HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT COOKING OIL

Beyond a smoke point, consider these three primary cooking oil characteristics:

1 FLAVORFUL VS. NEUTRAL OIL

Sometimes the oils rich flavour is desired for certain types of dishes. For example, sesame oil really compliments Asian cuisine.

In other cases, extra flavor in the oil will muddle the final outcome of the dish. In these cases, opt for neutral oils like peanut oil, vegetable oil, or canola oil.

In addition to their flavor difference, neutral oils also tend to have higher smoke points, making them suitable for frying.

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2 UNREFINED VS. REFINED OIL

After oils are extracted or pressed, they can either be bottled immediately or refined and processed.

Oils left in their natural state are labeled as unrefined, cold-pressed, raw, virgin, or unrefined. These oils tend to retain flavors, as well as beneficial minerals, nutrients, and enzymes.

However, these oils tend to have lower smoke points and are best used for very low heat cooking or raw, like salad dressings or finishing drizzles.

Refined oils are processed through filtering bleaching, or heating to remove the volatile compounds that break down in virgin oils. The resulting product offers a neutral taste, long shelf life, and high smoke point.

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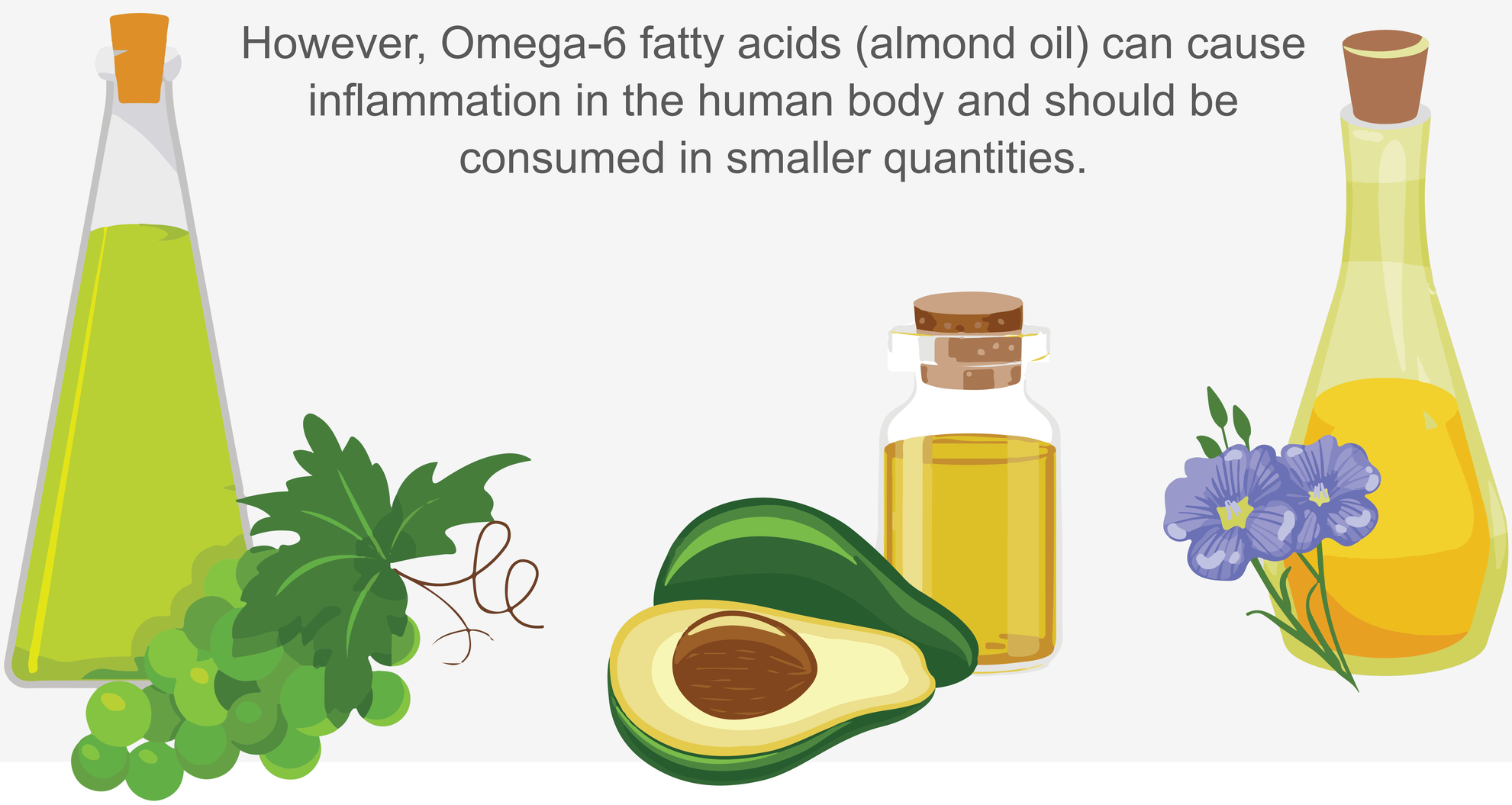
3 OMEGA FATTY ACIDS

Certain fatty acids, including Omega-9 and Omega-3 fatty acids, are healthy for the human body. Oils high in these beneficial fatty acids include avocado oil, flaxseed oil, and extra virgin olive oil.

However, Omega-6 fatty acids (almond oil) can cause inflammation in the human body and should be consumed in smaller quantities.



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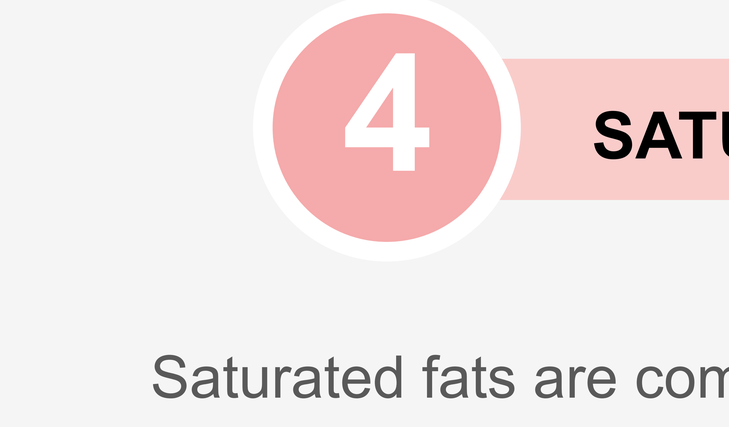
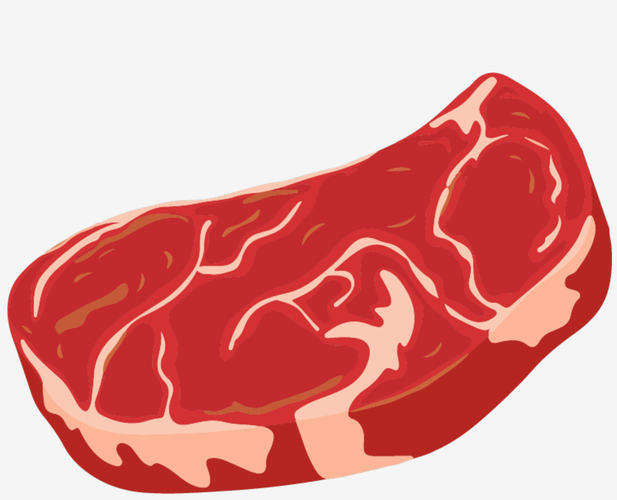
4 SATURATED VS. UNSATURATED FATS

Saturated fats are commonly found in meat, cheese, butter, and many processed foods. Unsaturated or monounsaturated fats are commonly found in nuts and seeds, and are much healthier.

In general, oils that are liquid at room temperature contain more unsaturated fat, making them a healthier choice than products like butter or lard, which contain more saturated fat.





OIL SMOKE POINT

WHAT IS AN OIL SMOKE POINT?

The smoke point of oil is the temperature at which it stops shimmering and starts smoking. The smoke point is also called the burning point of oil and can range from relatively low 325F (160C) to very high 520F (270C).

WHY IS OIL SMOKE POINT IMPORTANT?

Smoking oil is sometimes inevitable, for example when stir-frying in an extremely hot wok. Smoking is a sign that your oil is breaking down. When oils break down, they can release chemicals that give food a burnt/bitter flavor, as well as releasing harmful free radicals. Before using any oil, make sure that its smoke point can handle the cooking method you plan to use.

COOKING OILS
OIL SMOKE POINT

Extra Virgin Olive Oil

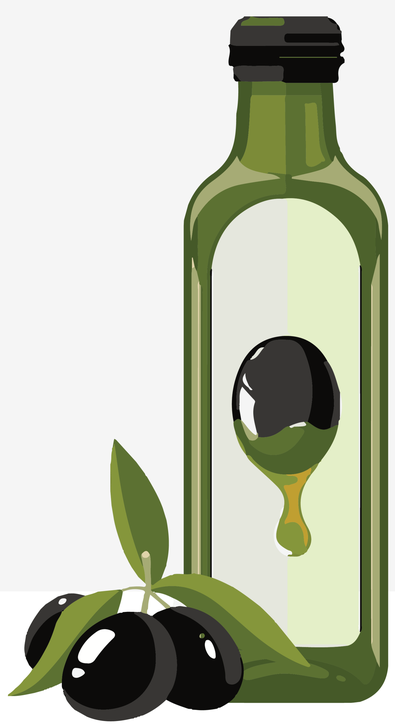
Should be used when frying at low or medium-high temperatures

Smoke point:

325-375F (163-190C)

Best Uses:

Sautéing, sauces, and salad dressings.



Flaxseed Oil

Also known as linseed oil, has a nutty taste and should not be used for cooking.

Smoke point:

225F (107C)

Best Uses:

Finishing oil for dips, dressings, smoothies.

Hemp Seed Oil

Nutty, rich flavor and dark green color, but too sensitive to be heated, so instead use it as a finishing oil for soups and salads.

Best Uses:

Finishing oil, marinades and dressings.

COOKING OILS
OIL SMOKE POINT

Coconut Oil

Comes in both virgin and refined options and is solid at room temperature.

Smoke point:

350F (177C)

Best Uses:

Thai and Indian food, frying, sautéing, and baking.

Avocado Oil

Very versatile with a buttery flavour.

Smoke point:

510-520F (265-271C)

Best Uses:

Sautéing, frying, sauces, and salad dressings.

Grapeseed Oil

Natural tasting oil, versatile with medium-high smoke point.

Smoke point:

390F (199C)

Best Uses:

Sautéing, frying, and dressings.

COOKING OILS
OIL SMOKE POINT

Peanut Oil

Widely used in Asian cuisine, has a mild nutty flavour.

Smoke point:

450 (232C)

Best Uses:

Frying, roasting, and grilling

Ghee

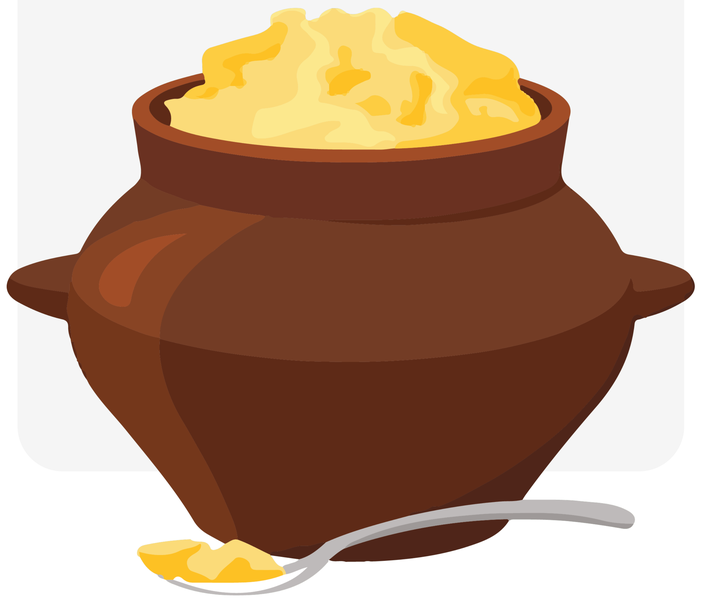
It's a form of clarified butter originating from India with a deep nutty flavour.

Smoke point:

450F (232C)

Best Uses:

Sautéing, roasting, and baking.



Sesame Oil

Great all-purpose oil. For more flavor use toasted sesame oil.

Smoke point:

410F (210C)

Best Uses:

Asian, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern foods

COOKING OILS
OIL SMOKE POINT

Palm Oil

Comes from palm trees native to Africa, where it has been consumed for thousands of years.

Smoke point:

450F (230C)

Best Uses:

Curries and other spicy dishes.

Sunflower Oil

Commonly used as a frying oil. This oil is high in vitamin e.

Smoke point:

440F (225C)

Best Uses:

Baking, frying, and salad dressing.

Canola Oil

Natural in flavour and best suited for frying and deep frying.

Smoke point:

400F (204C)

Best Uses:

Frying