

Cooking Healthy

All fats are not bad. In fact, replacement of bad fats, like saturated and trans fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, actually helps protect our hearts. But a little fat or oil goes a long way! Here's a list of cooking oils that contain the best ratio of the "better-for-you" fats.

Canola Oil

This was first introduced in the 1970s for home cooking and is made from seeds of the canola plant. It's a great oil to have in your pantry because it is very versatile.

- **Flavor** – Plain and mild
- **Smoke point**– 400 degrees F
- **Uses** – Sautéing, baking, frying, marinating
- **Quick tip** – Heat 2 tablespoons of canola oil with ¼ cup popcorn kernels in a pot for stove-top popcorn!

Olive Oil

This is a heart-healthy staple of the Mediterranean diet and is made from ripe olives. "Extra virgin" is made from the first pressing of olives. "Light" olive oil is lighter in flavor and color but has the same amount of calories as extra-virgin.

- **Flavor** – Extra virgin olive oil: fruity, tangy, bold. Light olive oil: mild
- **Smoke point Extra virgin** – 400 degrees F. Light: 450 degree F
- **Uses** – Grilling, sautéing, roasting, spreads for breads, base for Italian, Greek and Spanish dishes
- **Quick tip** – Drizzle extra virgin olive oil on top of soups, toasted bread, rice and pasta dishes for a rich flavor.

Peanut Oil

This is made from shelled peanuts and is popular in Asian dishes as well as Southern cooking.

- **Flavor** – Nutty yet mild
- **Smoke point** – 450 degrees F
- **Uses** – Stir-frying, roasting, deep frying, baking
- **Quick tip** – If you have a blender, make homemade peanut butter! Blend 1 cup shelled peanuts and 2 tablespoons peanut oil.

Sesame Oil

This is made from sesame seeds and is a staple in Chinese, Korean and Indian cooking.

- **Flavor** –Light sesame oil: nutty. Dark sesame oil: bold and heavy

- **Smoke point** – Light: 450 degrees F. Dark: 350 degrees F
- **Uses** – Stir-frying (light only), Dressings/sauces (dark)
- **Quick tip** – Whisk together dark sesame oil, rice vinegar and scallions; toss with cooked brown rice and shrimp.

Vegetable Oil

This is usually made from a combination of corn, soybeans and/or sunflower seeds and is another great oil to have on hand because it can be used for many different cooking techniques.

- **Flavor** – Plain and mild
- **Smoke point** – 450 degrees F
- **Uses** – Sautéing, baking, frying, marinating
- **Quick tip** – If you have a cast-iron skillet, wipe it down with a thin layer of vegetable oil to help seal its non-stick surface and prevent rusting.

**Smoke point is the temperature at which oil breaks down, starts to smoke and can have a foul odor or taste. Oils have different smoke points and some are more suited to cooking over high heat than others.*

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