

The SKINNY on FATS

The Fats That Fit a Healthy Diet

FAMILY FEATURES

Yes, some fats can fit into a healthy diet. Our bodies actually require them. The USDA Dietary Guidelines recommend 20 to 35 percent of calories come from fats, predominantly unsaturated ones. They deliver certain vitamins, provide essential fatty acids and are a source of fuel.

But it's easy to get confused about the different kinds of fats, where they come from and how much of them to eat. So here are some fat facts to keep things straight.

The Bad:

Saturated fats are found in animal products like meat, poultry skin, eggs and high fat dairy products. Saturated fats are also found in high quantities in vegetable oils that stay solid at room temperature, such as coconut and palm oil. The American Heart Association recommends that only about 7 percent of calories should come from saturated fats.

Trans fats come in two forms. Natural trans fats are found in small amounts in dairy and meat. Artificial trans fats are made when liquid oils are hardened into solid form, called "partially hydrogenated" fats. These are in baked goods, packaged snack foods, some margarines, icings and crackers. Even small amounts of artificial trans fats can increase bad cholesterol and put you at risk for heart disease. The Dietary Guidelines recommend keeping trans fat consumption as low as possible.

The Good:

Good fats are unsaturated. These include polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. When eaten in moderation, they can help reduce the risk of heart disease.

Polyunsaturated fats

- are found in most vegetable oils
- include a plant-based, heart-healthy omega-3 found in flax, pecans and canola oil
- include an omega-6 that is important for the skin, found in canola oil, pecans and poultry

Monounsaturated fats

- may help protect the heart by lowering bad cholesterol when used in place of saturated fats
- are typically a good source of the antioxidant vitamin E
- are found abundantly in olives, avocados, canola oil and pecans

While all fats and oils have the same amount of calories per gram, you can make those calories work for you by making nutrient-rich choices. When you know the skinny on fats, getting the good ones into delicious family-friendly meals is easy.



Baked Chicken Pecan

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Makes 4 servings

- 4 chicken breasts
- 1/2 cup Nuttin' Better Sauce
- 4 tablespoons coarsely chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Spread approximately 2 tablespoons sauce on top of each chicken breast. Place on foil lined baking sheet.

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until chicken is done and juices run clear.

Garnish each chicken breast with 1 tablespoon chopped pecans. Serve immediately.

Zesty Pecan Salad Dressing

Makes 1 cup

- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 2 to 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons Nuttin' Better Sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste

In medium bowl, whisk together canola oil and lemon juice. Add sauce and whisk to blend. Add salt and pepper if desired.

Store extra salad dressing in refrigerator.

Nuttin' Better Sauce

Makes 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 cups

This versatile spread can be used on its own, on a platter with cheese and vegetables, blended into dips and as a healthy ingredient in many savory dishes.

- 1 roasted red pepper
- 1/2 cup dry bread crumbs
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup pecan halves
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- Salt to taste

Add red pepper, bread crumbs, garlic, lemon juice, cumin, red pepper flakes, and pecans to food processor. Pulse once or twice just to blend ingredients.

Add canola oil and blend ingredients to form smooth consistency. Add salt to taste.

Sauce can be stored in refrigerator, covered, for up to one week.

Pasta Alla Pecan

Makes 4 to 5 servings

- 1/2 pound linguini
- 3/4 to 1 cup Nuttin' Better Sauce
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

Cook linguini following package instructions. Drain and reserve 3 to 4 tablespoons cooking water.

Return pasta to pot and place over low heat. Add sauce. Stir to coat linguini. If needed, add reserved pasta water to thin sauce. Serve immediately, garnished with chopped pecans.

Middle Eastern Vegetarian Pizza

Makes 4 servings

- 2 to 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 1/2 medium size eggplant, sliced into 2 x 4-inch slices
- 1/2 medium size zucchini, cut into 2 x 3/4-inch slices
- 1/2 medium red onion, cut into wedges
- 1/2 small red pepper, cut into 2 x 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 small yellow pepper, cut into 2 x 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 small orange pepper, cut into 2 x 1/2-inch pieces
- 4 6-inch whole wheat tortillas
- 4 to 6 tablespoons Nuttin' Better Sauce
- 10 to 15 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 to 3 tablespoons grated mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 375°F. Line baking sheet with foil.

Pour canola oil into large bowl. Toss vegetables (except tomatoes) with canola oil until well coated. Layer on foil lined baking sheet and roast for approximately 20 to 25 minutes or until vegetables are soft and slightly browned. Remove from oven. Set aside.

Increase oven temperature to 400°F. Place tortillas on foil lined baking sheet. Spread 1 to 2 tablespoons sauce on each tortilla. Divide vegetables, along with tomatoes, evenly onto each tortilla. Sprinkle with cheese.

Bake for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

Mushroom Mix and Chicken Pizza

Makes 4 pizzas

- 5 to 6 cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 5 to 6 white button mushrooms, sliced
- 5 to 6 oyster mushrooms, sliced
- 1 cup cooked chicken, coarsely diced
- 4 6-inch whole wheat tortillas
- 4 to 6 tablespoons Nuttin' Better Sauce
- 2 to 3 tablespoons grated mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Place tortillas onto foil lined baking sheet. Spread 1 to 2 tablespoons sauce on each tortilla. Divide mushrooms and chicken onto each of the tortillas. Sprinkle with cheese.

Bake for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

Sweet Pepper and Shrimp Pizza

Makes 4 pizzas

- 1/2 yellow pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/2 orange pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/2 red pepper, thinly sliced
- 24 to 30 small, precooked shrimp, thawed
- 4 6-inch whole wheat tortillas
- 4 tablespoons Nuttin' Better Sauce
- 2 to 3 tablespoons grated mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Place tortillas onto foil lined baking sheet. Spread 1 to 2 tablespoons sauce on each tortilla. Divide peppers and shrimp onto each tortilla. Sprinkle with cheese.

Bake for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

Clockwise from lower right: Nuttin' Better Sauce, Pasta Alla Pecan, Zesty Pecan Salad Dressing, Mushroom Mix and Chicken Pizza, Sweet Pepper and Shrimp Pizza, Middle Eastern Vegetarian Pizza

Canola Facts

Canola oil:

- has the best nutritional balance of any popular cooking oil
 - is cholesterol free and has no trans fat
 - is one of the best plant sources of omega-3 fat
- Find more information at CanolaInfo.org.

Pecan Facts

Pecans:

- are the highest in antioxidant capacity of all nuts
 - have over 19 vitamins and minerals
 - are high in fiber and a good source of protein
- Find more information at Texaspecans.org.