

# The skinny on cooking with FATS

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*Not all fats are created equal, so it is important to know the various types and characteristics of different oils to know what is best for cooking, and what is best for your health.*

## Types of fats

**Saturated Fats:** These are mostly animal fats that are solid at room temperature. Saturated fats raise cholesterol more than other types of fats, so they should be used sparingly when cooking. Common examples include butter, lard, and coconut oil.

**Unsaturated Fats:** There are 3 main types of unsaturated fats: polyunsaturated, monounsaturated, and trans-fatty acids.

*Polyunsaturated:* These oils are liquid at room temperature, and usually come from vegetables, seeds, or nuts. Oils high in polyunsaturated fats may help to improve cholesterol levels. Examples include corn, safflower, soybean, and sesame oils.

*Monounsaturated:* This type of oil usually come from seed or nuts, and is liquid at room temperature. Examples include olive, canola, and peanut oil.

*Trans-fat:* Trans fats are produced when liquid oil is chemically changed to become a solid fat, such as in margarine or shortening. Products containing “partially hydrogenated oils” contain trans fats. Trans fats raise bad cholesterol levels while lowering good cholesterol, so these types of fats should be avoided whenever possible.

Based on the descriptions above, fats to avoid include saturated fats and trans-fats, and ones to use more often are mono- and polyunsaturated fats. There is one more thing to consider when cooking with fat; however, and this is the cooking temperature. Some fats are made for high-heat cooking, and others work best in uncooked dishes such as dressings or drizzles. The **smoke-point** of oil is the temperature where it gives off smoke, and when it begins to lose its nutritional properties and taste. Below is a chart of some commonly used cooking fats, their uses, and their smoke points. **Red** indicates oils to use sparingly or not at all, **Gold** is the moderate choice, and **Green** is the most nutritious choice for cooking and eating. Regardless of the oil you choose, it is important to remember that all oils have similar calories (120-150 per 1 Tablespoon), so it is always good to watch portion sizes.

Fat or Oil	Type of Fat	Cooking Uses	Smoke Point
<b>Butter</b>	Saturated	Baking	350°F
<b>Canola Oil</b>	Monounsaturated	All-purpose, good for sautéing, frying, high-heat cooking	400°F
<b>Corn Oil</b>	Polyunsaturated	Frying	450°F
<b>Lard</b>	Saturated	Frying	370°F
<b>Olive Oil</b>	Monounsaturated	Dressings, sauces, drizzle on food	Extra Virgin- 320°F; Virgin – 420°F; Extra light- 470°F
<b>Vegetable Shortening</b>	Saturated and trans-fat	Baking, cooking	360°F
<b>Vegetable Oil</b>	Polyunsaturated	All-purpose	Varies depending on mixture

*Check out recipes using different oils in our [Recipe Archive](#). Here are some to get you started!*

[Lemon-Dill Pasta Salad](#)

[Curried Chicken Apple Salad](#)

[Papaya Seed Dressing with Mixed Greens](#)

[Lentil-Pecan Salad with Lemon Vinaigrette](#)

[Pistachio Pesto](#)

[Insalata Caprese](#)