

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

January 27, 2006

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776

e-mail:makeith@ifas.ufl.edu

Which Oil Should You Use?

Someone recently told me how disappointed he was about having to change the kind of oil he was using to cook. He liked the canola oil he had been using, until he found some 'new information' on the web about its 'toxic properties'. Now he was going to change back to corn or something else. Luckily I was able to assure him that he'd been misinformed, and could use canola oil without worry.

What that web site told him was that canola was an industrial oil not meant for human consumption and that it had toxic acids that had to be neutralized by genetic engineering. There's a whole lot of bad information there!

Canola plants are related to cabbage and broccoli. Another relative, rapeseed, was cross-bred over many years to produce canola. The oil comes from the seeds. All oils are made up of fatty acids. Rapeseed oil does have high levels of a fatty acid called erucic acid that may cause health problems if eaten in large doses. Canola seeds have less than one percent of the amount of this fat that rapeseed has. If anyone tried to eat enough of it to get sick from that fatty acid they would die of overweight or a heart attack long before any other effect happened! Why? Because canola oil, just like every other oil, has about 120 calories in every tablespoon. And for most of us, too many calories is the main health problem we face.

On the other hand, canola oil has less saturated fat - the bad stuff - than any other oil. It has more monounsaturated fat - the good stuff - than almost all others, only olive oil has more. It is almost the lowest in natural trans fats - also bad stuff. While

canola oil does have some omega-3 fats - usually good stuff - we don't use the omega-3 from plants as well as we do from fish, so that's not a huge benefit. Plus, canola oil has very little flavor of its own, and doesn't start to smoke or burn nearly as fast as many others do. So, canola oil is definitely on the good side of the scale.

The other one that's about as good for your heart as you can get is olive oil. It too has very little saturated fat and lots of the good monounsaturated fat. The problem with olive oils are that they burn easily, so it's not very good for frying foods. We should not be frying many foods anyway! But many kinds of olive oil have enough flavor that you can notice it in the food. That's fine if you want it on salad or bread, but not so good if you're making a cake.

Other oils with lots of unsaturated fats for heart health are peanut, corn, soybean and sesame. These are also nearly flavorless and can be used for most frying and baking. Peanut oil is like canola and olive oil - most of its fat is the good monounsaturated kind, but it does not have quite as much as they do. Corn and soybean oil are next in line with a little less monounsaturated. Sesame oil has lots of the good kind of fat but most kinds of sesame oil have a strong flavor. It's wonderful for stir-fry if you want the nutty flavor.

Finally there are the specialty oils, such as avocado, grapeseed, rice and walnut. These can be expensive, and are often advertised more for health benefits than cooking characteristics. Most add their own flavor to the foods, so they can be used in salads, and for some frying. But since they all have plenty of calories they're not a good choice if you are looking for antioxidants. Use them when you want their flavor.

Here's a stir-fry recipe for broccoli that uses toasted sesame seeds for flavor and canola oil to keep it from sticking. You can add slivered carrots or sweet red pepper for

more color. Since there's only a teaspoon of oil you won't get many calories from it and you can use any oil you have on hand.

Sesame Broccoli

1 medium head broccoli, washed and chopped 1 tsp (canola) oil

1 Tbsp sesame seeds

2 Tbsp water

1/8 to 1/4 crushed red pepper flakes

1 Tbsp low-sodium soy sauce

½ Tbsp lemon juice

Heat large skillet over medium-high heat and add oil. Swirl to coat bottom of pan. Add sesame seeds and cook 1 minute, stirring constantly. Don't let them burn!

Add broccoli (and other vegetables if desired). Increase heat to high and cook 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Broccoli should be bright green.

Add water, soy sauce, pepper flakes and lemon juice. Cover, and cook 4-5 minutes or until as tender as you like. Serves 4.

Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING