

Nutrition Nuggets: How Do Nuts Differ From Oil?

by Delisa Renideo

Olive oil -- it sounds so healthy, doesn't it? So wholesome. So good for our heart and blood vessels. After all, isn't the Mediterranean Diet proof that we all need to eat plenty of olive oil?



The research actually debunks the myth of "healthy olive oil," or any oil for that matter. And we

have been learning that a low-fat vegan diet actually corrects many health problems, such as heart disease and diabetes, and reduces the risk of cancer.

At the same time, we hear other researchers and doctors telling us we should eat some nuts and seeds every day because they are "heart healthy" and they help us absorb far more of the fat-soluble nutrients in our healthy vegetables. But what about the fat? Why should we avoid oil -- even extra virgin olive oil! -- but still eat nuts and seeds? They're definitely high in fat. How can we make sense of this?

Nuts and seeds are whole foods.

We need to go back to one of the most basic concepts we have learned about foods: Whole foods are much healthier than processed foods. Think about the difference between whole wheat berries (the grain) and white flour.

Oil is a highly processed product...

Basically, oil is just empty calories.

Big difference there! Or the difference between a potato and a potato chip. This will help explain the difference between nuts and oils.

Nuts and seeds are whole foods. They contain protein, carbohydrates, and fat. They have fiber. They also have vitamins and minerals, as well as phytochemicals. So they have a full complement of nutrients, along with their fat.

Oil is a highly processed product resulting

from the extraction of the oil from the original whole food. It is 100% fat. No protein, no carbohydrates, no fiber, and virtually no vitamins and minerals and phytochemicals except for a little vitamin E in some oils. Basically, oil is just empty calories.

Let's compare 1/4 cup of slivered almonds with 1 Tbsp. olive oil:

	Slivered Almonds (1/4 cup)	Olive Oil (1 Tbsp.)
Calories:	155	119
Protein:	5.7 g	0
Carbs:	5.9 g	0
Fiber:	3.3 g	0
Fat (total):	13.3 g	13.5 g
Sat.	1.0 g	1.9 g
Mono	8.3 g	9.9 g
Poly	3.3 g	1.4 g
Calcium	71 mg	0
Iron	1.0 mg	0.07 mg
Magnesium	72.4 mg	0
Potassium	190.4 mg	0.1 mg
Sodium	0.3 mg	0.3 mg
Zinc	0.83 mg	0
Vitamin A	0	0
Thiamine	0.05 mg	0
Vitamin E	7.07 mg	1.93 mg
Riboflavin	0.27 mg	0
Niacin	0.91 mg	0
Vitamin B ₆	0.03 mg	0
Folate	13.5 mcg	0
Vitamin C	0	0
Vitamin B ₁₂	0	0
Selenium	0.7 mcg	0

As you can see, the almonds have a wide spectrum of nutrients; the olive oil is virtually pure fat, with minuscule amounts of iron, potassium, and sodium, plus a little vitamin E.

Since almonds, and other nuts and seeds, are whole foods, they actually provide healthful nutrients for us. BUT, because they are also so high in fat, we need to eat them in small amounts. Otherwise, we are likely to increase our calorie intake too much, leading to excess weight. So, women, limit your nuts and seeds to 1 oz. per day, and men, 2 oz. per day. (An ounce is a small handful!) For those who are already at their ideal weight and are more active, it is okay to

eat more nuts and seeds, as long as we are staying within our caloric needs.

Consuming a small amount of nuts/seeds with our green salads and cooked greens helps us absorb far more of their nutrients, so sprinkle the nuts/seeds on your salad or make a creamy salad dressing with them. If we eat them as a snack, we're basically wasting this wonderful benefit since we're not consuming nutrient-dense greens at the same time. We're also cruising in dangerous territory, because as you know, it's really easy to pop whole handfuls of these tasty gems in our

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mouth and end up eating a cupful, rather than an ounce of them.

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And by the way, the Mediterranean Diet was healthy IN SPITE OF the olive oil, not because of it! The original Mediterranean diet consisted of large amounts of fresh vegetables and fruits, and small amounts of fish. It was the fruits and veggies that made it healthy!

Nuts and seeds are food and oil is junk food!

So how do nuts and seeds differ from oil? Well, nuts and seeds are food and oil is junk food!

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