

3 Everyday Cooking Oils for Your Kitchen

Culinary Nutrition with Flavorful Fats



Picking the best cooking oils

The source ingredient of an oil and production method, refined or unrefined, results in differences in flavor, smoke points, cooking uses, cost and minor nutrient differences. Refined oils have higher smoke points (the temperature the oil starts to smoke) than most unrefined oils, tend to cost less and have more culinary uses. Heat ranges for different techniques include:

- Frying/Grilling: °F: 350-400
- High-heat sauté: °F: 350+
- Moderate-heat sauté: °F: 285-320 (Best temperatures for flavorful browning reactions)

Unrefined oils offer aromas and flavors lacking in unrefined oils profiles and, in some cases have more trace nutrients. Note that smoke point temperatures can vary based on oil quality and processing.

Oil Type	Flavor	Smoke Point	Best Culinary Uses	Cost	Health Considerations
Flavorful Extra Virgin Olive (<i>unrefined</i>)	Variety of flavors & intensity	325F-350F	Higher cost may limit use to use vinaigrettes, drizzling as a sauce & olive oil-scented desserts	\$\$-\$\$\$	Highest in monounsaturated fats (~82%) and anti-oxidants so it oxidizes more slowly & is linked to reduced risk of a variety of health problems.
Everyday Extra Virgin Olive (<i>unrefined</i>)	Mild to moderate Flavors	325F-350F	Sauté, vinaigrettes, baking	\$\$	“ditto”
Canola (<i>Refined</i>)	Bland to none	460F	Sauté at any heat frying (<i>but a bit pricy</i>) Other: Baking or where oil flavor is not desired	\$\$ Organic: \$\$\$	High levels of monounsaturated fats (60%) & of the lowest saturated fat levels (6%). It’s one of few cooking oils with Alpha-linolenic acid (a type of polyunsaturated fat) that can convert, albeit inefficiently, to omega-3 fats.

Common Cooking Oils: Not for Everyday Use

Vegetable (<i>Refined</i>)	Bland to none	450F	High heat sauté, grilling, frying (<i>cheaper than canola</i>)	\$	This type of fat is too common in most diets so no limiting its use to frying or grilling is best
Coconut oil Virgin (<i>unrefined</i>)	Coconut	350F	Sauté, Warm Vinaigrette sauces (coagulates at cool temperatures), baking, desserts	\$\$\$	Rigorous evidence on health benefits is limited. It’s high in MCT (medium chain triglycerides) burn well as fuel and store inefficiently as fat. There are potential healthful nutrients, but the 92% saturated fat can increase health risks.