

Health and Wellness: **Which Oil Is Best for Cooking?**

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Many have traded butter for oil to prevent or minimize health problems. When choosing cooking oils, there is no shortage of choices. Unfortunately, one oil cannot be used for all cooking needs. Following are two links to compare various options. To be used simultaneously, following are two different but related pieces of information for the oil puzzle, the first link is in chart format and the second is in labyrinth style: (1) http://www.pccnaturalmarkets.com/images/products/grocery/cooking_oil_brochure_1101.pdf, and (2) http://www.eatingrules.com/Cooking-Oil-Comparison-Chart_02-22-12.pdf. What follows is additional information for readers to learn more in their quest for the best oil choices.

The Best Oils For Heating:

Background: Certain oils are better suited for low, medium or high heat because of their chemical makeup. The temperature at which oil begins to smoke is called the smoke point. This is especially important because when an oil heats above its smoke point, toxic fumes and harmful free radicals are produced (all things which should be prevented in the first place). Without a doubt, the biggest health risk when frying with oil occurs when it is heated beyond its smoke point. Perhaps you might want to bring either the above charts or this article to the grocery store – or simply add the one you want to your shopping list.

Very High Heat Oil Choices: Refined almond, expeller-pressed refined avocado, cold-pressed unrefined avocado, high oleic refined peanut, refined safflower, high oleic refined sunflower and expeller-pressed refined sunflower.

Mild-High Heat Oil Choices: Any of the above very high heat oil choices and extra light refined olive, expeller-pressed (vitamin E added) refined peanut and refined walnut.

For additional information on the best oils for heating, click on the very first link at the top of this article.

The Best Oil For Non-Heated Purposes:

Extra Virgin Olive Oil: “Pure” olive oil (not virgin) is generally good because it is a monounsaturated fat which helps keep “bad” LDL cholesterol low and boost levels of “good” HDL cholesterol. There’s an added boost with extra-virgin olive oil because it is also high in antioxidants called polyphenols which have been linked to heart health. Best uses of EVOO are in a salad (perhaps with fresh ground pepper) and pesto sauces.

Oils to Avoid Completely:

Soybean Oil: Frequently an ingredient in vegetable oil, soybean oil is high in omega-6 fats that compete with healthy omega-3 fats (which benefit the heart and brain). Typically from processed foods, the Standard American Diet (SAD) which most Americans consume is high in omega-6 fats.

Palm Oil: Food manufacturers are currently replacing heart-damaging trans fats (such as hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils) with palm oil. Beware though because even though palm oil is trans-fat free, approximately half of its fat is saturated which adds about 1.5 grams of saturated fat to a two tablespoons serving.

Only If Organic:

Soy, Corn, Canola and Cotton Oils: Unless they’re organic, these oils are all genetically modified. Presently, the only way to ensure non-GMO oils (and foods) is by USDA organic standards which prohibit genetically-engineered ingredients. The two reasons to purchase organic oils are to avoid pesticides as well as genetically-modified organisms.

Summary: Choose natural products which contain neither added palm oil nor trans fats. Caveat emptor or buyer beware because although claims have been made that palm oil is less cholesterol-raising, omega-6 fats cause other problems.

Storage

Oil's taste and health-promoting nutrients can be affected by heat, light and air. Therefore, most oils should be kept in a room-temperature cupboard which is dark or even in the refrigerator. Also, no stocking up on oil since the taste and healthy phytonutrients in olive oil can slowly degrade over time. For that reason, it's probably best to use all oils within a year or within six months once opened.

Cautionary Warning: It’s Important Not to Reheat Oils and Why:

Toxic compounds called aldehydes are released into the atmosphere and also remain in the oil after the oil reaches a frying temperature. These toxic aldehydes result from fatty acids in oil being degraded which could be linked to neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s as well as some cancers.

Sources Used:

As with most other health topics, there is lots to learn and know. Listed below are some of the websites used in this article:

- (A) http://www.pccnaturalmarkets.com/guides/tips_cooking_oils.html
- (B) <http://www.eatingrules.com/2012/02/cooking-oil-comparison-chart/>
- (C) <http://health.clevelandclinic.org/2012/05/heart-healthy-cooking-oils-101/>
- (D) <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/food-and-nutrition/AN01037>
- (E) <http://www.livestrong.com/article/481908-does-frying-olive-oil-make-it-unhealthy/>

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