

FATS AND OILS

2-4 SERVINGS PER DAY (1 serving = 1 tbsp olive oil)

Nutrition: calories 120; fat 14 grams

Everyone is aware that olive oil is *the* oil on the Mediterranean diet. Olive oil is predominately monounsaturated fat, which has been found to lower cholesterol and LDL. Did you know that olives, avocados, almonds, cashews, peanuts and nut butters are also high in monounsaturated fats?

Another great source of healthy fats includes fatty fish – mackerel, herring, sardines, albacore tuna, salmon and lake trout – which are rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

Monounsaturated fats (MUFA) have one double bond making them liquid at room temperature. The Greeks consume on average 4 tablespoons of olive oil per day. Compare this to only half a teaspoon for most Americans.



Polyunsaturated fats (PUFA) have two or more double bonds. The two main types of PUFAs are omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. The main source of **omega-3** fatty acids are fatty fish and lesser amounts in walnuts and seeds. **Omega-6** fats include vegetable oils (safflower, corn, cottonseed, sesame, peanut, safflower and canola).

In general, the omega-6 oils *can* become inflammatory while the omega-3 oils are anti-inflammatory. Omega-6 oils are not inflammatory themselves but can be converted into arachidonic acid which is a building block for molecules that are inflammatory. Fortunately, not all omega-6 becomes arachidonic acid and replacing saturated fats with omega-6 is heart healthy.

If you like the concept behind the paleo diet, then you should love fish. Research suggests that ancient humans evolved with a 1:1 ratio of omega-6 to omega-3. Today, however, that ratio is closer to 16:1. Not because we are ‘evolving’ towards this ratio, but because of our diet and processed oils and fats. Processed oils are the problem, not the omega-6.

So, is olive oil the secret juice in the sauce of life? Probably not. It appears that the “secret” is following all the ingredients of the entire soup, not just one magical ingredient.

“Olive oil plays a central role, but it is not alone,” says Dimitrios Trichopoulos, MD, PhD, of Harvard School of Public Health. “...eating the proper diet can significantly reduce your risk of early death.” Dimitrios followed 22,000 adults aged 20 to 86 from Greece for four-years along with detailed dietary records.

The individuals were evaluated on a 0-to-9 scale regarding how closely they followed the diet. Those that followed the diet the closest reduced their death rate from heart disease and cancer by 25%. No

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one food appeared to be the answer, it was the mix. REPLACING saturated fat with monounsaturated fat and reducing meat consumption.

The Mediterranean diet is *very* high in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, and cereals; moderate in fish; and low amounts of meat and dairy. People in Greece eat twice as many vegetables as Americans – nearly a pound a day.



The bottom-line message is – Don't just increase olive oil consumption, that will only increase your total calories. Eat more fruits, vegetables, and legumes and fewer foods rich in saturated fats.

So, what fats and oils *should* you use? All unprocessed, unsaturated oils are acceptable. However, olive oil should still be number one. Olive oil has the studies and research proving long-term health benefits. Canola oil studies have been short term. Canola oil also does not contain the antioxidants that olive oil has. In mice, olive oil appears to improve memory while canola oil worsened memory and promoted obesity.

Here is our source of fats and oils in a healthy diet.

- Olive Oil – yes you can even cook with it!
- Olives – duh.
- Nuts – most are monounsaturated, walnuts are polyunsaturated.
- Seeds – also rich in healthy oils.
- Flaxseed – rich in omega-3, high-quality protein, lignans and fiber.
- Chia seeds – also rich in nutrients similar to flaxseed.
- Avocado – a great nutrient-dense food and rich in monounsaturated fat.
- Fatty fish – your best omega-3 source and a staple of the Mediterranean diet.

How do we choose our olive oil?

Extra-virgin olive oil (EVVO) is the highest quality meaning it is unrefined, free of chemicals and rancidity and never treated with heat.

AVOID “light” olive oil. All oils are 100% oil, so it is not “light” in calories. “Light” means it has been refined and subjected to heat to remove odor and flavor.

Using your extra virgin olive oil.

- Salad dressing.
- Bread dipping.
- Drizzle over fish or steamed vegetables.

Pan frying is OK with EVVO, it has the highest smoke point (350 to 410 degrees; ideal frying temperature is 350 – 375 degrees). **NEVER DEEP FRY.**

Heating oil for frying (pan- or stir-frying) will destroy much of the flavor and aroma of the oil, so no need to waste money on an expensive oil for this purpose. Save your expensive EVVO or virgin olive oil for consuming raw. When it comes to browning or sautéing, use an inexpensive, flavorless oil with a high

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smoke point – canola, soy or peanut oil. Make sure you get *unprocessed* oils for cooking. It should say “cold pressed” and “unrefined.”

Storing olive oil. Light and heat destroys all oils. Keep your oil in a dark, cool, place, away from the stove. Dark glass protects the oil from light. Avoid clear bottles.

Here are a few cooking terms explained:

Sautéing means to cook small pieces of food over medium-high to high heat (375 degrees) until browned. Shrimp, cut vegetables and meat cut into small pieces. You only add enough oil (2-3 teaspoons) to prevent food from sticking. Nonstick pans allow you to cook with even less oil.

Pan frying uses lower heat (340 degrees) than a sauté and is usually used on larger pieces of food, such as chicken breasts, steak, port chops or fish. Same amount of oil as sauté – just enough to glaze the pan – but lower temperature so as not to overcook the food during the longer cooking time.

Stir frying is like sautéing, small pieces of food, high heat and very little oil, typically 2-3 tbsp. Want the best flavor? You need ridiculously high heat, like around 650 degrees. This high temperature means the water in food turns to steam *FAST* and prevents oil from penetrating into the food.

Non-stick woks are not good options. The coatings breakdown at around 475 degrees. You can use a heavy pan, cast iron or stainless steel pan, and work in batches allowing the pan to reheat between batches.



Shallow frying is what you do when you make fried chicken, eggplant Parmesan or beer battered shrimp. The food swims in oil and is the same as deep frying. **WE DO NOT SHALLOW OR DEEP FRY.**