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Cooking with Fats & Oils

Choosing the best option

All fats and oils contain 120 calories per tablespoon (or 9 kcal/g). When choosing what oil to use, it is important to consider health benefit, purpose, smoke point, and flavor.

Unsaturated and Saturated Fats

Unsaturated fats, the healthier fats, are found in plant-based foods and oils. Considered heart-friendly, unsaturated fats improve blood cholesterol levels and can decrease risk of heart disease.

Saturated fats, the less healthy fats, raise total blood cholesterol levels and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels that can increase your risk of heart disease.

Smoke Point

The smoke point of cooking oil is important. When oils are heated past their smoke point, it can destroy the healthy fatty acids and impart a burnt flavor to your food. The higher the smoke point, the better the oil is for high temperature cooking.

Choosing a Cooking Oil

Cooking oils have special characteristics that make them better for certain uses.

- **Baking:** vegetable, canola, soybean oil, butter, coconut oil
 - *Soybean Oil:* use as a alternative to vegetable oil
 - *Coconut Oil:* sweet-nutty flavor, use as an alternative to butter for dairy-free baking. Use sparingly due to high saturated fat content
- **Deep Frying:** peanut oil, canola oil, corn oil, sunflower oil
 - *Corn Oil:* mild flavor, good for at home frying
 - *Sunflower Oil:* neutral flavor, good for frying
- **Dressings:** olive oil, grapeseed oil, peanut oil, sesame oil
 - *Olive Oil:* distinct sweet flavor, best for dressings and bread dipping
- **Garnish:** Flaxseed oil, olive oil, sesame oil
 - *Flaxseed Oil:* spoils easily, keep refrigerated, add as a garnish to foods for health benefits
- **Sautéing:** olive oil, grapeseed oil, canola oil
 - *Olive Oil:* low smoke point makes it better for quick sautéing, avoid high temperatures to prevent burning
 - *Grapeseed Oil:* neutral flavor, high smoke point, can be used as a replacement for canola oil
 - *Canola Oil:* neutral flavor, good for high temperature sautéing
- **Stir-fry:** canola oil, peanut oil
 - *Peanut Oil:* light-nutty flavor, high smoke point, best for frying, doesn't absorb the flavor of other foods cooked in the oil
- **Marinades:** peanut oil, sesame oil
 - *Sesame Oil:* toasty flavor, popular in Asian cooking

Smoking Points	
Fats and Oils	Temperature
Butter	350°F
Coconut Oil	350°F
Olive Oil	325-375°F
Sesame Oil	350-400°F
Avocado Oil	375-400°F
Grapeseed Oil	420°F
Clarified Butter/Ghee	450°F
Canola Oil	450°F
Peanut Oil	450°F
Sunflower Oil	450°F
Soybean Oil	450°F
Rice Bran Oil	490°F
Safflower Oil	510°F

References:

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