

Australian Oilseed Federation

Nutrition Fact Sheets



No. 5 June 2004

Oils for Health

Which oil should you buy? There are many oils now available on your supermarket shelf. Discover the differences between them and which is best for your needs.

The oil you use for stir-fries, pan frying, salads and even baking can have a dramatic effect on your overall fat intake, as it can shift the balance of fat in your daily diet towards a healthier unsaturated type of fat. If you're aiming to lower your cholesterol, the right oil can make your meals more "heart friendly" and also add a bonus of omega-3 oils.

Which oil?

Canola

Nutritionally an all-rounder being high in monounsaturates with a good dose of omega-3s. A neutral-tasting everyday oil which is versatile in the kitchen. An Australian success story, canola is widely grown here and features as an ingredient in canola margarines, oven-baked chips and frozen fish fillets.

Sunflower

High in polyunsaturates, sunflower oil is a versatile oil. Produced in Australia, it's often used to make polyunsaturated margarines. High in vitamin E.

Monounsaturated sunflower

A variant of sunflower oil which is rich in monounsaturated fats rather than the usual polyunsaturated. Makes a good oil for frying and roasting, as it is very heat stable.

Cottonseed

Light and neutral, cottonseed is a major oil in Australia (a by-product of cotton growing) and inexpensive. High in vitamin E.

Safflower

Highest in polyunsaturates, safflower oil is often recommended for those wanting to lower their cholesterol. Interchangeable with sunflower and soybean in recipes, but is more expensive. High in vitamin E.

Olive

An essential ingredient in Mediterranean cuisine, olive oil has a pronounced flavour and greenish colour, although this varies from brand to brand and type of olive oil (see Oil jargon). High in mono-unsaturates.

Peanut

A fragrant oil preferred for Asian cookery, especially stir-fries.

Sesame

A few drops of sesame oil in the stir-fry or salad changes the character of the whole dish. Darker in colour than other oils, it is a favourite in Asian recipes.

Soybean

Light and pleasant tasting, this is an everyday kitchen oil suitable for frying, roasting and salad dressing. Adds some omega-3s.

Maize (corn)

Is derived from corn kernels and has a somewhat spicy flavour that develops during cooking. Good for shallow frying.

Walnut

Has a rich nutty flavour which is ideal for salad dressings and drizzled over pasta. Needs to be stored in a cool dark place. Adds some omega-3s.

Macadamia

Appreciated by gourmet cooks, macadamia is a specialty oil and is high in mono-unsaturates.

Flaxseed (linseed)

Sold through health food shops, flaxseed is attracting interest as it has the highest omega-3s of all oils. However it is unstable and can develop off-flavours, so buy in small quantities and store in a cool dark place.

Grapeseed

A light oil extracted from the seeds of spent grapes from wine making. A good multi-purpose oil.

Chilli oil

Any oil impregnated with fresh or dried chillies until the oil absorbs much of the "heat".

Herb oils

Rosemary, oregano, tarragon, basil or other herbs are added to an oil to impart a special flavour during cooking.

Oil by type

Monounsaturated	Polyunsaturated	Saturated
Canola	Safflower	Coconut
Olive	Sunflower	Palm
Peanut	Maize (corn)	
Macadamia	Soybean	
Almond	Cottonseed	
Sunola/monosun	Grapeseed	
	Walnut	
	Sesame	
	Flaxseed (linseed)	

Note: No oil is 100% mono-unsaturated or 100% polyunsaturated. Oils are mixes of the three types of fatty acids - saturated, mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated, with the predominant fatty acid giving the oil its classification.
