

## Vegetable oils for cooking

**Avocado** For sautéing and salads.

**Canola** Neutral in flavor; good for most uses. Look for organic, non-GMO oil.

**Coconut** Although coconut oil is 92 percent saturated fat, there is evidence that suggests that it is used differently in the body than other saturated fats, and may have healing properties.

**Corn** Good for baking and in salads.

**Grape Seed** High in linoleic acid and low in saturated fats. Light, nutty taste; good for cooking.

**Palm Kernel** Saturated fat 83 percent.

**Palm Fruit** is fifty percent saturated fat and considered to be healthier than palm kernel oil.

**Peanut** Monounsaturated. Great for frying, baking and in salads.

**Olive** Monounsaturated. For salads and light sautéing.

**Safflower** Great as a salad oil, for cooking, or baking. Available in regular and high-oleic forms.

**Sesame** Excellent for stir frying and deep frying. Toasted sesame oil is a highly concentrated and aromatic oil added to stir fry or cooked dishes.

**Soybean** Contains omega-3. Has a strong flavor. Can be used in cooking, baking and salads.

**Sunflower** Mild flavor. Good for most uses except deep frying. Available in regular and high-oleic forms.

**Walnut** Delicious in low-heat applications. Great in salad dressings. High in omega-3.

**Wheat Germ** Supplement oil. Excellent source of vitamin E.

## Supplement and body oils

**Apricot** Use as a body oil.

**Almond** Use as a body oil.

**Borage** Comes from the seed of the flowering herb borage. It is an important source of gamma-linolenic acid.

**Cod Liver** A good source of vitamin A and D and essential omega-3 fatty acids.

**Evening Primrose** Extracted from primrose seeds, this oil is a good source for gamma-linolenic acid.

**Flax Seed** Supplement oil highest in alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which the body converts to omega-3. Buttery flavor. Great in salad dressings, on steamed vegetables and baked potatoes.

**Fish** Often derived from salmon, menhaden, cod and mackerel, these oils are an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids.

**Hemp** Rich in ALA, hemp oil has a pleasant nutty flavor, and can be used internally or applied topically.

**Wheat Germ** An excellent source of vitamin E and rich in naturally occurring antioxidants.

*Please note: Many supplement oils are sensitive to heat and light. Keep refrigerated in a dark container. Supplement oils are not for cooking, but can be added to prepared foods.*

## Definitions

**Essential fatty acids** (EFAs) include linoleic (omega-6) and linolenic (omega-3) fatty acids. Critical to our health, these must come from our diet—they are not manufactured by our bodies.

**Omega-3s** have anti-inflammatory properties. Ongoing studies show their potential for counteracting many diseases and conditions. Currently, good evidence exists for their use against cardiovascular disease. Other research suggests they may fight certain cancers and depression.

**Omega-6s** can help reduce the risk of heart disease when used in place of saturated fat in the diet.

**Gamma-linolenic acid** (GLA) is an omega-6 fatty acid commonly derived from the seeds of plants such as evening primrose and borage. GLA can be converted to compounds that have anti-inflammatory and antiproliferative properties.



**StrongerTogether.coop** is a consumer website developed by National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) for our “virtual chain” of over 120 retail food co-ops, operating more than 160 store fronts, nationwide.

**StrongerTogether.coop** is a place for people to gather on their food journeys. It's a place to find out more about what's in your food, where it comes from, where to find great food, how to prepare it, and a whole lot more. It's also a place to talk with others about food topics you're exploring, are passionate about, and even want to get involved in.

Learn more about co-ops, and find food co-ops all across the U.S. at [www.strongertogether.coop](http://www.strongertogether.coop). Follow @strongertogether on Twitter and like us on Facebook; we're at [www.facebook.com/coop.strongertogether](http://www.facebook.com/coop.strongertogether).

ALL ABOUT

# Oils



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# Choosing a good vegetable oil

High quality vegetable oils are the best way to meet your body's daily requirement for essential fats and fulfill many of the body's nutritional requirements. Natural vegetable oils carry these essential fat nutrients that are so important to good health. By keeping in mind a few key points about the fatty acid content of oils, processing methods, and best uses in the kitchen, you'll be able to purchase the healthiest products for your needs.

## Essential fatty acids as disease fighters in vegetable oils

Though excess consumption of saturated fat and the cholesterol found in animal fats have been associated with heart and arterial disease, some fat is necessary in a daily diet to ensure good health. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend most fats come from sources of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids such as fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. The Dietary Guidelines also recommend that calories from fat be kept under 30 percent of your total caloric intake.

Fat is needed by the body for absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, K, and carotenoids. Vegetable oils are one of the few sources of the essential fatty acids: linoleic (omega-6) and linolenic acid (omega-3).

Vegetable oils, especially wheat germ oil, are good sources of vitamin E.

Oils rich in omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to protect the body from heart disease and some types of cancer. Flax seed, canola, walnut, and soy oils are good sources of omega-3s.

## Types of oil

Fats are classified as either saturated, monounsaturated or polyunsaturated. Saturation refers to the carbon-hydrogen makeup of the oil. The more hydrogen, the greater degree of saturation and solidity of the oil.

### Monounsaturates

Monounsaturated fats found in olive, peanut, canola and high-oleic oils are generally liquid at room temperature and either semi-congealed or solid when refrigerated. These protect the body from heart disease by raising the blood level of HDL, the good cholesterol. Higher levels of HDL prevent plaque build-up on arterial walls. Consumption of polyunsaturated oils, like safflower and soybean oils, lowers levels of the bad cholesterol (LDL) but also of the good (HDL).

### Polyunsaturates

Polyunsaturated fats such as safflower oil are rich in linoleic (omega-6) fatty acids. These oils never solidify, even when refrigerated.

### Saturates

Saturated fats such as coconut oil, butter and lard are solid at room temperature. Nutritionists recommend having approximately equal amounts of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, while minimizing intake of saturated fats.

## Oil processing

Several different steps and methods are used in the processing of oils. The quality, flavor and nutritional content of oils vary greatly according to which processes are used.

### Extraction

How an oil is extracted affects the nutritional quality of the oil because heat, light and oxygen can destroy nutrients. Here are the most commonly used extraction methods:

**Expeller** pressing—a process that uses mechanical pressure rather than chemicals to extract oil from its source. Friction generates temperatures that may be as high as 185°F depending on the hardness of the seed, grain, bean or nut.

**Cold** pressing—term sometimes used for expeller pressing at temperatures below 120°F. A common cold pressed oil is extra virgin olive oil, which comes from the first pressing of olives.

**Vacuum** extraction—a vacuum expeller process that extracts oils in a non-oxygen and light-free atmosphere at temperatures as low as 70°F.

**Solvent** extraction—oils are extracted chemically with petroleum solvents which destroy the oil's nutritional value.

### Refining

While unrefined oils have more nutrients and flavor, they also have a much lower smoke point than refined oils, making them rarely used for sautéing and frying. Co-ops carry naturally refined varieties that have not been exposed to chemicals.

The refining process allows the oils to be safely used for sautéing and some are excellent for frying

also. Unrefined oils are best used in dressings and at the end of the cooking process (especially since the nutrients are harmed at higher temps).

## Hydrogenation

Hydrogenation is the chemical process that transforms a liquid oil into a solid or partially solid form. The process uses heavy metals, hydrogen gas and extremely high temperatures. Hydrogenation destroys nutrients and transforms the fat into trans-fatty acids. Consuming trans-fatty acids has been linked to high cholesterol and heart disease.

Other sources of hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils are packaged snacks like cookies, crackers, chips and pastries. Look for brands that use natural vegetable oils for a healthier choice. The FDA now requires the total grams of trans-fatty acids to be listed on food packages.

Your co-op carries trans-fat free margarines and shortening, as well as other products.

## STORAGE TIPS

The packaging and storage of oils can affect their quality. Heat, oxygen and light promote rancidity. Unrefined oils should be stored in cool, dark places and unrefined oils that are high in omega-3 fatty acids should be stored in the refrigerator.

Natural or unrefined oils will keep from four to six months if stored properly. Refined or heavily processed oils will keep twice as long.