Woman's World

The Easy Cooking Oil Swap That Studies Show May Lower Cholesterol, Help Your Brain Stay Young and Reduce Inflammation

MDs weigh in on how grapeseed oil can make you healthier and chefs reveal how to cook with it

By Anna Jamerson Updated: October 24, 2023

Walking into your grocery store and heading down the cooking oil aisle can be a tad overwhelming: You'll find a surprising number of varieties, including olive oil, canola oil, vegetable oil, coconut oil, avocado oil and grapeseed oil, to name a few. Lately, grapeseed oil is getting a lot of buzz for its ability to reduce cholesterol, in addition to other health benefits. Is grapeseed oil the best choice for you? We talked to doctors, nutritionists and chefs to learn more about the benefits of grapeseed oil for cholesterol and its other nutritional and culinary perks. Keep reading to see why you may want to pick up a bottle of grapeseed oil the next time you head down the oil aisle.

What is grapeseed oil?

Grapeseed oil is made from the fats inside the seeds of grapes (yes, there's fat inside them!). "It is the oil produced by pressing the seeds of grapes in much the same way as olive oil or avocado oil is made," says Timothy S. Harlan, MD of the Culinary Medicine Specialist Board. "The seeds are generally those left over from winemaking." (It also boasts beauty benefits: See the skin benefits of grapeseed oil.)

3 health benefits of grapeseed oil

1. Grapeseed oil may help to improve your cholesterol profile

"Grapeseed oil is high in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats and low in saturated fat," says Dr. Harlan. The first two are known as healthy fats that are good for your heart. Indeed, one study found that people who consumed grapeseed oil every day for 45 days increased their HDL ("good") cholesterol by 13% and decreased their LDL ("bad") cholesterol by 7%. What's more, grapeseed oil is rich in linoleic acid, a polyunsaturated fat, and Harvard researchers found that replacing saturated fats with linoleic acid reduces total and LDL cholesterol.

In other research, scientists found that daily consumption of grapeseed oil led to a significant decrease in C-reactive protein (CRP), which is an indicator of inflammation levels in the body.

2. Grapeseed oil may help reverse brain aging

Grapeseed oil provides your body with a hefty dose of essential fatty acids like omega-3s and omega-6s. These fats have a host of health benefits, but perhaps the most impressive is that regular consumption of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids may promote healthy brain aging, according to research published in the journal *Nutritional Neuroscience*. In one study, people with high levels of these fats in their blood had a healthier *fornix* (an area of the brain linked to memory.)

According to study author Marta Zamroziewicz, MD, PhD, "a lot of research tells us that people need to be eating fish and fish oil to get neuroprotective effects from these particular fats, but this new finding suggests that even the fats that we get from nuts, seeds and oils can also make a difference in the brain." (Learn more about the link between omega 3, 6 and 9 fats and weight loss.)

3. Grapeseed oil may help protect against cancer

"Grapeseed oil is a rich source of vitamin E, which is a potent antioxidant and can therefore benefit heart health and fight inflammation," says registered dietitian Carlos Fragoso, MS, RD, CDN, owner of nutrition counseling service Nutrethos. In fact, grapeseed oil contains more vitamin E than olive oil. That's a boon for your health, since vitamin E protects against free radical damage, helping defend the body against cancer and other chronic illnesses. In one study, daily consumption of grapeseed oil reduced the risk of developing prostate cancer by 41%! (See more benefits of vitamin E for women.)

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2 reasons chefs love working with grapeseed oil

Grapeseed oil isn't only nutritious — it also functions well as a cooking oil:

Grapeseed oil has a neutral flavor

One reason grapeseed oil is such a culinary superstar is because of its neutral flavor. "Since it has such a mild taste and light color, grapeseed oil allows other flavors of your cuisine to take the

spotlight, unlike an extra-virgin olive oil, which can have a prominent flavor," says Jackie Newgent, RDN, CDN, plant-forward culinary nutritionist and author of *The Plant-Based Diabetes Cookbook*. "It's versatile in all cooking preparations, including roasting, grilling and frying, and it can be used without heat, like in salad dressing." Tip: If you're going to use it in dressing, consider the other ingredients. Dr. Harlan says, "Because grapeseed oil is for the most part flavorless, it can be a good oil for vinaigrette if the goal is to focus on other flavors in the dressing."

Grapeseed oil has a high smoke point

Grapeseed oil has a high smoke point (the temperature at which it burns) of about 420 degrees Fahrenheit. "This means it's suitable for high-heat cooking like sautéing or frying, because it doesn't give out a burned or unpleasant taste when exposed to high temperatures," adds nutritionist Catherine Gervacio, BHSc, RND.
When cooking with grapeseed oil, Dr. Harlan offers this caveat: "When oils are heated to that burning point there is the possibility of creating some inflammatory compounds that may counteract the otherwise anti-inflammatory aspects." To reduce the risk, Newgent says, "I suggest minimizing the amount of time you use the oil at high temperatures and don't reuse the oil after cooking."

Grapeseed vs canola oil

You may be wondering, canola oil is also neutral in flavor and has a high smoke point, so can I use that instead? You could, but it's not the healthiest option: Grapeseed oil is considerably healthier than canola oil because it isn't hydrogenated. Hydrogenation is a manufacturing process that leads to a high content of unhealthy trans fats. (Click through to learn why hydrogenated oils are bad for you and why canola oil is banned in Europe.)

The ideal daily dose of grapeseed oil

The government's Dietary Guidelines for Amerians advise that women consume 1.5 to 2 tablespoons of oils a day. Adds Fragoso, "The Institute of Medicine recommends a daily intake of 11 to 22g of omega-6, depending on age and gender. Based on this, it would be advisable to consume no more than 1.5 tablespoons of grapeseed oil each day."

Grapeseed oil supplements for weight loss

You can also get your daily dose of grapeseed oil via supplements. Grapeseed extract supplements deliver the same benefits as the oil, plus one more: Research suggests that grapeseed oil made from muscadine grapes (the form found in many supplements) may aid in weight loss. The reason? Muscadine grapeseed oil contains tocotrienol, an unsaturated form of vitamin E that blocks the formation of new fat cells. "Thus, consuming foods made with muscadine grape seed oil could curtail weight gain by reducing obesity," according to researcher Marty Marshall, former professor at the University of Florida. A brand to try: Vitacost Muscadine Grape Seed Oil (Buy on Vitacost, $12.99 for 120 capsules)

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