

Cooking Oils 101 - Choosing the Best Oils for Your Health

By Jonathan Benson, Natural News

Contrary to popular belief, not all fat is bad for your health. Many fats, in fact, actually promote healthy weight maintenance and a well-functioning cardiovascular and nervous system, among many other benefits. But with so much misinformation out there about the nature of fats and oils, it can be difficult for many people to make sense of the issue, to the detriment of their own health.

To help simplify the matter, here are some helpful tips for choosing the best edible oils for your health:

Coconut oil. Perhaps the most misunderstood -- and also one of the healthiest -- oils you can consume, coconut oil is an amazingly-versatile, nutrient-dense superfood that is the richest known source of medium-chain fatty acids (MCFAs), which aid in the proper digestion and assimilation of fats, as well as boost energy levels. Coconut oil is also rich in healthy saturated fats and antioxidants, and has been found to promote brain health, boost immunity, and strengthen thyroid function.

Since it has a high smoke point and is incredibly shelf stable, coconut oil is great for both cooking and eating raw. Many people regularly eat unrefined, extra virgin coconut oil by the spoonful, as it is a powerful antifungal, antibacterial, and antiviral food that is rich in disease-fighting lauric acid. Coconut is also a powerful energy booster, as it quickly penetrates cells and provides rapid nourishment.

(http://www.naturalnews.com/coconut_oil.html)

Red palm oil. This one is a bit more controversial, as palm plantations are said to be slowly overtaking the natural habitats of orangutans and other animals. But when cultivated responsibly, red palm oil is an excellent, shelf-stable oil that is rich in tocotrienols (vitamin E) and carotenes (vitamin A). Similar to coconut oil, red palm oil has a high smoke point, does not require hydrogenation to remain stable, and is completely free of trans fatty acids, which makes it an excellent option for cooking and baking.

Red palm oil is pretty much the only oil that has a perfect balance of both tocopherols and tocotrienols, which together encompass the gamut of vitamin E's many unique forms. Red palm oil also contains nearly 13 times more vitamin A-producing carotenes than carrots, which make it one of the richest plant sources of this important nutrient. (http://www.tropicaltraditions.com/red_palm_oil.htm)

Avocado oil. A relatively underrated fat, avocado oil is gaining popularity as a powerful, free radical-fighting "super-oil" that protects cellular mitochondria from destruction. Rich in phytonutrients, avocado oil does not easily oxidize, which makes it preferable to sunflower, safflower, canola, soybean, corn, and peanut oils, which are often recommended in many mainstream health circles as being healthy. (<http://www.naturalnews.com>)

The antioxidants found in avocado oil have a unique ability to effectively enter cell mitochondria and shield cells against disease-causing oxidation. Many fruits and vegetables that are rich in antioxidants lack this ability, at least to the same degree. Avocado oil is also a powerful weapon against heart disease and aging. (<http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk>)

Macadamia nut oil. The average American consumes far more omega-6 fatty acids than omega-3 fatty acids, which is a major contributor to chronic inflammation and disease. But macadamia nut oil is uniquely low in omega-6s compared to other nut oils, while also being relatively high in omega-3s. Macadamia nut oil is said to contain an ideal 1:1 ratio of omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids, which makes it one of the healthiest nut oils you can consume.

Macadamia nut oil is also rich in oleic acid, an omega-9 fatty acid that contains its own unique cancer-fighting and heart-protecting properties. With a rich, sweet, buttery flavor, as well as a high smoke point, macadamia nut oil is both a delicious salad topper, and a tasty frying and sauteing oil. (<http://primaltoad.com/macadamias/>)

Olive oil. Nearly everybody knows about the health benefits of olive oil, as it is one of the most highly acclaimed, heart-healthy oils being talked about today. And when it is truly fresh and authentic, extra virgin olive oil really is everything the health industry claims and more, especially when consumed alongside other healthy oils like coconut and avocado.

A staple of the so-called Mediterranean diet, olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fats and high-density lipoproteins (HDL), which help reduce levels of cholesterol in the blood. Its various vitamins, nutrients, and antioxidants effectively guard against heart disease; promote healthy digestion; ease the symptoms of ulcers and gastritis; and prevent gallstone formation, among other benefits. (<http://www.globalhealingcenter.com>)

Sesame oil. Popular in Asian cooking, sesame oil has a pungent flavor that makes it a favorite in many foods. And the great news is that it is also beneficial to health, having been shown to lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease. Sesame oil is also rich in iron, calcium, and magnesium, the latter of which is known for its incredible calming effect.

Also rich in polyunsaturated fats, sesame oil helps contribute to proper fat absorption; cognitive acuity; healthy skin; a lowered risk of heart disease; and strong teeth and bones. Sesame oil also helps fight diabetes, reduce high blood pressure, prevent gingivitis and dental plaque, protect against kidney damage, and fight depression. (<http://www.greenmedinfo.com>)

Other beneficial oils worth checking out include almond oil, pumpkin seed oil, flax seed oil, grape seed oil, walnut oil, hemp oil, and ghee, also known as clarified butter. On the other hand, corn, soy, cottonseed, canola, sunflower, safflower and various other "vegetable" oils are all damaging to health and should be avoided.