler, directly coupled to an ion trap mass
199 spectrometer (Agilent ion trap 6320) via an electrospray interface. To carry out the

200 analyses, a Hypersil C₁₈-AR column (150 mm×4.6 mm, d.p. 3 μm) (Thermo Scientific,
201 San Jose, CA) was employed using as mobile phases ACN (A) and water (0.1% formic
202 acid, B) eluted according to the following gradient: 0 min, 95% B; 5 min, 95% B; 50
203 min, 40% B; 53 min, 5% B; 57 min, 5% B; 60 min, 95% B. The optimum flow rate was
204 0.4 mL/min while the injection volume was 10 μL. The diode array detector recorded
205 the spectra from 200 to 550 nm. On the other hand, the MS was operated under ESI
206 negative ionization mode using the following parameters: dry temperature, 350 °C; dry
207 gas flow, 9 L/min; nebulizer gas pressure, 40 psi; capillary voltage, 3500 V. The
208 instrument acquired data in the range m/z 90-1200.

209

210 2.4.2. Quantification of phenolic antioxidants by UPLC-MS/MS.

211 The UPLC-MS/MS analyses were carried out using an Accela (Thermo Scientific, San
212 Jose, CA) liquid chromatograph equipped with a DAD and an autosampler. The
213 chromatograph was coupled to a TSQ Quantum (Thermo Scientific) triple quadrupole
214 analyzer via an electrospray interface. The analytical conditions employed consisted of
215 the use of a Hypersil Gold column (50mm×2.1mm, d.p. 1.9μm) (Thermo Scientific)
216 using as mobile phases ACN (0.1% formic acid, A) and water (0.1% formic acid, B)
217 eluted according to the following gradient: 0min, 95% B; 0.35 min, 95% B; 6.5 min,
218 40% B; 7 min, 5% B; 7.5 min; 5% B; 8 min, 95% B. The optimum flow rate was 0.4
219 mL/min while the injection volume was 5 μL. The diode array detector recorded the
220 spectra from 200 to 500 nm.

221 To quantify the antioxidants, the mass spectrometer was operated in the negative ESI
222 multiple reaction monitoring (MRM) with a Q1 and Q3 resolution of 0.7 Da FWHM
223 using scan width 0.010 Da and scan time of 0.040 s. The values corresponding to the

224 tube lens voltage and collision energy as well of the ion transitions employed for the
225 quantification were optimized for each compound as indicated below.

226

227 **2.5. Statistical analysis.**

228 Microsoft Excel 2003 Program was employed for statistical analysis of the data with the
229 level of significance set at 95%. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to
230 assess statistical differences between extractions. Differences were considered as
231 significantly different at a value of $p < 0.05$.

232

233 **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.**

234

235 **3.1. Extraction of olive leaves and functional characterization.**

236 To study the capabilities of PLE using food-grade solvents (i.e., water and ethanol) to
237 extract bioactive compounds from olive leaves, different extraction conditions were
238 tested. Four different temperatures were tested, namely 50, 100, 150 and 200 °C, in
239 order to cover the entire instrument's working range. However, according to previous
240 reports conducted in our lab [28,29], both the extraction time and pressure were always
241 maintained constant at 20 min and 1500 psi, respectively. These works demonstrated
242 that both parameters did not have a statistically significant influence on the result from
243 the extraction. However, the temperature might have a critical influence on the chemical
244 composition and characteristics of the obtained extracts. In order to cover the entire
245 instrument's working range, four different extraction temperatures were tested, i.e., 50,
246 100, 150 and 200 °C for the two solvents employed. The obtained extracts were
247 subsequently characterized in terms of extraction yield, antioxidant activity and total
248 phenols content. Data collected from these assays is summarized in Table 1. As it can

249 be observed, the total extraction yield obtained after the PLE extraction increased as a
250 result of the increment on the extraction temperature. Interestingly, both solvents
251 (ethanol and water) provided with similar extraction yields at the same temperature,
252 although water extracts had a slightly higher extraction yield. In this case, the influence
253 of the temperature is very important, considering that increasing this value from 50 to
254 200 °C it is possible to produce ca. 2.5 times more yield. This behaviour was expected
255 and it has been previously reported in the PLE extraction of other natural matrices. An
256 increase on the extraction temperature, while keeping the solvent in the liquid state,
257 produces an enhancement on the solubility of the analytes, an improvement of water
258 diffusivity and a decrease in water viscosity, which allows a better penetration into the
259 matrix. These facts are translated during the PLE process into an increase of the mass
260 transfer rate, and therefore, in an improved extraction yield (C. C. Teo, S. N. Tan, J. W.
261 H. Yong, C. S. Hew, E. S. Ong, *J. Chromatogr. A*, 1217 (2010) 2484).

262 As mentioned, two different *in-vitro* assays were used in order to gain insight on the
263 possible antioxidant mechanisms present; the DPPH radical scavenging and the TEAC
264 assay. As it is shown in Table 1, both methods provided with comparable results; in
265 fact, for water extracts, an increment of the antioxidant activity (lower EC₅₀ and higher
266 TEAC value) was observed according to an increase in the extraction temperature,
267 being the antioxidant activity at 200°C significantly different ($p < 0.05$) than those
268 obtained at 100 and 150 °C. However, ethanol extracts presented a maximum of activity
269 at 150 °C, showing a decrease when the extraction temperature was raised to 200 °C.

270 Although results for both, water and ethanol, considering the DPPH radical scavenging
271 assay were quite similar, the antioxidant activity of water extracts was much higher
272 against the ABTS radical employed in the TEAC assay; for instance, comparing the

273 antioxidant activity of extracts produced at 150 °C using both solvents, it could be seen
274 that water was, by far, more active (more than 2-fold).

275 In order to find possible correlations between the chemical nature of the extracts and
276 their antioxidant activity, the amount of total phenols was determined using the Folin
277 assay. Data corresponding to these determinations is also shown in Table 1. As it can be
278 observed, the amount of total phenols present on the extracts followed the same trend as
279 the antioxidant activity, with maxima in the water and ethanol extracts at 200 and 150
280 °C, respectively. Therefore, the antioxidant activity present on these extracts can be
281 highly correlated to the presence of phenolic compounds. Ethanolic extracts from olive
282 leaves obtained using conventional solvent extraction have also shown strong
283 correlations between their total phenols content and their respective antioxidant
284 activities (E. Altıok, D. Bayçın, O. Bayraktar, S. Ulku, Sep. Purif. Technol. 62 (2008)
285 342). However, the data obtained for the two sets of antioxidant activity measurements
286 are not mathematically correlated to the total phenols; for instance, similar amount of
287 phenols were determined in the extracts obtained with water and ethanol at 50 °C (see
288 Table 1), whereas their antioxidant activities were significantly different. It is well
289 known that not only phenolic antioxidant may give a positive response to the Folin
290 assay, but also other components containing phenols groups that might not contribute to
291 the final antioxidant activity. Therefore, this determination provides with useful
292 information regarding the nature of the extracts, but it is not enough to completely
293 characterize them. For this reason, the next step consisted on the chemical
294 characterization of the obtained extract paying special attention to those which
295 presented the highest values of antioxidant activity and total phenols, that is, the extracts
296 obtained with water at 200 °C and with ethanol at 150 °C.

297

298 **3.2. LC-MS characterization of the olive leaves PLE extracts.**

299 A new RP-LC method was optimized, using a slow gradient, and applied to the olive
300 leaves' PLE extracts to attain a good separation of the main components. Figure 1
301 shows the chromatograms (280 nm) corresponding to the most active extracts, that is,
302 ethanolic extract at 150 °C and water extract at 200 °C. Besides, Table 2 lists the
303 compounds that could be tentatively identified. The assignment of these components
304 was made according to the information provided for the two detectors connected in
305 series after the separation, the DAD and the MS detector. In fact, combining the
306 information provided by the UV-Vis spectra of the separated compounds as well as the
307 information of their MS spectra and MS/MS fragmentation patterns, it was possible to
308 significantly increase the certainty on the tentative assignments. These data are also
309 shown in Table 2.

310 As it can be observed in Figure 1, all the main peaks separated in these analyses could
311 be identified. Ethanol extract was characterized by the presence of hydroxytyrosol and
312 different secoiridoids, mainly oleuropein and its related compounds, as well as by
313 several flavonoids, whereas the extract produced with water was richer in
314 hydroxytyrosol and contained less flavonoids. Nevertheless, the negative ESI ionization
315 conditions employed for the detection of the phenolic compounds did not allow the
316 identification of the main peak present on the water extracts (peak 1). With the aim to
317 identify this component, positive ESI ionization analysis were carried out. Its analysis
318 under positive ESI conditions revealed the existence of a molecular ion ($[M+H]^+$) at
319 m/z 127.1 that produced a main fragment at m/z 109.1. The MS^3 analysis of this
320 fragment produced an ion at m/z 93.1. The combination of this information with its UV-
321 Vis spectrum, with a maximum of absorbance at 283 nm, provided the tentative
322 identification of this peak as 5-hydroxymethylfurfural. This compound was probably

323 not naturally present on the analysed samples. In fact, it is well known that 5-
324 hydroxymethylfurfural can be produced as a result of Maillard reaction as well as from
325 dehydration of sugars under strong temperature conditions [30]. Different studies
326 conducted in our lab have previously demonstrated the occurrence of Maillard reaction
327 and other chemical events during PLE extraction processes with water at very high
328 temperatures [31,32]. Therefore, the existence of this compound in the water extract
329 obtained at 200°C could be a consequence of dehydration of sugars present on the
330 sample at this high temperature (e.g., cellulose) and/or Maillard reaction processes. The
331 close study of the formation of this compound from olive leaves during PLE processes
332 with water at high temperatures as well as its associated activities will be the aim of a
333 forthcoming research.

334

335 3.2.1. Secoiridoids.

336 Among the secoiridoids detected, oleuropein (peak 19) was the main compound in both
337 extracts. This very well known compound present in olive has been described to possess
338 interesting functional properties including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-
339 atherogenic, anti-cancer and antimicrobial activities, among others [33]. This peak
340 presented a maximum of absorbance at 280 nm and a clear molecular ion m/z 539 ([M-
341 H]⁻). The fragmentation of this ion produced fragments with m/z 377, 307 and 275
342 (Figure 2A). Both the molecular ion as well as the fragments confirmed the presence of
343 oleuropein. The fragmentation pattern of this compound is well described, presenting a
344 fragment as a result of the loss of a hexose (m/z 377), and different ions derived from
345 the further fragmentation of the oleuropein aglycon residue (m/z 307, 275). However,
346 besides this main peak corresponding to oleuropein, two adjacent minor peaks could be
347 also detected possessing exactly the same characteristics (see peaks 20 and 21). It has

348 been previously described the presence of different isomers of oleuropein both in olive
349 fruits and leaves. According to these previous reports [16], peak 21 would correspond to
350 oleuroside, an isomer of oleuropein that differ from it in the position of the olefinic
351 double bond in the elenolic acid moiety. Peak 20, more closely eluting to oleuropein,
352 would correspond to another oleuropein isomer already described [14,34]. Moreover,
353 different detected peaks showed ions at m/z 701.4 (peaks 14 and 18). Their
354 fragmentation patterns were identical. An example of one of them (peak 14) is shown in
355 Figure 2B. These ions showed fragments at m/z 539 that could most probably be
356 derived from the loss of a hexose moiety (162 Da) together with other fragments at m/z
357 377, 307 and 175 corresponding to those typical from oleuropein and its aglycone.
358 Thus, these two peaks were tentatively identified as oleuropein diglucosides. A similar
359 fragmentation pattern was found for a small peak detected in the olive leaves water
360 extract (peak 22). In this case an ion at m/z 601.6 was detected, presenting the same
361 fragments as the oleuropein diglucosides. Therefore, considering the MS information
362 together with its UV-Vis spectra and retention time, this compound was assigned to an
363 oleuropein derivative. Besides, another oleuropein derivative was also detected and
364 tentatively assigned in the water extracts (peak 11). This peak presented a molecular ion
365 at m/z 555.4. The main fragments produced from this ion presented m/z 537, 403 and
366 393. The loss of 18 Da could indicate the presence of an OH, whereas the fragment m/z
367 393 corresponded to the loss of a hexose, therefore being the aglycone. This fragment
368 has been already described in olive derived products as 10-hydroxy oleuropein aglycon.
369 Consequently, peak 11 was assigned to 10-hydroxy oleuropein.
370 Different compounds closely related to elenolic acid were also detected. Among them,
371 peak 23 was identified as ligstroside. This peak possessed a molecular ion ($[M-H]^-$) m/z
372 523.4 and presented different characteristic fragments, such as the loss of a hexoside

373 (m/z 361) or the loss of a C₄H₆O (m/z 291). This latter fragmentation was also produced
374 in the case of oleuropein, as it has been shown above. Moreover, peak 7 could be
375 identified as elenolic acid glucoside, thanks to the detection of an ion at m/z 403.1 and
376 MS/MS fragments at m/z 371, 222 and 179. These compounds had been already
377 determined in olive leaves [14]. The UV-Vis spectra of these two components with
378 maxima at ca. 290 and 321 nm provided further proof of their identity. Lastly, among
379 the different detected secoiridoids, oleoside was also detected (peak 4). This compound,
380 which presented a m/z 389.1 was previously detected in olive pomace [14]; further
381 fragmentation of this ion by MS/MS provided ions at m/z 227, 183, 165 and 121 that
382 confirmed the tentative identification as oleoside.

383

384 3.2.2. Tyrosols.

385 Another important group of compounds found in olive leaves' PLE extracts was formed
386 by tyrosol-related compounds. Among them, hydroxytyrosol was the main component
387 (peak 3). In fact, this was the main identified phenolic compound in water extracts. The
388 identification of this compound was possible thanks to its UV-Vis maximum at 280 nm
389 and m/z 153.9, presenting a typical fragment at m/z 123.8. This fragment corresponded
390 to a loss of the CH₂OH group. Hydroxytyrosol was found in high amounts in both
391 extracts; different important functional properties have been associated to its presence
392 such as antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiproliferative or antifungal activities, among
393 others [35-37]. In fact, it has been already shown how olive leaves extracts enriched on
394 hydroxytyrosol were able to exhibit a cell cycle blocking in the G1 phase within human
395 breast cancer cells (Z. Bouallagui, J. Han, H. Isoda, S. Sayadi, Food Chem Toxicol 49
396 (2011) 179. Besides, in water extracts two related compounds could be also determined;
397 a small peak eluting before hydroxytyrosol was identified as its glucoside (peak 2),

398 presenting an ion at m/z 315.9 that gave fragments at m/z 153 (loss of hexose) and 123,
399 typical of hydroxytyrosol. On the other hand, another peak presenting the same UV-Vis
400 spectra as hydroxytyrosol was detected possessing a m/z 137.5. Accordingly, this peak
401 was assigned to tyrosol. Finally, another tyrosol-related compound could be detected in
402 both extracts (peak 16). Considering that this peak presented a maximum of absorbance
403 at 280 nm as well as its molecular ion at m/z 195.6 and its relative retention time with
404 respect to hydroxytyrosol, this compound was tentatively identified as hydroxytyrosol
405 acetate. This component has been previously described as a phenolic component of
406 olive oil [38].

407

408 3.2.3. Hydroxycinnamic acid derivatives.

409 Two different hydroxycinnamic acid derivatives could be indentified in the olive leaves
410 extracts. Firstly, compound 6 was tentatively identified as a coumaroyl derivative,
411 considering its particular UV-Vis spectra, matching those from these compounds, and
412 the presence of an important fragment at m/z 163 coming from the molecular ion m/z
413 491.2 as well as another at m/z 325. This fragment might, therefore, correspond to a
414 coumaric acid glucoside. Besides, other hydroxycinnamic acid derivative, verbascoside,
415 commonly found in olive leaves was also identified on the PLE extracts. This peak
416 presented a molecular ion at m/z 623.5. The MS/MS fragmentation of this ion produced
417 ions at m/z 461 and 325 corresponding to the loss of a hexose moiety and of a rhamnose
418 residue, respectively. This information, together with its UV-Vis spectra allowed the
419 identification of this compound (see Figure 3). Although being a minor component,
420 verbascoside has been demonstrated to significantly contribute to the overall antioxidant
421 capacity of several olive leaves extracts [39].

422

423 3.2.4. Flavonoids.

424 Different compounds included in the group of flavonoids could be detected in the olive
425 leaves' PLE extracts. Among them, the most frequently found was luteolin and its
426 related compounds. In fact, luteolin-diglucoside (peak 8), luteolin-rutinoside (peak 10),
427 and two isomers of luteolin-glucoside (peaks 13 and 17) were found in these extracts.
428 These compounds could be identified thanks to their typical flavone UV-Vis spectra as
429 well as for the detection of molecular ions corresponding to the different glycosides and
430 their related fragments. In Figure 4, an example of the identification and differentiation
431 among these compounds is shown. Different luteolin-glucoside isomers have been
432 described to occur simultaneously [13]. The first eluting peak was identified as luteolin-
433 7-glucoside comparing its retention time to that of the commercial standard. The other
434 luteolin-glucoside isomer could not be unequivocally assigned, although according to
435 previous reports, peak 17 may most probably be luteolin-4-glucoside [13]. On the other
436 hand, the differential fragmentation pattern allowed the identification of peak 8 and 9 as
437 luteolin-diglucoside and rutin (quercetin 3-O-rutinoside), respectively. Although the
438 two peaks presented molecular ions at m/z 609 and eluted closely, the fragmentation of
439 peak 8 produced clear fragments corresponding to luteolin-glucoside (m/z 447) and
440 luteolin aglycone (m/z 285) whereas the MS/MS analysis of m/z 609 at peak 9 provided
441 with fragments with m/z 301 and 179, typical from quercetin. Apigenin-rutinoside (peak
442 15) could be identified following the same reasoning than the rest of flavonoid
443 glucosides. Finally, the aglycones of luteolin, apigenin and diosmetin could also be
444 detected in the ethanolic extracts. In this case, retention times as well as typical
445 molecular ions and UV-Vis spectra were used in order to conclude their assignment. In
446 general, it has been already demonstrated that the flavonoids present on the composition
447 of olive leaves might have an important contribution to the overall antioxidant capacity

448 of the extracts [39]. Consequently, although hydroxytyrosol and oleuropein have been
449 pointed out as the main bioactive compounds in this matrix, the importance and
450 influence of the flavonoids present should not be underestimated.

451

452 **3.3. Quantification of phenolic antioxidants by UPLC-MS/MS.**

453 Once the PLE extracts from olive leaves were chemically characterized, the
454 quantification of some of the main phenolic antioxidants, for which commercial
455 standards were available, was carried out. To do that, the separation method was
456 transferred to a UPLC instrument coupled to a MS equipped with a triple quadrupole
457 analyzer. The use of this detector allowed the attaining of very low LODs thanks to its
458 high selectivity. The selected antioxidants included the main phenolic compounds
459 detected in both, ethanol and water extracts, that is, oleuropein and hydroxytyrosol.
460 Besides, other important phenolic antioxidants detected in the extracts were quantified,
461 namely, luteolin-glucoside, apigenin and diosmetin. On the other hand, other
462 compounds described in olive tree related products, such as caffeic acid, apigenin-
463 glucoside and quercetin, were also quantified although its presence could not be
464 confirmed using the above described method. The UPLC method was adapted to a new
465 gradient using an analytical column with sub 2 μm particles, being possible to have the
466 complete separation of the analyzed antioxidants in less than 8 min. Table 3 lists the
467 quantified compounds together with the detection parameters optimized for their
468 quantification using multiple reaction monitoring (MRM). As it can be observed, the
469 transition between the $[\text{M}-\text{H}]^-$ ion and the corresponding most intense fragment ion was
470 optimized individually, along with the optimum collision energy and tube lens values.
471 Once the transitions were optimized, calibration curves for each compound were
472 constructed, using different concentration ranges, but including, in any case, at least 5

473 different concentration points. The calibration curves obtained, together with the
474 concentration ranges employed and the LODs and LOQs obtained for each compound
475 are shown in Table 4. As it can be seen, R^2 values higher than 0.993 were obtained for
476 all the quantified antioxidants. The detection limits ranged typically from 0.010 $\mu\text{g/ml}$
477 for diosmetin to 0.065 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ for caffeic acid. The only compound outside this sensitive
478 range was hydroxytyrosol, for which a LOD of 0.443 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ was obtained due to the
479 background noise obtained for the detection of this peak. The reproducibility of the
480 UPLC method was also very good, with RSD (%) values for retention times always
481 lower than 3.2 %. Figure 5 shows the MRM chromatograms corresponding to the
482 quantified phenolic antioxidants.

483 Next, the obtained olive leaves extracts were analyzed under the optimum UPLC-
484 MS/MS conditions; results are shown in Table 5. As it can be observed, there is a strong
485 influence of the solvent polarity in the type of compounds extracted by PLE. In general,
486 significantly higher amounts of the more polar phenolic antioxidants, such as
487 hydroxytyrosol and caffeic acid were obtained using water as solvent, whereas ethanol
488 was more selective towards the extraction of less polar flavonoids. Nevertheless, not all
489 the studied compounds had a similar behaviour as a result of the change in the
490 extraction conditions. For instance, it can be seen how the extraction of hydroxytyrosol
491 improved with the increasing temperature for the two solvents tested, although the use
492 of water was, by far, more favourable for the extraction of this potent antioxidant.
493 However, in the case of flavonoids the highest amount recovered with water was found
494 at medium extraction temperatures. At the highest tested temperatures, the amount of
495 these compounds was lower, most probably due to thermal degradations. In fact,
496 observing the recoveries of these compounds when using ethanol, that was the most
497 appropriate solvent, it could be observed how the highest amounts were obtained at the

498 lowest temperatures tested, thus confirming a degradation at higher temperatures. In
499 general, as it can be observed in Table 5, the highest amounts of the quantified phenolic
500 antioxidants extracted were obtained using water. Although using ethanol high
501 proportions of the less polar phenolic compounds could be obtained, the total recovered
502 amount was always lower as compared with water, at the same extraction temperature,
503 except at 50°C. Therefore, it could be concluded that the use of water in PLE processes
504 might provide extracts with higher proportions of phenolic antioxidants, mainly
505 hydroxytyrosol and oleuropein. By using ethanol, less amount of the quantified
506 compounds could be obtained but the composition of the extracts was more complex,
507 including significantly less amounts of hydroxytyrosol but higher proportions of
508 flavonoids. As can be seen comparing data obtained for the total phenols quantified
509 (Table 5) with the total phenols measured using the Folin assay (Table 1), trends are in
510 quite good agreement, mainly for water extracts, less complex than ethanol;
511 discrepancies are due to the inability to quantify all phenolic compounds and on the
512 basis of Folin reaction that, as mentioned previously, allows a positive response for
513 many compounds and therefore, it is expected an overestimation of the final results
514 [40].

515

516 **4. CONCLUSIONS.**

517 In this work it has been demonstrated the capabilities of PLE using food-grade solvents,
518 such as water and ethanol, to obtain antioxidant extracts from olive leaves rich on
519 polyphenolic compounds. The extraction conditions that provide with the best results in
520 terms of antioxidant capacity included the use of liquid water at 200 °C (ca. 40%
521 extraction yield) and liquid ethanol at 150 °C (ca. 30% extraction yield). Around 25
522 different phenolic compounds could be tentatively identified on these extracts by LC-

523 MS, including phenolic acids, secoiridoids, hydroxycinnamic acid derivatives, flavonols
524 and flavones. Among them, the most important phenolics described on this plant, such
525 as hydroxytyrosol, oleuropein or luteolin-glucoside were found. The quantification of
526 these components by UPLC-MS/MS showed that the amount of the quantified
527 compounds in the water extracts was increased along with the extraction temperature,
528 being hydroxytyrosol the main phenolic compound on the water PLE olive leaves
529 extracts. On the other hand, oleuropein was the main component of ethanolic extracts;
530 in this case, the amount of phenolic compounds recovered decreased with the increasing
531 temperature except in the case of hydroxytyrosol. In conclusion, this work shows the
532 good possibilities of coupling advanced environmentally clean extraction mechanisms
533 to powerful analytical techniques in order to produce and characterize natural
534 antioxidant extracts from by-products from the olive oil industry, such as olive leaves.

535

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608

609

610 **FIGURE LEGENDS.**

611 **Figure 1.** Chromatograms (280 nm) obtained from the LC-MS analysis of the olive
612 leaves PLE extracts produced with ethanol at 150 °C (A) and water at 200 °C (B). For
613 peak identification, see Table 2.

614 **Figure 2.** UV-Vis and MS spectra, MS/MS fragmentation pattern and proposed
615 chemical structures for A) oleuropein (peak 19) and B) oleuropein-diglucoside (peak
616 14).

617 **Figure 3.** UV-Vis and MS spectra, MS/MS fragmentation pattern and proposed
618 chemical structures for verbascoside (peak 12).

619 **Figure 4.** MS spectra and MS/MS fragmentation pattern of the luteolin-related
620 compounds found in the olive leaves PLE extracts. A) luteolin diglucoside (peak 8), B)
621 luteolin-rutinoside (peak 10), C) luteolin-7-glucoside (peak 13), and D) luteolin (peak
622 24).

623 **Figure 5.** MRM extracted UPLC-MS/MS chromatograms corresponding to a mixture of
624 0.39 µg/ml of each of the quantified phenolic antioxidants present in the olive leaves
625 PLE extracts.

626

627

628 **Table 1.** Values of extraction yield (% dry weight), antioxidant activity (measured by
 629 means of DPPH radical scavenging assay, EC₅₀ (µg/ml) and TEAC assay (mmol/g)) and
 630 total phenols (as mg gallic acid/mg extract) obtained for the different PLE extractions
 631 performed at the indicated conditions. Superscripts indicate pairs of values not
 632 significantly different (p > 0.05).

633

Solvent	Extraction Temperature (°C)	Time (min)	Extraction yield (%)	Antioxidant activity		Total phenols (mg gallic acid/g extract)
				EC ₅₀ (µg/ml)	TEAC (mmol/g)	
Water	50	20	15.5	39.7 ± 1.7	1.129 ± 0.038	28.3 ± 1.7
	100	20	21.3	27.2 ± 1.3 ^a	1.699 ± 0.113 ^a	42.8 ± 2.1 ^a
	150	20	33.6	29.9 ± 2.7 ^a	1.609 ± 0.074 ^a	43.4 ± 1.9 ^a
	200	20	37.8	18.6 ± 0.4	2.661 ± 0.188	58.7 ± 0.9
Ethanol	50	20	13.5	52.7 ± 5.3	0.273 ± 0.016	26.2 ± 1.1
	100	20	23.0	35.3 ± 2.2	0.536 ± 0.014 ^c	33.6 ± 0.2
	150	20	29.0	27.4 ± 0.7	0.677 ± 0.025	45.8 ± 0.6 ^b
	200	20	37.5	31.1 ± 0.6	0.573 ± 0.019 ^c	43.2 ± 0.9 ^b

634

635

636 **Table 2.** Identification of antioxidant compounds in the olive leaves PLE extracts. UV-
 637 Vis and MS characteristics.

ID	Retention time (min)	Identification	UV-Vis maxima (nm)	[M-H]-	Main fragments detected
1	12.1	5-Hydroxymethylfurfural	283	127.1 ^b	109.1, 93.1 ^b
2	16.4	Hydroxytyrosol glucoside	280	315.9	153.5, 123.7
3	16.7	Hydroxytyrosol ^a	278	153.9	123.8
4	17.4	Oleoside	176	389.1	226.8, 182.9, 164.9, 121.1
5	21.2	Tyrosol	280	137.5	
6	22.5	Coumaroyl derivative	295s, 310	491.2	325.1, 162.9
7	24.0	Elenolic acid glucoside	296, 321	403.1	371.1, 222.9, 179.0
8	25.1	Luteolin diglucoside	331	609.5	447.2, 285.3
9	27.5	Rutin	340	609.4	300.9, 179.1
10	28.1	Luteolin-rutinoside	340	593.2	285.0
11	28.2	10-hydroxy-oleuropein	280	555.4	403.2, 393.4, 323.3, 291.0
12	28.5	Verbascoside	290, 325	623.5	461.2, 315.1
13	29.3	Luteolin-7-glucoside ^a	346	447.6	284.9
14	29.8	Oleuropein-diglucoside	280	701.4	539.4, 377.4, 307.2, 275.3
15	30.3	Apigenin-rutinoside	335	577.7	269.0
16	31.4	Hydroxytyrosol acetate	280	195.6	151.0, 110.9
17	32.1	Luteolin-glucoside	336	447.8	284.9
18	32.7	Oleuropein-diglucoside	280	701.4	539.2, 377.1, 307.1, 275.0
19	33.3	Oleuropein ^a	280	539.3	377.2, 307.4, 275.7
20	33.9	Oleuropein isomer	280	539.3	377.1, 307.2, 275.6
21	34.1	Oleurosides	280	539.4	377.2, 307.2, 275.4
22	35.1	Oleuropein derivative	280	601.6	539.2, 377.1, 307.1, 275.2
23	36.1	Ligstrosides	280, 320s	523.4	361.1, 291.1, 259.4
24	38.0	Luteolin	344	285.7	
25	41.9	Apigenin ^a	332	269.7	
26	42.4	Diosmetin ^a	347	299.9	

638 ^a Identification confirmed using commercial standards

639 ^b Parent and fragment ions detected as [M+H]⁺

640 s, shoulder

641

642 **Table 3.** Main optimized parameters for the MS/MS detection of the phenolic
643 antioxidants quantified and the optimum fragmentation values and ion transitions
644 employed for each one.

Compound	Parent ion [M-H]-	Product ion	Collision energy (V)	Tube lens offset (V)
Hydroxytyrosol	153.1	123.151	15	72
Caffeic acid	179.2	135.119	17	65
Luteolin-7-glucoside	447.2	284.95	28	79
Apigenin-7-glucoside	431.2	268.963	25	101
Oleuropein	539.3	377.051	18	113
Quercetin	301.1	151.012	22	79
Apigenin	269.1	117.13	39	75
Diosmetin	299.1	284.028	22	72

645

646

Table 4. Calibration curves and concentration ranges employed for the quantification of the phenolic antioxidants, and limits of detection (LOD) and limits of quantification (LOQ) reached using the optimized UPLC-MS/MS method.

Compound	Tr (min) ± RSD (%)	Concentration range (µg/ml)	Calibration curve	R²	LOD (µg/ml)	LOQ (µg/ml)
Hydroxytyrosol	1.14 ± 3.2	0.098 – 100	y = 38364x + 84999	0.9952	0.443	1.477
Caffeic acid	2.17 ± 1.2	0.098 – 6.25	y = 431678x + 19330	0.9994	0.065	0.217
Luteolin-7-glucoside	3.14 ± 0.4	0.098 – 100	y = 251541x + 414600	0.9971	0.037	0.123
Apigenin-7-glucoside	3.49 ± 0.3	0.098 – 6.25	y = 275193x + 60995	0.9963	0.012	0.041
Oleuropein	3.88 ± 0.4	0.098 – 100	y = 189185x + 440844	0.9980	0.021	0.070
Quercetin	4.22 ± 0.3	0.098 – 6.25	y = 359042x + 50847	0.9970	0.024	0.081
Apigenin	4.73 ± 0.3	0.098 – 6.25	y = 241311x + 67250	0.9956	0.014	0.045
Diosmetin	4.85 ± 0.2	0.098 – 6.25	y = 2658922x + 784558	0.9931	0.010	0.035

Table 5. Quantification of the phenolic antioxidants found in the olive leaves extracts. Concentrations indicated as mg/g extract \pm sd. Values are the mean of, at least, three replicates.

Solvent	Temp. (°C)	Hydroxytyrosol (mg/g extract)	Caffeic acid (mg/g extract)	Luteolin-7- glucoside (mg/g extract)	Apigenin-7- glucoside (mg/g extract)	Oleuropein (mg/g extract)	Quercetin (mg/g extract)	Apigenin (mg/g extract)	Diosmetin (mg/g extract)	Total (mg/g extract)
Water	50	3.326 \pm 0.224	0.060 \pm 0.004	0.824 \pm 0.030	0.680 \pm 0.013	3.116 \pm 0.095	n.d.	0.009 \pm 0.000	0.008 \pm 0.000	8.023
	100	3.418 \pm 0.140	0.015 \pm 0.000	1.386 \pm 0.039	0.491 \pm 0.008	7.993 \pm 0.091	0.003 \pm 0.000	0.001 \pm 0.000	0.001 \pm 0.000	13.308
	150	5.930 \pm 0.278	0.013 \pm 0.000	1.449 \pm 0.031	0.071 \pm 0.012	5.295 \pm 0.123	0.001 \pm 0.000	n.d.	< LOQ	12.759
	200	8.542 \pm 0.150	0.018 \pm 0.002	0.507 \pm 0.021	0.012 \pm 0.000	4.341 \pm 0.090	< LOQ	n.d.	< LOQ	13.420
Ethanol	50	0.351 \pm 0.046	0.001 \pm 0.000	2.630 \pm 0.068	0.475 \pm 0.028	6.156 \pm 0.083	0.028 \pm 0.003	0.040 \pm 0.002	0.028 \pm 0.001	9.613
	100	0.678 \pm 0.075	0.004 \pm 0.000	2.778 \pm 0.062	0.469 \pm 0.044	4.661 \pm 0.095	0.077 \pm 0.005	0.015 \pm 0.002	0.022 \pm 0.000	8.704
	150	2.235 \pm 0.037	0.008 \pm 0.001	2.213 \pm 0.107	0.492 \pm 0.043	4.509 \pm 0.121	0.129 \pm 0.002	0.009 \pm 0.001	0.016 \pm 0.000	9.611
	200	2.519 \pm 0.186	0.013 \pm 0.001	1.927 \pm 0.061	0.398 \pm 0.027	2.819 \pm 0.053	0.086 \pm 0.002	0.032 \pm 0.001	0.037 \pm 0.001	7.831

