

# COOKING WITH OILS

When it comes to cooking and nutrition, not all oils are made the same. Some oils perform better at higher temperatures, whilst some have stronger flavours making them more suitable for certain dishes. With so many oils now available to purchase, it can be difficult to know which oil is best suited. In this fact sheet, we explore the benefits of commonly used cooking oils and look at why some oils are healthier than others.

## HEALTH BENEFITS

Oils differ in the types and ratios of fats they contain, as well as in the way they have been processed. The majority of plant based oils include varying amounts of both mono and polyunsaturated fats which play an active role in managing heart health by reducing cholesterol. Some oils also contain higher amounts of saturated fats which can increase the risk of heart disease when consumed frequently. As a rule of thumb, oils which tend to be solid at a lower temperature such as coconut oil and palm oil, tend to contain higher levels of unhealthy saturated fat.

Some oils also do not contain higher amounts of good fats either due to the type of oil or due to extensive processing. For example, oils which are unrefined such as first pressed extra virgin olive oil will contain higher amounts of good fats and antioxidants compared to a highly refined olive oil.

## SMOKE POINT

The smoke point of oil can also strongly influence how potent the flavours and nutrient profile of the oil becomes during cooking. This is referred to as the temperature at which the oil starts to smoke and breakdown. Every oil has a different smoke point and if the oil reaches this

point, the antioxidant content and healthy fat benefits begin to reduce. Generally oils which are lighter in colour will have a higher smoke point. Additionally, more refined oils will also have a higher antioxidants.

Please see the table below which illustrates the health benefits and smoke points of common oils available to purchase.

SMOKE POINT TYPE OF OIL COMMENTS

SMOKE POINT	TYPE OF OIL	COMMENTS
200°C	Extra Virgin Olive Oil	Olive oil has a stronger flavour and is rich in healthy monounsaturated fats. It has a reasonably high smoke point and can therefore be used in a variety of ways including in baked dishes and in salads.

220-230°C	Canola Oil	Improves cardiovascular health, and aids in reducing the risk of dementia.
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232°C	Refined Coconut Oil	Despite being a plant based oil and having a high smoke point, coconut oil is high in saturated fat. Ideally this type of oil should only be used in small portions to avoid negative effects on heart health.
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232°C	Peanut Oil	Peanut oil is high in vitamin E when compared to other oils. It's high smoke point makes it an excellent oil for use in stir-fries.
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SMOKE POINT TYPE OF OIL COMMENTS

270°C	Refined Avocado Oil	Avocado oil is rich in potassium and also has one of the highest monounsaturated fat contents of most oils on the market. It maintains its chemical structure at high and low temperatures and therefore can be used in a variety of dishes from baking, cooking, and in salads.
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107°C	Unrefined Flaxseed Oil	Flaxseed oil is rich in omega-3 fatty acids (healthy fats) which can help to reduce inflammation. It has a mild nutty flavour and is best used in salads and sauces due to its lower smoke point.
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235°C	Palm Oil	Palm oil is solid at room temperature on account of being high in unhealthy saturated fats. Due to this, usage should be kept to a minimum, if at all.
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235°C	Vegetable Oil	Vegetable oil is usually a mix of several oils such as safflower, corn and soybean oil and is considered a refined oil. It is lower in good fats compared to Other oils however, due to having a high smoke point and mild taste, the type of oil is very versatile and can be used in cooking, frying and baking.
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