

**DAVID RUSSELL
ON...**

Slippery Secrets



Hands up all those who are certain that the oil they cook with is safe? If like most you are confused by the conflicting advice over suitable fats for cooking, read on.

Fats are one of the hardest nutrient groups to get to grips with because how good, or bad they are for you depends very much on the type of fat, how much you consume in relation to other fats and lastly, how the fat is applied – for example, is it deep fried or used in a salad dressing?

We are all now aware that certain fats, notably the essential fats omegas 3 and 6, are very good for you, amongst many health benefits facilitating neurotransmitter function in the brain, allowing the sending and receiving of information. Similarly we are aware that saturated fats are readily stored in the body as fat. Less well understood however are the health implications when fats are used in cooking:

Do you cook with extra virgin olive oil? Many do believing that they are benefiting from its heart-friendly effects. This prized Mediterranean oil is in fact damaged at high temperatures however; the delicious flavour lost and any health benefits replaced by health concerns as the fat structure mutates into the harmful form of trans fats. What's the solution? Simply replace this premium oil with a much cheaper, non virgin alternative such as pomace oil for sautéing and roasting. The higher smoke point means that you can cook safely and save money.

Mention must be made of deep fat frying. Obviously this extremely high fat cooking method is not recommended, and nutritionists recommend that we bake items like chips and fish cakes instead. If you do still deep-fry foods however, Senior Nutrition Consultant for the Partnership Fiona McDonald Joyce recommends (somewhat grudgingly!) that chefs use sunflower or rapeseed oil, as these relatively stable oils will not be excessively damaged by the intense heat of the deep fryer, limiting trans fat production.

Do also check the ingredients of your current deep frying oil to ensure that they do not contain hydrogenated fats. Hydrogenated fats are often added to 'long-life' oils. These man-made oils are not only readily stored as fat in the body and raise cholesterol, they also take up the position of the brain-boosting omega 3 essential fats and actively block the transmission of information by neurotransmitters in the brain.

In summary, I recommend pan-frying and roasting with pomace or similar non-virgin olive oil. If you must deep-fry, use sunflower or rapeseed oil, and finally, save the more expensive oils such as extra virgin olive oil or avocado oil for salad dressings where their flavour and nutritional benefits can be fully appreciated.