

# Beyond the Olive

Pressed from nuts, seeds, and fruit, these four delicious oils can enrich your diet in surprising ways.



**FOR ALL THE CRITICISM** it gets, fat is a workhorse in the body. It's crucial to the structure of every cell, helps regulate blood pressure and immune function, and facilitates the absorption of key vitamins. But all fats aren't created equal:

Plant oils deliver far more heart-healthy benefits than solid fats like butter, says Roberta L. Duyff, author of the *American Dietetic Association Complete Food and Nutrition Guide*. Here, a few flavorful options. —KATE ROCKWOOD

## Pistachio Oil

Aromatic and emerald green, it's assertive but subtly sweet.

### NUTRITION PERKS

This rich oil contains a powerful dose of phytosterols, plant-based compounds that have been shown to reduce the risk of certain types of cancer and inhibit tumor growth in animals. And because phytosterols are structurally similar to cholesterol, they compete with the artery-clogging compound in the intestine, reducing the amount of cholesterol that's absorbed into the body.

### KITCHEN PREP

For an elegant appetizer, Béatrice Peltre, author of the new cookbook *La Tartine Gourmande*, suggests combining 2 Tbsp. unsalted chopped pistachios with ¾ cup sliced red grapes, 6 sliced pink radishes, and 3 ounces crumbled Roquefort cheese. In another bowl, whisk together 2 Tbsp. pistachio oil, 1 Tbsp. each canola oil and balsamic vinegar, a minced garlic clove, and salt and pepper. Toss mixture in dressing and spoon onto endive leaves.

## Avocado Oil

Derived from the ripe flesh of the subtle fruit, it has a mellow, buttery taste.

### NUTRITION PERKS

Every oil has a smoke point—the temperature at which it begins to break down, losing nutritional value and releasing potential carcinogens. Avocado oil's smoke point is an incredibly high 510 degrees (compared with extra-virgin olive oil's 325- to 400-degree range), which makes it a safer option for high-heat cooking like frying and broiling. It's also rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats, which have been shown to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and raise HDL (good) cholesterol.

### KITCHEN PREP

Try avocado oil in vegetable sautés or when broiling fish or chicken. For a summery lunch, Peltre serves 4 ounces cooked crabmeat atop a diced apple and diced avocado, tossed with 3 Tbsp. avocado oil, 1 Tbsp. lime juice, 1 tsp. each finely chopped ginger and coriander, 1 chopped scallion, and salt and pepper.

## Walnut Oil

A nutty, roasted flavor, without the mild bitterness of whole walnuts.

### NUTRITION PERKS

Many Americans don't eat enough omega-3 fat, which helps ensure normal brain function, reduces artery-damaging inflammation, and may reduce the risk of dementia, cancer, and heart disease. Walnuts are one of the richest nut sources of omega-3s. In a Penn State study, subjects showed a better physical response to stress, with lower blood pressure, when they ate walnut oil and whole walnuts.

### KITCHEN PREP

To whip up an easy vinaigrette, Peltre mixes together 1 Tbsp. sherry vinegar, ½ tsp. ground coriander or cumin, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Then she whisks in 2 Tbsp. walnut oil and 1 Tbsp. olive oil until emulsified.

## Pumpkin Seed Oil

Vibrant forest green in color, it has an intense, concentrated flavor.

### NUTRITION PERKS

Another good source of omega-3s, pumpkin seed oil is also high in antiaging tocopherols, which fight free radicals (DNA-damaging molecules produced by pollution and the sun). And research suggests that the oil can help lower arthritis-induced inflammation and regulate blood pressure.

### KITCHEN PREP

Peltre uses the oil to elevate potato salad: Boil 2¼ pounds fingerling potatoes 12 to 15 minutes. Let cool slightly, then slice. Whisk together 5 Tbsp. pumpkin seed oil, 3 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar, 1 chopped shallot, 1 Tbsp. each finely chopped ginger and parsley, 1 tsp. tarragon, and 1 tsp. chopped chives. Toss with potatoes and top with 3 ounces crumbled Feta cheese, 6 sliced pink radishes, 2 Tbsp. toasted pumpkin seeds, and salt and pepper to taste. Still hungry? In Austria they top vanilla ice cream with a splash of the oil.

