

## SAUTÉING TIPS

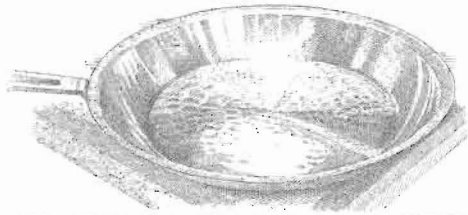
We use a vegetable oil blend for nearly all our sautéing needs.

### ➤ Get a Cold Start

Cooks debate whether oil should be added to the pan before or after the pan is preheated. We strongly prefer adding oil to the cold (unheated) pan for three reasons: First, the oil serves as a reminder that the pan is heating (visually, a dry heated pan looks no different from a cold pan). Second, hot oil gives visual cues about when it's time to add food to the pan. Third, heating an empty nonstick pan can damage its coating and emit fumes.

### ➤ Let Oil Shimmer and Then Sauté

For proper browning, the oil must be moderately hot before you add food to the pan. Checking the oil's temperature is impractical, as sautéing requires such a small amount that your thermometer won't get an accurate reading. Instead, use the visual cue of "shimmering." When the oil starts to ripple, start cooking.



### ➤ Mind Smoking More Than Smoke Points

Most sautéing falls below an oil's smoke point, so you won't see smoke unless the pan gets too hot. (An exception: When searing food in a very hot skillet, wisps of smoke indicate that it's time to cook.) It's more important to be vigilant of vigorous smoking—if you see it, immediately remove the pan from the heat and let it cool. Dispose of the oil, wipe the pan clean, and start again.

## DRESSING GUIDELINES

A premium extra-virgin olive oil is typically our first choice in vinaigrettes.

### ➤ Get the Ratio Right

For a vibrant but balanced dressing, we prefer a 3:1 ratio of oil to vinegar.

### ➤ Take Time to Emulsify

In tests, we found that coating greens with an emulsified dressing, rather than with separate hits of oil and vinegar, prevented the greens from quickly turning soggy; binding the oil in the vinegar prevents the fat from penetrating the waxy cuticle layer on salad greens (water-based liquids, like vinegar, can't cross through that film).

### ➤ Avoid Motorized Mixing

Never emulsify extra-virgin olive oil in a blender or food processor. The whirring blades will break the oil into very small droplets, releasing bitter-tasting compounds into the mix. (Note: In recipes that contain lots of other robust flavors, such as pesto, we have found that any bitter taste goes unnoticed.)



### ➤ Mix in a Little Mayo or Mustard

Whisking together oil and vinegar will make an emulsified dressing, but it won't hold well unless you add a helper ingredient. Mayonnaise and mustard both contain emulsifying agents—lecithin and mucilage, respectively—that keep the dressing stable for longer. Add ½ teaspoon of mayonnaise or mustard for every 3 tablespoons of oil and 1 tablespoon of vinegar.

## FRYING KNOW-HOW

When deep-frying food in batches in which the oil will be heated for longer than 15 minutes, we may seek out peanut oil. But for shallow frying, which happens at a lower temperature, vegetable oil blend is our go-to.

### ➤ Shallow versus Deep Frying

We reserve shallow frying, in which the oil reaches only partway up the food, for bulky items like breaded cutlets or bone-in chicken pieces. These foods cook slowly enough that they can be browned in the oil one side at a time without risk of overcooking. With deep frying, food is completely submerged in the oil, which enables smaller, quick-cooking items like French fries to brown on all sides simultaneously.

### ➤ Oil Amount

When shallow-frying, make sure the oil reaches halfway up the sides of the food; otherwise, you'll end up with a pale band around the exterior. When deep-frying, you'll need at least 1 quart of oil to completely cover the food—but don't fill the pot more than half full to avoid splattering once food is added.

### ➤ Monitor the Temperature

When deep-frying, use a clip-on candy/deep-fry thermometer to guarantee that the oil reaches—and remains at—the target temperature (generally between 325 and 375 degrees). Don't let the thermometer touch the bottom or sides of the pot; if it does, you may get a false reading.

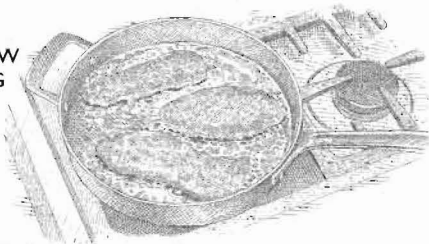
### ➤ Include Some "Recycled" Oil

When deep-frying, the first batch is often paler and less crispy than those that follow. But by mixing strained, previously used frying oil into fresh oil, you can get golden, crispy results from the start. Why? Oil that's already been exposed to heat produces surfactants that can penetrate the water barrier that surrounds food as it fries. This increased contact promotes browning and a nice crust. We use a 1:5 ratio of used oil to fresh.

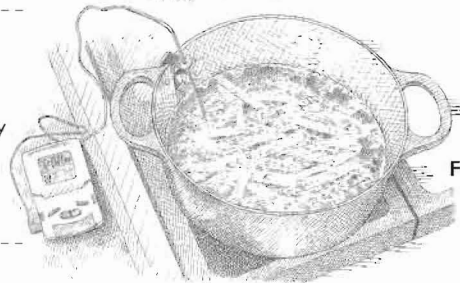
### ➤ Rules for Reusing Oil

- Never reuse oil that smoked or that was used for fish.
- Let the oil cool completely.
- Strain the used oil through at least two layers of cheesecloth or paper coffee filters.
- Refrigerate the oil until ready to use.
- Discard the oil after three uses; in tests we found that the smoke point of peanut oil dropped 28 degrees after three rounds of frying.

### SHALLOW FRYING



### DEEP FRYING



## BAKING BENEFITS

Butter is traditional in baking, but in many applications, oil can improve flavor and texture.

**TENDERNESS** Oil and butter both coat flour proteins and prevent them from bonding with water and developing tough gluten, but oil does it better. Many recipes that require tenderness but not added flavor, such as quick breads and muffins, rely on vegetable oil.

**MOISTURE** When butter's high water content—about 20 percent—evaporates in the oven, it can leave baked goods dry. While developing our Fluffy Yellow Layer Cake (March/April 2008), we discovered that using a combination of butter and vegetable oil makes our cake moister than if we were using all butter.

**CLEAN TASTE** While butter adds its own rich flavor, neutral-tasting oil allows other flavors to come to the fore. We use oil in recipes ranging from brownies and chocolate cupcakes to French apple cake.