



Why You Should Give Red Palm Oil a Try

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The health benefits of [olive oil](#) have been touted for many hundreds of years. More recently, [coconut oil](#) has become all the rage and hailed by many as the king of oils. But, [whatever oil you choose](#) – whether it's olive, coconut, almond, canola, peanut, safflower, walnut, or even avocado oil – none compare to the powerful nutritional virtues of virgin organic red palm fruit oil.

Bonus: The health benefits of red palm fruit oil can be achieved by incorporating only 1-2 tablespoons into your daily diet.

Red Palm Fruit Oil vs. Palm Kernel Oil

Regarded as a sacred healing food by many civilizations, including the ancient Egyptians, crude or virgin red palm fruit oil should be regarded as one of the most nutritious edible oils in the world. It is not to be confused with palm *kernel* oil. It is derived from the fruit of the oil palm tree (*Elaeis guineensis*) and is referred to as "red palm oil" because of its rich dark red color in its unprocessed natural state. Palm kernel oil is derived from the seed or the kernel.

Palm fruit oil contains mainly palmitic and oleic acids and is about 50% saturated, while palm kernel oil contains mainly lauric acid and is more than 89% saturated. The general assumption that kernel oil and palm fruit oil are one in the same may have lead to one of the greatest oversights in modern nutrition. The stigma attached to the *kernel* has kept the fruit in the dark - at least until now. Virgin organic sustainable red palm fruit oil is otherwise a bona fide food.

Palm kernel oil does not convey the same health benefits that red palm fruit oil does. The health benefits are only achieved due to the red color of the palm fruit oil that is attributed to its high content of carotenes, which include beta-carotene and lycopene. These powerhouse antioxidant nutrients are the same ones that give tomatoes and carrots and other fruits and vegetables their rich red and orange colors. What may shock you is that red palm fruit oil contains more than tomatoes or carrots. Red palm fruit oil is also densely packed with numerous tocotrienols – a powerful form of vitamin E.

Processed palm oil does not contain cholesterol and behaves like hydrogenated fats (the dangerous trans-fatty acids) in packaged foods since it has "thickness" at room temperature. This makes it ideal for many food manufacturers to use in place of hydrogenated oils in their snack products. Processed foods can then be advertised as being "trans fat free" and "cholesterol free". But, when red palm oil is refined and processed, the red color disappears and its nutritional and healing benefits are destroyed. Once it becomes part of a processed snack food, it no longer features the health benefits and powerful antioxidants found only in the *raw* palm oil.

Red Palm Fruit Oil vs. Fish and Coconut Oils

But how does red palm fruit oil compare with fish oil you may ask? Frankly, comparing [fish oil](#) to red palm oil would be comparing apples to oranges.

The health benefits of fish oil come mainly from its high levels of omega-3 essential fatty acids known as EPA and DHA. These are incredibly important to our health. In fact, fish oils feature some of the most wide-reaching health benefits, and far and away have the most robust science to back claims related to heart, brain, and immune health and serve to manage inflammation better than any other oil. However, fish oil is extremely susceptible to high temperature, air and light – which is why you can't cook with it. Red palm fruit oil, on the other hand, is *very* stable.

Palm fruit oil contains less cholesterol-lowering “long-chain” omega-3 fatty acids than fish oil. What red palm oil contains, however, is a lot of “medium-chain” and “short-chain” fatty acids – both of which scientists recognize as healthy for us and necessary in moderation.

And while we're comparing, let's look at an apple-to-apple scenario: [coconut oil](#) vs. red palm fruit oil. Even when you account for the marginally higher levels of medium chain triglyceride (MCT) levels that coconut oil has over palm, it is once again the carotenoid and tocotrienol antioxidants that give it a significant health advantage over coconut oil.

Heart Helper, Disease Fighter

Red palm oil has great science behind it for its beneficial role in fighting [heart disease](#) and high cholesterol. Over the past two decades, researchers have intensely studied red palm oil's effect on cardiovascular health and the preliminary results initially baffled scientists.

At room temperature, this semi-solid oil seems as likely as lard to clog your arteries. But what might shock you to learn, as it has equally stunned researchers, is that although red palm fruit oil is indeed high in saturated fat, it actually protects against heart disease. Saturated fats behave like a thick molasses through the cardiovascular system, eventually contributing to plaque (atherosclerosis). But studies show that adding palm oil into the diet can remove plaque build-up in arteries and, therefore, reverse the process of plaque and prevent blockages. In fact, studies funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have shown that a natural form of vitamin E called alpha tocotrienol, which is the form found in high amounts in red palm fruit oil, can help reduce the effects of stroke by 50% by protecting your brain's nerve cells.

Removing plaque is not the only way red palm oil may protect against strokes and [heart attacks](#). Red palm oil can also improve cholesterol values and also helps maintain proper blood pressure. Science now understands that inflammation in the artery lining is what warrants cholesterol to deposit in the first place. So, it makes sense that the protective effects come from the high antioxidant, anti-inflammatory content of the red palm oil which works to quench free radicals and keep inflammation under control.

But red palm oil's benefits aren't exclusive to heart health. Research is showing that the antioxidant power of red palm oil can be of help in protecting against a variety of health problems, including osteoporosis, asthma, cataracts, macular degeneration, arthritis, and liver disease. It can even slow down the premature aging processes by protecting the skin against damaging UV rays.

But nothing ages us faster than being overweight. And, where traditional fats and oils like margarine, or other vegetable oils take a long time to break down for energy and are eventually stored as fat, red palm oil goes straight to liver and ignites metabolism. That means you'll burn calories from fat much faster.

When it comes to your brain, the special form of vitamin-E (tocotrienol) in red palm oil stops destructive damage and improves blood flow to brain cells, which can also help to prevent [Alzheimer's disease](#) and dementia.

The high antioxidant content of red palm oil makes it a potent [anti-cancer](#) food. Though tocotrienols can be found in rice bran, barley and wheat, red palm oil is the richest source of tocotrienol. Research suggests that this form of vitamin E may help fight skin, stomach, pancreas, liver, lung, colon, prostate, breast, and other cancers.

Additionally, research has shown that red palm oil promotes nutrient utilization, improves liver detoxification pathways and improves immune function.

Availability and Sustainability

By now, one question you may have is, "Where do I get some?" Actually, you can already purchase this at your local health food store. It gets imported from Malaysia, the world's second largest producer of palm oil.

Besides its known nutritional virtues, private enterprise has recognized palm oil's other lucrative applications.

With the price of crude oil and gas hitting an all-time record high through 2012, palm oil seems to have caught the attention of scientists and corporations as one of the few plausible sources of biodiesel. The concept that palm oil should be used as a renewable substitute for petroleum-derived diesel has already received criticism from various non-governmental organizations worldwide.

The controversy is focused primarily on three issues: Extinction of orangutans, deforestation, and, particularly, the food vs. fuel dispute. Besides demolishing the habitat of one of the most wonderful creatures on earth, it is thought that the conversion of the crops currently used for food over to fuel would significantly decrease

accessibility to those looking to use the oil for dietary purposes, increasing the number of undernourished people in the world.

A Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) was formed in 2004 to promote the growth and use of sustainable palm oil products. Where some researchers believe that the palm oil industry has the capacity to fulfill both demands, responsible people don't want to create negative environmental impact. So, on top of "virgin" and "organic" red palm fruit oil, we need to look for brands that produce the oil sustainably.

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