

News Of Nutrition

Canola: A Unique Plant With Healthy Oil

(NAPSA)—Canola oil is widely regarded as heart healthy and versatile by dietitians and chefs, but many consumers may not understand why—or know what canola is in the first place.

“Canola is often confused with rapeseed, but the two crops and their oils are distinctly different both compositionally and nutritionally,” explains Minnesota canola grower Rob Rynning.

Canola oil comes from the crushed seeds of the canola plant, which is a member of the *Brassica* family that includes broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower. It was developed in Canada through traditional plant breeding to remove two undesirable components (erucic acid and glucosinolates) found in rapeseed. To acknowledge these differences, the new plant earned a new name, canola—a contraction of “Canadian” and “ola,” meaning “oil.”

Rapeseed, although still grown in limited quantities in North America, is confined to production under contract for specific industrial uses, Rynning notes.

The oil extracted from canola plants is also one of the most healthful in the world. Doctors and nutrition experts laud canola oil for both what it does contain and what it doesn't. Of all common cooking oils, canola has the most plant-based omega-3 fat (11 percent) and the least saturated fat (7 percent)—half that of olive oil (15 percent).

“Since heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, it's critical to lower intake of saturated fat and to consume a moderate amount of healthy fats instead,” says Dr. Suzanne Steinbaum, cardiologist and director of the women's heart disease center at New York's Lenox Hill Hospital. “Canola oil is simply a smart choice as an everyday cooking oil.”

In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized a qualified health claim on canola oil's ability to reduce the risk of heart disease when used in place of sat-



Canola oil may help reduce the risk of heart disease when used in place of saturated fat.

urated fat. Research has shown that the oil's high unsaturated fat content (93 percent) helps lower “bad” LDL cholesterol, thereby reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. Unsaturated fats are made up of mono- and polyunsaturated fats, including omega-3 and omega-6.

“The types of omega-3 and -6 fats that are found in canola oil can be considered 'essential' in the diet because the body can't make them on its own,” notes Roberta Duyff, M.S., R.D.N., author of “American Dietetic Association Complete Food & Nutrition Guide.” “Canola oil is higher in omega-3 fat than other common cooking oils so it's an easy way to get some of this often underconsumed nutrient in the diet.”

Moreover, chefs consider canola oil a kitchen essential, too. Its neutral flavor, light texture and high heat tolerance (a smoke point of 468° F) make it a match for almost any culinary application.

“I love cooking with canola oil because it's incredibly versatile,” agrees Nancy Hughes, a professional recipe developer and cookbook author. “I use it for sautéing, searing, roasting, baking, stir-frying, vinaigrettes—you name it. The fact that it's healthy to boot makes my decision in the kitchen even easier.”