

ALL ABOUT Oils

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Fat is an essential macronutrient in our diets. Past food fads and even changes to the government food pyramid (now the modern day MyPlate) has made fat out to be unnecessarily feared. Although fat is higher in calories per gram – 9 calories per 1 gram of fat versus only 4 calories per gram for carbohydrates and proteins – it is needed in every cell of our body. Fat helps with keeping us fuller longer and gives us extended energy, as well as absorb vitamins such as vitamins A, E, D and K. Cooking, baking and topping salads with healthy oils is a great way to incorporate heart-healthy fats and get the best vitamin and mineral absorption from foods.

Great to Cook With

Avocado

With an alluring green hue, a buttery, nutty flavor and a composition of more than 70-percent monounsaturated fat, avocado oil is a heart-nourishing choice. Thanks to its high smoke point, avocado oil is ideal for sautéing and fish or chicken and adds a flavorful base for salad dressing. This oil also contains vitamins A, E and D. May seem a bit costly at \$9-12 per bottle, but you can't put a price tag on great nutrition! (... well, I guess you can).

Peanut

Peanut oil is a common monounsaturated fat and contains vitamin E. This oil is often used in deep frying because of its high smoke point – not saying you should use it for that purpose – but is



good for sautéing red meats, chicken and vegetables. Its distinctive flavor makes it shine in stir-fries and ginger dressing.

Grapeseed

Extracted from grape seeds (a by-product of wine-making), this oil is rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids, which lowers total cholesterol. Grapeseed oil has a moderately high smoke point, which makes it great for sautés and frying. It can also be used in dressings and dips for vegetables. The price per bottle is comparable to olive oil, and since you do not use a ton of oil to sauté with it's a great way to try something new in the kitchen.

Olive

Most versatile and highly available, olive oil is high in monounsaturated fatty acids, which may help reduce the risk of heart disease. Extra-virgin olive oil has less acid, a fruitier flavor and stronger aroma than pure or virgin olive oil. Olive oil labeled as "light" is often lighter in hue or flavor, but not lighter in calories. Use olive oil in dressings, sautés, for dipping and to cook vegetables and meat.

Makes Delicious Dressings

Sesame

Sesame oil is rich in mono- and polyunsaturated fatty acids. Sesame oil is typically used in Asian cuisines and has a sweet, nutty flavor. Toasted sesame seed oil has a more intense flavor and aroma. Drizzle it over an Asian cabbage slaw.

Flaxseed

With omega-6 and omega-9 essential

fatty acids, flaxseed oil can help lower your cholesterol when replaced with saturated fats in your diet. Flaxseed oil has a low smoke point, so it's not ideal for cooking. Instead, enjoy a drizzle over a whole grain like quinoa or combine it with herbs and vinegar to make a salad dressing.

Walnut

Made from dried and cold-pressed nuts, walnut oil has a high concentration of alpha-linolenic acid that partially converts to omega-3s, which support heart health. Walnut oil doesn't stand up to high heat, so its rich, nutty flavor is best used as a dressing or flavor enhancer rather than for cooking. Store this oil in the refrigerator.

Pumpkin Seed

Pumpkin seed oil has a deep color and rich, nutty flavor. This oil delivers a heart-healthy boost from its linolenic acid content, although it's not as plentiful as in walnut oil. Showcase this oil's intensity with a drizzle over squash soup or create a flavorful salad dressing.

Ideal Oils for Baking

Coconut

Coconut oil is extracted from the fruit of mature coconuts and is a saturated fat. Virgin coconut oil is high in lauric acid, a medium-chain fatty acid. Preliminary studies show that this acid may have a neutral or beneficial effect on cholesterol levels. Coconut oil has a sweet flavor and can be sub-

stituted for shortening or butter in recipes. It imparts a tropical flavor to vegetables, curry dishes and fish.

Corn

An all-purpose cooking oil with a mild flavor and aroma, corn oil is high in polyunsaturated fatty acids. Corn oil is ideal for baking, sautéing or stir-frying. In studies where 4 tablespoons of this oil was consumed for 21 days, LDL cholesterol was lowered by 10%.

Trans Fat

Most trans fats are made from oils through a food processing method called partial hydrogenation. Foods containing trans fats are more stable, which means the food products they're added to will last longer on supermarket shelves. Unfortunately, these are also the worst offenders when it comes to our health. Trans fats have been shown to not only increase unhealthy low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol but also to lower health high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, which can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. A great way to decrease trans fat intake is start reading ingredient lists. Avoid foods containing "partially hydrogenated" ingredients; it's code for trans fat! Common foods containing partially hydrogenated oils are baking mixes, commercial baked goods, as well as some margarine, lard and fried foods.

Saturated Fat

Saturated fat, which is solid at room temperature, is most often found in animal fats, butter and shortening. Plant sources of saturated fat include coconut oil and palm oil. But, it's the animal-based saturated fats that we should be most concerned about having a negative effect on health. Saturated fats have been found to raise total blood cholesterol levels and LDL cholesterol levels, which can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Monounsaturated Fatty Acids (MUFAs) and Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids (PUFAs)

MUFAs and PUFAs are liquid at room temperature and are found in many vegetable and fish-based foods. Studies show that eating foods rich in monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats improve blood cholesterol levels, which can decrease your risk of heart disease. Research also shows that monounsaturated fats may benefit insulin levels and blood sugar control, which can be especially helpful if you have type 2 diabetes. Polyunsaturated fats may also help decrease the risk of type 2 diabetes. Examples of monounsaturated fats include certain oils (olive, canola, peanut, sesame, safflower), avocados, peanut butter and many nuts and seeds. Examples of polyunsaturated fats include soybean, corn, sunflower oil, ground flaxseed, fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring and trout. Other sources include some nuts and seeds, such as walnuts and sunflower seeds, tofu and soybeans.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

One type of polyunsaturated fat is made up of mainly omega-3 fatty acids and may be especially beneficial to your heart. Omega-3 fatty acids may decrease triglycerides, lower blood pressure slightly, reduce blood clotting, decrease stroke and heart failure risk and reduce irregular heartbeats. Fish is the main source of the heart disease-fighting omega-3 fats eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), but some plant-based foods also contain omega-3 in the form of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which also helps heart health. Fatty fish, such as salmon, trout, mackerel, herring, sardines and tuna contain the most omega-3 fatty acids. Plant-based sources of omega-3 fatty acids include flaxseed, chia seeds, walnuts, soy foods and pumpkin seeds.

Understanding The Different Fats

Baked Huevos Rancheros

Active Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 35-45 minutes

Makes: 4 servings

Total Carbohydrates: 22 grams per serving

Mexican Huevos rancheros is usually some combination of eggs, beans, salsa, and cheese, served with corn tortillas and various toppings. This version seems to have paid a visit to its Tunisian cousin, shakshuka, which is a dish of eggs baked or poached in a spicy tomato sauce. And it's delicious: saucy, a little spicy (Or not!), and a perfect weekend breakfast or brunch or, while we're at it, lunch or dinner. If you're pressed for time, you can skip the onion and garlic and sautéing them, and just add a half teaspoon of garlic powder with the spices. You can also simply cover the pot and leave it on the stovetop to cook the eggs, thereby eliminating the oven altogether. If you want to serve this dish with corn tortillas, which are relatively low in carbs, go ahead – but it's also really good just as it is.



Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, chopped

½ teaspoon ground cumin

Something spicy (1/2 teaspoon cayenne or chipotle powder; 1 teaspoon canned chipotle en adobo; 1 tablespoon hot sauce or chopped fresh or pickled jalapenos)

1 (14-ounce) can crushed tomatoes (diced tomatoes will work too)

1 (14-ounce) can black beans, drained

½ teaspoon salt

4 eggs

Cilantro leaves, crumbled feta, sliced radishes, avocado, and hot sauce, for topping

Instructions

Heat the oven to 375.

Heat the oil in a 9- or 10-inch oven-proof skillet over medium heat. Sauté the onion and garlic until the onion is quite soft and turning golden, about 6 or 7 minutes.

Add the cumin and the spicy something and sauté just until fragrant – a few seconds – then stir in the tomatoes, beans, and salt. Turn the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally and then more frequently, until thick, around 15 minutes. Taste the sauce, and add more salt if it needs it.

Use a spoon to make a little well in the sauce, then crack in an egg. (I'm neurotic, so I crack the egg into a mug first, to make sure I'm not going to ruin the whole dish with shell fragments or a broken yolk etc. In fact, while the sauce is simmering, I crack each egg into a separate mug so they're all ready to go! I have a dishwasher, so the dirty mugs are not a hardship.) Repeat with the remaining eggs, then put the pan in the oven. (Note: If you are super-particular about your eggs and how done you like them, then you might want to poach or fry them separately, as cooking them in the sauce is an inexact science. That said, do you really want to wash another pan?)

Bake until the eggs are as set as you like them, which will take anywhere from 7 to 15 minutes. (The eggs will be more cooked underneath than the way they look on top, just FYI.) Use the baking time to prepare the toppings, then top the finished dish and serve.