

BRUNCH

Wellness

Oil's well

How much do you know about cooking oil, a staple in our kitchens?

By Colleen Braganza

OLIVE OIL
We've been told that olive oil is not meant for Indian cooking because it has a low smoking point. But that is apparently not the case.
We are most familiar with extra virgin, virgin, olive and pomace oil. Of these, olive oil and pomace are most suited to Indian cooking, say nutritionists. Pomace oil is especially suited for frying, says nutritionist Ritika Samaddar, head dietitian, Max Healthcare. "Extra virgin olive oil has a distinct flavour of its own and is best for salads."
Olive oil is the best possible oil to use from the health point of view. This is because the ratio of mono-unsaturated and poly-unsaturated fat in olive oil is ideal for our system, says Rupali Dutta, chief clinical nutritionist, Fortis, Vasant Kunj.

MUSTARD OIL
Known as *sarson ka tel*, many of us use this for our cooking. "Mustard oil is one of the best sources of mono-unsaturated fat that protects the heart and helps raise the level of good cholesterol. However, because it is also high in saturated fat, we don't advise its use all the time. Cook just one vegetable in *sarson ka tel* a day," says Rupali.
Ritika adds that mustard oil is best used to cook green leafy vegetables and fish because it lends a distinct flavour to the dishes.
A lot of us smoke mustard oil to get the flavour right. Nutritionists say this is all right but warn against reusing it.

DESI GHEE
No Punjabi worth his salt will ever have a meal without a big blob of



VEGETABLE OIL
These include groundnut oil, *kardi*, sunflower, safflower, corn oil, etc. However, the problem with vegetable oil is that each kind of oil, say, sunflower, safflower or corn, is rich in either mono-unsaturated or poly-unsaturated fat, not both. Our bodies need these fats in a certain proportion. Therefore, it is best to rotate these oils. So if you use groundnut oil one month, shift to sunflower oil the next and so on. "Don't get stuck on one oil. Keep changing them for the best results," says Ritika.
This doesn't mean you mix the oils together for one-time use. "Different oils have different smoking points so mixing them is a bad idea. They also tend to get rancid when they are mixed together," adds Rupali.

Why you must not reheat oil

Nutritionists say that when oil is constantly reheated, its chemical composition changes and it degrades. "Reheating breaks down the bonds in the oil. It causes oxidation and the oil turns toxic. Simply, this introduces trans fats into the oil," says nutritionist Rupali Dutta. Trans fats are the worst fats and are very harmful to the system.

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