



Oiling Up: Using Olive Oils for a Healthier Life

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When Karen Rose's father was discharged from the hospital after being diagnosed with coronary artery disease three years ago, she was surprised to find a brochure about the Mediterranean diet in his pile of discharge papers.

The piece, written for people with coronary disease, went into detail about the health benefits of replacing fatty oils and butter with olive oil. Soon after, on a trip to Europe with her family, Rose began learning more about olive oils from various regions and how to incorporate them into delicious foods. But it wasn't until her mother was diagnosed with lymphoma upon their return that Karen got serious.

"Both diseases—coronary artery disease and lymphoma—have proven to have lower incidence in countries that consume higher amounts of olive oil," she said.

Karen took this as a wake-up call and engulfed herself in research about olive oil's health benefits. At the same time, she was thinking about switching from her longtime career as a gastrointestinal nurse to a store owner. Eventually, she decided to fuse her two new interests into City Olive, an Andersonville store specializing in olive oils from around the world.

Just two months prior to opening her store on Clark Street last March, Rose's father passed away. Her mother had passed away about a year after being diagnosed with lymphoma in November 2005. In many ways, Rose has dedicated this store to her parents—there are reminders of them throughout—and to the hope of preventing others from meeting their fate.

BENEFITS OF THE OLIVE

Olive oil's health benefits are due mainly to its high content of monounsaturated fats, which have been linked to a reduced risk of coronary heart disease, and high content of antioxidants and dietary fiber.

Olive oil is a very large part of the Mediterranean diet – a broad term describing the eating patterns of those who live in the 16 countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, especially Greece and Southern Italy. Many researchers believe this diet—particularly its olive oil component—greatly contributes to the fact that people of Mediterranean countries are 20 percent less likely to die of coronary artery disease than Americans and have one-third less incidence of cancer than the United States, according to the Women's Heart Foundation.

Dr. Maria Omiotek, board certified family medicine physician at Swedish Covenant Hospital, said olive oil lowers cholesterol levels in the blood, unlike the animal fats common in the American diet. A large amount of research suggests that consumption of olive oil reduces the "bad" cholesterol, LDL, and is less likely to reduce "good" cholesterol, HDL. It is also known to lower blood sugar levels and blood pressure.

"All of this contributes to a lower risk of heart disease," Dr. Omiotek said. "I would recommend my patients use olive oil instead of butter as much as possible in their diet. But remember, just like exercise, it's something you have to do long-term and regularly to reap the benefits."

The lifestyle change may be well worth it, as benefits of olive oil continue to be discovered. For example, several studies link olive oil consumption to a lower risk of colon and breast cancers, partially due to its high level of the antioxidants vitamin A and vitamin E, which neutralize cancer-causing free radicals in our bodies and also boost the immune system.

In addition, olive oil has been found to be well-tolerated by the stomach and lower the incidence of gallstone formation by activating the secretion of bile and pancreatic hormones. It also can improve anti-inflammatory issues.

EATING MEDITERRANEAN

According to the American Heart Association, there are several healthy, common characteristics of the Mediterranean dietary pattern:

- Consumption of olive oil, an important monounsaturated fat source

Replacing Butter with Olive Oil

Use the chart below to convert the quantity of butter called for in a recipe to the equivalent quantity of olive oil.

Butter	Olive Oil
1 teaspoon	3/4 teaspoon
2 teaspoons	1 1/2 teaspoons
1 tablespoon	2 1/4 teaspoons
2 tablespoons	1 1/2 tablespoons
1/4 cup	3 tablespoons
1/3 cup	1/4 cup
1/2 cup	1/4 cup and 2 tablespoons
2/3 cup	1/2 cup
3/4 cup	1/2 cup and 1 tablespoon
1 cup	3/4 cup

SOURCE: www.whatscookingamerica.net

- High consumption of fruits, vegetables, bread and other cereals, potatoes, beans, nuts and seeds
- Low to moderate intake of dairy products, fish and poultry, with little red meat eaten
- Low consumption of eggs, typically zero to four times a week
- Low to moderate intake of wine

But you don't have to fully engage in the Mediterranean diet to reap the benefits of olive oil. Simply try incorporating more olive oil and less butter or margarine into your cooking, Karen said.

"You don't have to change everything. You just have to think about it a bit," she said, adding numerous recipes involving olive oil are available.

For Karen, dozens of bottles of olive oil in a range of flavors for almost any cooking need fill her home cabinets. She's happy knowing she's providing her family with foods infused with healthy oils that may protect them from the illnesses her parents endured.

Bonus! Download a coupon for 10% off your olive oil purchases at [City Olive](#) >

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