

9 Specialty Oils Make Intriguing Additions to Your Pantry

Much like you select quality fruits, vegetables, meats and cheeses, selecting the right oil can make or break a recipe as well as your health. But with so many oils to choose from, knowing which one to use for each recipe is key.

EN regularly recommends olive oil or canola oil for everyday use because they boast the most healthful fatty acid profiles of oils well-suited for general use. Others don't fare as well for cooking, are too strongly flavored or are too expensive for everyday use. But you can still experiment in small quantities.

The Science Behind Oils. No oil contains just one type of fat; each is made up of its own unique balance of saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids. An oil is referred to as saturated, monounsaturated or polyunsaturated depending on the main type of fat.

The best oils for frying have a high "smoke point," so they can be heated to a high temperature before they smoke and burn. Everyday oils with the highest smoke points include corn, peanut, safflower, sunflower and soybean.

Specialty oils offer taste sensations beyond those found in bland oils like canola, sunflower and safflower. Think of these suddenly popular gourmet oils as culinary opportunities. All oils are pure fat, but when used in moderation in place of saturated fat-rich butter or trans-laden hydrogenated fats, they can be heart-healthy. Here's a culinary guide to selected specialty oils.

Almond Oil—An oil with a delicate nutty flavor and aroma. Very expensive French almond oil, *huile d'amande*, has an intense flavor and aroma of lightly toasted almonds. The American variety is milder, but also less expensive. Substitute

for olive oil to add a distinct flavor to salads, vegetables, fish, poultry and lamb.

Argan Oil—Made from the nuts of the argan tree, which grows almost exclusively in Morocco. Gives a distinctive nutty flavor to dishes, especially traditional Moroccan *amlou*, a tahini-like spread of argan oil, almonds and honey. Typically, this oil is used for seasoning, not cooking. Drizzle over salads, vegetables, bread, couscous, lentils, cooked seafood and egg dishes.

Where to Find Specialty Oils

- Whole Foods Markets
- Trader Joe's
- www.gourmetfoodstore.com
- www.earthy.com
- <http://trufflemarket.com/shop> (or call 866-481-9221)

Avocado Oil—Recently labeled by chefs as the next "hot" ingredient. One of the few oils not derived from a seed or pit; it is pressed solely from the fleshy pulp. Highly monounsaturated. Use together with olive oil. Its smooth, rich flavor won't overpower the natural flavor of foods. Use in fish and chicken dishes or French and Asian-style cuisines. Ideal for stir-frying, searing and dipping.

Grapeseed Oil—Pressed from the seeds of *Vitis vinifera* grapes, a by-product of winemaking. Because of a light, clean, neutral flavor, grapeseed oil is perfect in salad dressings, marinades or to infuse or flavor with garlic, rosemary or other herbs or spices. Holds up well for sautéing, stir-fries, fondue and baking.

Hazelnut Oil—Higher in monounsaturates than olive oil. Fragrant and as full-flavored as the roasted nut itself, but because of its strong flavor, it's often combined with lighter oils for cooking. Hazelnut oil gives salads a deliciously nutty flavor and is a favorite in baked goods. Because of its high mono makeup, store it in the refrigerator to prevent rancidity.

Mustard Oil—An oil with a spicy, pungent taste popular in India and Bangladesh, where it is used for frying. In addition to Indian dishes, mustard oil is delicious in salad dressings, stir-fries and marinades for meat and fish. Heat the oil to its smoke point before cooking with it. Once it smokes, the taste transforms to a smoother flavor that won't overpower food.

Rice Bran Oil—Popular in Asian countries, such as China and Japan; extracted from the germ and inner husk of rice. A high smoke point and mild flavor make it perfect for sautéing and stir-frying.

Tea Seed Oil—Pale amber-green oil with a sweet, herbal aroma, also known as tea oil or camellia oil. The main cooking oil in some southern China provinces. Ideal for sautéing and stir-frying because of a high smoke point. Also use in salad dressings, dips, marinades and sauces.

Walnut Oil—Rich, nutty flavor best uncooked or in cold sauces because of a very low smoke point; when heated, becomes bitter. Try adding to chicken or turkey salad with grapes and chopped walnuts. Brush a thin coat of walnut oil on grilled fish and steaks just before serving. Toss with freshly cooked pasta and spices. Try in favorite dessert recipes for added flavor.

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