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Characteristics of Common Cooking Oils

Oil	Uses	Smoking Point	Flavor Characteristics	Health/Nutrition Characteristics
Canola	Deep-frying, pan-frying, sautéing, baking	High – 400F	Mild flavor	Lowest in saturated fat of all oils – helps lower cholesterol levels
Corn	Deep-frying, pan-frying	High – 450F	Light taste – can be used in place of olive oil	Believed to reduce bad cholesterol in the arteries
Grape Seed	Deep-frying, pan-frying, sautéing	High – 400F	Light taste – can be used in place of olive oil	Believed to reduce bad cholesterol in the arteries
Nextra	Deep-frying (primary), pan-frying, sautéing, grilling	High – 450F	Tallow, meaty flavor; generally a flavor enhancer	No cholesterol and no trans fat; decreases LDL
Olive	Sautéing, stir-frying	Low to Med unrefined: 320F, Extra Virgin: 406F, Virgin 420F	Bland to very strong, depending on type	A monosaturated oil – the green/golden variety has more antioxidants
Peanut (refined)	Stir-frying, deep-frying, wok cooking, sautéing, grilling	High – about 450F	Can add a rich, nutty taste, but does not absorb or transfer flavors	Contains resveratrol, which is associated with reduced cardiovascular risk and reduced cancer risk; however, it can cause allergic reactions
Safflower (refined)	Deep-frying, pan-frying, sautéing, baking	High – 450F	Bland, flavorless	High in polyunsaturated fats – helps reduce total cholesterol and LDL
Sesame (refined)	Wok cooking, dressings, flavoring	Medium – 410F	Pungent – used to flavor many Asian dishes	High in vitamin E (antioxidant), helps lower cholesterol
Sunflower (refined)	Deep-frying, pan-frying, sautéing	High – 450F	Generally bland	High in polyunsaturated fats – helps reduce total cholesterol and LDL
Vegetable (typically refined soy oil)	Deep-frying, pan-frying, sautéing, baking	High – 450F	Generally mild flavor	Soy oil is high in polyunsaturated fats – helps reduce total cholesterol and LDL; partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVO) contain trans fats, which may increase risk of heart disease

Source: “Finding the Right Chemistry,” *Restaurant Startup & Growth*, June 2005