

## Safely Fry Away

**D**iet trends come and go. The most recent was Atkins, which created a mania that had restaurateurs scrambling to create low-carb additions for their menus. But your wisest guests have known all along that the secret to flat tummies and trim hips is, of course, moderation.

There are few truly “bad” foods, and occasional indulgences won’t impact one’s pants size or health. That said, science occasionally provides us with information that should—and does—create a lasting impact on the foods consumers choose, and the options restaurant operators provide their patrons.

Case in point: Recent research has shown that consumption of a category of fat called trans fatty acids (TFAs), which are produced when hydrogen is added to cooking oil, are indeed, one of those bad foods that should be kept to a minimum for heart health.

Common in most commercial oils and considered even more dangerous than saturated fat, TFAs present a double threat to the cardiovascular system—increasing LDL cholesterol and reducing HDL (good) cholesterol. New FDA guidelines (which went into effect in January) require trans fats to be included on

**HEART HEALTHY:** As consumer awareness of the dangers of trans fatty acids grows, restaurateurs will have to change the way they fry. The good news: Ridding your fryer of trans fatty acids is easier than you think.

food labels. Unfortunately, the oils most restaurants use are hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated, and are preferred for their stability and their ability to en-

hance the flavor and crispiness of food. Hydrogenated oils also perform well at high temperatures, for extended periods of time, and are inexpensive as well.

Nonetheless, according to CDC research, 45% of Americans say they want more foods without TFAs. The bottom line: You must

### Heat Treatment

Consider the following oil options:

- **Canola oil**
- **Rice oil**
- **Peanut oil**

All are non-hydrogenated. **Pros:** No trans-fat; are relatively inexpensive and widely available. Canola provides stability and is lowest in saturated fat of all oils; peanut offers a unique flavor and contains resveratrol, which is associated with reduced cardiovascular and cancer risks.

**Cons:** Rice has highest saturates; Peanut can cause allergic reactions.

- **Corn oil**
- **Soybean oil**
- **Cottonseed oil**
- **Sunflower oil**

All are non-hydrogenated. **Pros:** No trans-fat; cotton has a sweet flavor; corn has unique, light flavor and may lower bad cholesterol. **Cons:** These oils have lower stability; cottonseed has higher saturates.

- **Palm oil**

**Pros:** No transfat; high stability.

**Cons:** high in saturated fat, bland flavor.

- **High Oleic Oils**

**Pros:** No transfat and are most comparable to partially hydrogenated oils.

**Cons:** These are very expensive.

- **Beef Tallow**

**Pros:** Inexpensive and highly stable.

**Cons:** In some cases, beef tallow may not fit the 0g TFA claim; also, it’s very high in saturated fat.



begin responding to this shift. It’s important to note that trans fats are present not only in hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated frying oils, but also in many items that come into your kitchen partially prepared and par-fried, such as french fries, chicken nuggets, fried chicken and fish filets.

The good news is that increasingly, foodservice manufacturers are offering oil and food alternatives that are TFA free. The fact is that nearly all foods that are made with hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils can be made with non-hydrogenated oil instead. Those who have not already done so should sit down with their suppliers to talk about these options.

Frying more healthfully also requires chefs to make sure that items going into the fryers are made without hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils.

In San Diego, Pat & Oscar’s restaurants recently switched to a 0g TFA french fry, which director of marketing Brian Horne says is actually superior to their old fry. “When we tested it, most guests noticed no difference, although some said they actually tasted better,” he says. The bottom line: You love your guests, so help protect their hearts, even as you protect your fried food sales.