



The ultimate guide to cooking with coconut oil

Ingredients

Method

There are so many choices when it comes to the different types of oils you can use in the kitchen. Some are great for high temperature cooking, others have health benefits and specific flavour profiles. Coconut oil is one such delicious, nutrient-rich addition to your pantry.

Here is some interesting information you may not have known about coconut oil, and a few tips for using it in your cooking:

Types of coconut oil and where to use them

You can get coconut oil in various forms – from a refined liquid with subtle flavours and versatile consistency – to virgin, unrefined coconut oil that boasts rich flavour profiles and aromas.

Virgin coconut oils are usually higher quality, with more complex palates and fresher ingredients. The more unrefined your choice is, the higher in antioxidants it is rumoured to be. For most baked dishes or as a spread, unrefined, unbleached virgin coconut oil is your best bet – whereas the lighter refined option can be good for pan frying vegetables or drizzling over salads.

Low smoking point

Unlike some olive oils or nut-based oils, coconut oil has quite a low smoking point, which means that it is best used in lower temperature cooking. High temperatures will cause it to overheat and even burn – so avoid using coconut oil for deep-frying. Once an oil reaches its smoking point it is well on its way to becoming flammable too, and no one likes a flash in the pan!

Hot tip: if you're mixing, don't add cold ingredients

Did you know that coconut oil is a great source of fatty acids – a core energy source and essential for absorbing vitamins into the body? But because of its high-fat composition, coconut oil solidifies at lower temperatures, getting harder and more paste-like in consistency the colder it goes. If you're using it in a cake mix, for example, it can harden when combined with cold eggs and milk. To avoid a stodgy, hard-to-mix batter,

ensure that all ingredients are at room temperature when mixing in your coconut oil.

Low melting point: keep it cool

In the same vein, coconut oil has a relatively low melting point (at around 24 degrees Celsius), so should be kept in cool environments if you'd like to retain its more solid consistency. Melting isn't a bad thing, but simply changes the texture and prevents you from enjoying its spread or butter-like capabilities.

How is coconut oil made?

Coconuts grow all year round in warmer climates, with one coconut palm producing up to 120 coconuts each year. The oil is extracted from the flesh of these coconuts – sometimes refined down from heated and dried coconut flesh (copra), or cold pressed from fresh, ripe coconuts to produce our favourite virgin oils – full of flavour and natural colour.

Notes
