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What's the Difference?

Not All Oils are Created Equal

All oils have nine calories per gram, but their unique fat composition affects the body in different ways. Polyunsaturated fat, for example, is the easiest for the body to metabolize, whereas saturated fat may raise the level of cholesterol in the

bloodstream. Each type of oil contains a diverse combination of ratios or proportions of “[good fats](#)” (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) and “[bad fats](#)” (saturated fat).

The exception is partially or fully hydrogenated vegetable shortening and many margarines, which also contain trans fats (a man-made fat and the most unhealthy of all fats often found in baked goods, snacks, crackers, chips, doughnuts and fast foods).

The predominant type of fat in oil determines how oil is categorized. For instance, olive, canola and peanut oils are considered monounsaturated oils because their primary component is monounsaturated fat. Conversely, safflower, sunflower, corn, flaxseed and soybean oils are polyunsaturated oils because they are rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids. See chart below for fat breakdown.

Fatty Acid and Cholesterol Composition of Some Common Fats

<i>Dietary Fat</i>	<i>Saturated g/Tbsp</i>	<i>Monounsaturated g/Tbsp</i>	<i>Polyunsaturated g/Tbsp</i>	<i>Cholesterol mg/Tbsp</i>
Canola Oil	1	8.2	4.1	0
Safflower Oil	1.2	1.6	10.1	0
Sunflower Oil	1.4	2.7	8.9	0
Corn Oil	1.17	3.3	8	0
Olive Oil	1.8	9.9	1.1	0
Sesame Oil	1.9	5.4	5.7	0
Soybean Oil	2	3.2	7.9	0
Peanut Oil	2.3	6.2	4.3	0
Vegetable Shortening	3.2	5.7	3.3	0
Chicken Fat	3.8	5.7	2.7	11
Lard	5	5.8	1.4	12
Beef Tallow	6.4	5.3	0.5	14
Palm Oil	6.7	5	1.3	0
Butter	7.1	3.4	0.6	31
Palm Kernel Oil	11.1	1.5	0.2	0
Coconut Oil	11.8	0.8	0.2	0

Source: Composition of Foods. Fats and Oils. AH No. 8-4. U.S.D.A.

Polyunsaturated fatty acids are vital in vegetarian diets as they are the source of essential fatty acids (EFAs) omega-6 and omega-3, which the body cannot manufacture and therefore must obtain through foods such as flax seed oil.



Cold-pressed or expeller-pressed, unrefined and unfiltered oils are expensive to produce and therefore cost consumers more. However, these minimally processed oils are rich in vitamins and antioxidants providing not only the highest quality dietary fats in vegetable oils but also tremendous health benefits.

Likewise, choosing organically produced oil adds to its cost because it is free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), chemical herbicides, fumigants, synthetic fertilizers and unapproved pesticides.

In contrast, conventionally produced oils involve chemical solvents, some of which can promote cancer. The link with cancer is not declared on labels because the chemicals are not present in “significant” quantities, which would otherwise require disclosure by law. My own view is that, as these chemicals accumulate over time in the body, they’re never too small or insignificant when consumed. Any amount is both unnecessary and potentially harmful in the long term.

Furthermore, the process of refining oils involves nutrient-destroying high temperatures and non-organic oils tend to contain unhealthy additives and preservatives.

It’s scary to learn about non-organic, unhealthy oils. But eliminating fat is not the answer. Fat is necessary for the body to function properly. We need only to be selective about the type of fat we eat and reduce the quantity of fats in our diets.

Buying expensive oil that has been organically produced, barely processed, and unrefined is an investment in your health. Look at it this way: By buying higher quality, more expensive oil and eating less of it, you’ll actually save money and be healthier at the same time.

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