



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL WSJ

Upgrade Your
Gin and Tonic



VOL. CCLXV NO. 137

DOW JONES News Corp.

WEEKEND

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, JUNE 13 - 14, 2015

★★★★ \$3.00

WSJ.com

OFF DUTY EATING & DRINKING



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MINI GUIDE

Fat Finding

Olive oil, we still love you. But with so many other options out there for frying and drizzling, it's worth playing the field a little

MANY COOKS I KNOW keep just one variety of oil in the kitchen, within grasping distance of the stove: olive. Can you blame them? These days olive oil is almost as ubiquitous in recipe ingredient lists as salt and pepper; grocery store shelves teem with bottles from Spain, Greece, Italy and California. But the next time you're shopping, you should consider the wide range of other options out there.

Sure, olive oil is healthy and delicious, but chefs will tell you that it's just one in a whole arsenal of flavorful fats squeezed from nuts, seeds and vegetables that they draw on when composing dishes. "Good cooking is about thinking through every opportunity to add flavor to your food," said chef Matthew Accarrino of SPQR in San Francisco. "The different applications for oils are endless."

Below are five alternative plant oils to get you out of an olive rut. As a rule, the more intensely flavored the oil, the shorter the shelf life. You're best off storing these in the refrigerator, where the low temperature and darkness will keep them at their freshest—but still close enough to grab when you're ready to switch up your sizzle. —Elizabeth G. Dunn



Avocado Oil

The one to buy: Bella Vado Organic Avocado Oil, \$15 for 250 ml; bellavado.com

Dave Pasternack, the chef and owner of the seafood-centric restaurants Barchetta and Esca in New York, likes avocado oil for its subtle, creamy flavor. It can withstand high temperatures without burning, which makes it a perfect all-purpose cooking oil. "It's a good utility player," Mr. Pasternack said. "When you put avocado oil on something, it's not an 'ooh taste.'" For starters, try it for sautéing vegetables or pan-roasting fish.

loves the sweet, intense roasted-pistachio flavor imparted by this oil. He uses it in salad dressings and slicked over fish crudos. It's also delicious in sweets: Try adding it to sliced citrus, or substitute a tablespoon for an equal volume of butter in cookie recipes.



Pumpkin Seed Oil

The one to buy: Castelmuro Pure Styrian Roasted Pumpkin Seed Oil, \$25 for 250 ml; chefshop.com

This smoky, rich oil, a specialty of the Austrian state of Styria, is made by drying and roasting pumpkin seeds, and then pressing them to squeeze out the intensely nutty fat. At SPQR, Mr. Accarrino serves it on baked ricotta, and also whips it together with glycerin to make an intensely flavored mousse. At home, consider using it drizzled over filled pastas, atop soups or in salad dressings.



Extra-Virgin Canola Oil

The one to buy: Family Generation Foods Extra-Virgin Canola Oil, \$12 for 750 ml; familygenerationfoods.com

"Canola oil" typically refers to an inexpensive, near-flavorless product ideal for high-heat cooking, but the extra-virgin version from Oregon-based Family Generation Foods is something else entirely. Jenn Louis of Lincoln Restaurant and Sunshine Tavern in Portland, Ore., describes the flavor as intense and grassy—like wheatgrass juice, but in oil form. Due to its power, she uses it exclusively as a finishing oil. Ms. Louis suggests drizzling small amounts over meats and frittatas.



Argan Oil

The one to buy: Huilerie Beaujolaise/Jean-Marc Montegottero Virgin Argan Oil, \$95 for 500 ml; raretecellar.com

A Moroccan delicacy made from the nuts of the argan tree, this oil is famed for health benefits including reducing inflammation and hypertension. This



Pistachio Oil

The one to buy: La Tourangelle Roasted Pistachio Oil, \$12 for 250 ml; latourangelle.com

Michael Serpa, chef and partner at Select Oyster Bar in Boston,

one is extracted at a 19th-century stone mill in Beaujeu, France, using old-world production techniques (hence the high price tag). Jeff Mahin of Summer House Santa Monica restaurant describes its flavor as luscious, nutty and smoky. He recommends drizzling it lightly on cooked fish, or brushing it on pita breads fresh from the oven.

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