

The Weekly Handout

Issue 33, 2011

Dr. Charles M. Laycock

RANKING OF COMMON COOKING FATS

		TOTAL FAT	SFA	SMOKE PT
SAFEST/ MOST STABLE	COCONUT OIL	100g	86g	350/450
	TALLOW/SUET	94g	52g	400
	BUTTER	81g	51g	350
	LARD	100g	39g	370
	OLIVE OIL	100g	14g	420
UNSAFE/ LEAST STABLE	PEANUT OIL	100g	17g	450
	VEGETABLE SHORT.	71g	23g	360
	CORN OIL	100g	15g	450
	SOYBEAN OIL	100g	16g	450
	SUNFLOWER OIL	100g	11g	450

What Are Safe Cooking Fats & Oils?

Saturated fats are more STABLE than unsaturated fats. Quite literally, the chemical structure of saturated fats will not be easily damaged by things that will easily damage unsaturated fats, namely heat, light and air. Ever wonder why your high-quality olive oils are sold in a dark green glass or other opaque container? It's to keep light from damaging the oil. Ever wonder why coconut oil doesn't go "off" or smell rancid from sitting out on the counter without a lid on it but a vegetable oil like corn or soybean oil will? Air oxidizes those oils and makes them rancid. That is, damaged beyond the point that they are already just from the point of bottling.

Seed oils are extremely high in monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs) and polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) at varying ratios, all of which are prone to oxidation, PUFAs most significantly. You wouldn't cook with fish oil, would you? Why would you want to cook with other oils that are very high in PUFAs? Even beyond PUFAs, MUFAs are pretty easy to damage as well (olive oil is very high in MUFAs).

BEWARE: Many refined seed oils are marketed as having a high smoke point, therefore making them "ideal" choices for cooking. That's not really the whole story. A higher smoke point is valid only if the fat or oil is fairly stable to begin with, and it may be useful in determining between two fats which is more ideal to use.

Office Hours:

Mon: 8:30am-12pm & 2:30pm-6:30pm

Tues: 8:30am-12pm & 2:30pm-5pm

Wed: 8:30am-12pm & 2:30pm-6:30pm

Fri: 8:30am-12pm & 2:30pm-6:30pm

So, which fats ARE safe and recommended for cooking?

It's safe to assume, however, that most naturally occurring saturated fats are safe to cook with, while most unsaturated fats (called oils because they are liquid at ambient room temperature) are unsafe to cook with and are most ideal for cold uses if appropriate for consumption at all. (**See the chart to the left for more info**). Remember that man made trans-fats are never healthy to eat: Crisco, Earth Balance, Smart Balance, Benecol, Margarine, Country Crock, I Can't Believe It's Not Butter and the new one claiming to be a coconut product but it actually contains soybean oil... yeah, those are all a "never."

~Courtesy of Diane Sanfilippo

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- Click the yellow "VOTE" button
- Fill in the required information or click "login" at the top if you have an account from last year
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