

Beyond EVOO

Lisa Young PhD, RDN
New York University



Extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO) tops the list of good-for-you oils, but there are other healthy choices for when you want a more neutral taste, a higher smoke point for cooking or a different flavor to drizzle over a finished dish...

Avocado oil. Because of its high smoke point (the temperature the oil can reach before breaking down), this healthy mild-flavored oil is best used in an air fryer and for sautéing and deep frying. It is also good for baking.

Flaxseed oil. Another mild-tasting oil, flaxseed oil has the highest concentration of the plant-based omega-3 fatty acid *alpha-linolenic acid* (ALA)—8.5 grams per tablespoon. Keep it refrigerated—it can go rancid quickly. Not suitable for cooking, it is best used on cooked foods and for dressings.

Grapeseed oil, from the seeds left over after grapes are pressed for juice

or wine, has a mild flavor and is high in polyunsaturated fatty acids. At high heat, it reacts with oxygen to form unhealthy free radicals. It is best used as a dressing or finisher on cooked foods. Keep it in the fridge to prevent it from going rancid.

Peanut oil. Because it has a smoke point of up to 440°F, peanut oil is great for high-heat stir-frying. But it contains high levels of omega-6 fatty acids, which should be eaten only in moderation.

Canola oil has the lowest saturated fat among cooking oils and 1.2 grams of ALA per tablespoon. It should not be used for roasting or to make a salad dressing, but it is an option for occasional deep frying.

Walnut oil has a slightly nutty flavor and can be used in baking, on salads and as a finishing oil. It delivers 1.4 grams of ALA per tablespoon. It can be used for light sautéing but is best as a dressing or a topper on cooked food. Store this one in the fridge.

Toasted sesame oil is delicious not only in Asian dishes but also when cooking whole grains such as kasha and rice and for drizzling over vegetables.

Important: Plant-based, coconut oil is over 90% saturated fat, so it's not a good choice for people with high cholesterol. In fact, everyone should use it judiciously.

COLD-PRESSED OR REFINED?

Cold-pressed oils are the least processed. The oil is mechanically extracted and likely to retain more vitamin E, polyphenols and other nutrients. These oils cost more, and you may have to search harder to find them.

Refined oils are extracted using heat and chemical solvents, such as *hexane*. It is unclear if the solvents that remain after refining pose a health threat, and it is hard to know what level of nutrients remain. Refined oils cost less than cold-pressed. If you use a lot of these oils, you might want to pay for higher-quality ones.

Bottom Line Personal interviewed Lisa Young, PhD, RDN, adjunct professor of nutrition in the department of nutrition and food studies at New York University, New York City, and author of *Finally Full, Finally Slim: 30 Days to Permanent Weight Loss One Portion at a Time*.
DrLisaYoung.com

