

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Canola – Myths that Won't Die

For as common as canola oil is in our kitchens, whether in a bottle or a loaf of bread, it is amazing to see how many horror stories are still being spread about it. It doesn't take much on the internet to find claims that it's toxic, will poison us, is a pesticide, is a plastic or a soap, on and on. Yet on the other hand, there are medical claims that it is healthier than most other oils, good for our hearts, high in omega-3's and more. Can they all be true? No, but the true ones might surprise you.

The claims of poisons and toxins probably come from its parents. The original rapeseed plants, relatives of cabbage and broccoli, made too much of one particular kind of fat. This fat, called erucic acid, can cause health problems in animals. So Canadian researchers started breeding rapeseed that did not have erucic acid. Using standard cross-breeding techniques, by the 1970s they had developed varieties that do not produce it. Because it was different from the original rapeseed they changed the name to canola, for CANadian OiL. It's safe! No toxin, no poison.

Canola grows easily and makes lots of oil. That makes it inexpensive. So, just like other common vegetable oils, canola is used to make soap, plastics, fuel and ink. Like other oils it will smother insects, so it's used in pesticides. Because it works in these products doesn't mean it's not safe! We've been using coconut oil for soap and shampoo for much longer than we have been eating it. But it's a food star these days. Peanut and corn oils are used for many different products too. Canola is safe.

On the health side, canola oil is near the top. It has the least amount of saturated (bad) fat of any oil, and almost as much monounsaturated (very good) fat as olive oil. And it is second only to flaxseed in the amount of omega-3 fat. Like flax, its omega-3 is not the same as the fish oils that are best for our hearts. But it does help reduce inflammation. And like soy oil, canola has things called phytosterols that help reduce cholesterol. Plus it has vitamins, both E and K.

As long as twenty years ago there were medical studies looking at the 'Mediterranean diet'. The first, big study, the one that made 'Mediterranean diet' a popular name, didn't use olive oil. It used canola oil! And the people who were using the canola oil margarine (along with the rest of the

diet) had much lower rates of heart attacks, especially if they had all ready had one attack.

Other studies since then have found that when people change from butter or other solid (saturated) fats to canola oil their LDL goes down, and their triglycerides go down. Often this happens within a month of making the switch. Medical researchers think that this might be because of how much omega-3 fat canola oil contains.

Another recently developed type of canola is called high-oleic oil. It has even more of the monounsaturated fat oleic acid that's in olive oil. Standard canola is 61% monounsaturated oleic. Olive oils range from 55 to 83% mono. High-oleic is 70% monounsaturated oil. It should be even better for our hearts and health. You won't find it in bottles on the shelf, but it used in a lot of food manufacturing. You might notice it in the list of ingredients on food packages. It doesn't burn, or get rancid as fast as most other oils, so it's good for foods that need to be stored a long time. And it's a good substitute for partially hydrogenated fats, which we now know are definitely not good.

One last point: just like all other oils, canola has calories, lots of calories. There are 120 of them in each tablespoon. So don't go overboard on canola or olive or coconut or any other oil. Use all of them sparingly. Go easy on the fried foods, gravies and sweets with butter or oils. That will definitely keep your heart happier!

Here's a way to change a package of frozen corn into something different. You'll love the extra sweetness from the browning. Eat healthy!

Browned Pepper Corn

16 oz pkg frozen whole kernel corn, thawed	¼ tsp salt
2 tsp non-hydrogenated canola margarine	¼ tsp black pepper
1/8 tsp paprika	3 Tbsp water

Pat the corn dry with paper towels. Heat large non-stick skillet over high heat. Remove from heat and spray with cooking spray. Add margarine and swirl to coat the pan. Heat for 30 seconds, or just until margarine begins to brown. Add corn and cook 3 minutes until corn is browned, stirring constantly. Add salt, pepper and paprika, cook 30 seconds longer. Add water and scrape bottom of pan to loosen any browned particles. Stir and serve immediately. Serves 4.

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