

An in-depth look at healthier oils

Benefits and harm from consuming fats

by Darren Wood



Choosing the right oil to cook with is a complicated business. When it comes to fats and oils, we are spoiled for choice. But these days it is extremely confusing because there is so much debate about the benefits and harm that come from consuming different types of fats.

To find out more about the subject of healthy oils Darren Wood spoke with Nature's Crops International's vice president of strategic initiatives Greg Cumberlandford.

When asked about why the food industry should be considering more healthier options for oils, Greg states that when talking about healthy oils, there are a few things that need to be considered.

"Essential fatty acid oils, which form the basis of cellular function, they're called essential fatty acids because our bodies don't make them, but we need to get them in the diet for everything from cardiovascular function, to joint function, even ocular and brain health, so gaining these are an essential part of our diet.

"When we talk about healthy oils, we talk about those which are more anti-inflammatory in nature as opposed to those oils that trigger inflammatory responses in people."

Greg mentions that there are various options in regards to healthier oils, with one of the variants recommended being ahiflower oils.

"When we're talking about plant based oils, we're talking about high oleic oils and these oils that you typically see in the market place are canola oil or olive oil but then there's also the medium chain triglyceride oils such as coconut oil, but then there's also omega oils.

"People are choosing these because they tend to be more supportive of basic cellular function as opposed to essentially cheap oils for promoting deep fried foods and other heavy industrial manufacturing processes.

"What sets apart healthier oils is that they're much more traceable, closer to source and they have medical health science research backing behind them and they are more promotive of less inflammation in the body."

However, Greg mentions about the challenges that the food industry is facing including the main obstacle being consistent quality and purity.

"Those two issues are the main problems. However, the food industry is more at the level of being able to meet the growing demand in a way that ensures that the impurity and the traceability of the oils.

"There's a lot of concern about the environmental and eco-social impacts of oils and you're seeing a lot of criticism of palm oil as it relates to tropical deforestation and so issues like that are coming to the fore."

Greg mentions that he believes ahiflower is a 'game



changer', describing how it is 'so much closer to fish oil'. Greg goes into further detail about what sets ahiflower apart.

"What makes ahiflower different to any plant-derived oil is that it has the highest combined essential fatty acids of any plant-derived oil in the omega category. It also has the highest omega-3 stearidonic acid of any commercially available oil."

Stearidonic acid is what our bodies naturally convert alpha-linolenic acid into on the way to becoming longer chain omega-3 fatty acids like EPA, which is one of the main omega-3 constituents in fish oil. Therefore, when looking for healthy oils, the more omega-3 contained, the better, as Greg explains: "There's a convergence of medical health science and professional nutritionists and dieticians who are convinced that many people who have a dominant western diet are deficient in omega-3s."

"So, they're really hammering home the message that people need to increase overall omega-3 fatty acid intake and reduce pro-inflammatory omega-6 fatty acid intake."

"There's an arachidonic acid cascade that is very pro-inflammatory, which is linked to a lot of skin and metabolic disorders and these can lead to further disease states. So, by moving back towards the diet that our ancestors were used to consuming, which was much higher in omega-3 against omega-6, you're promoting an overall healthier state within the body."

However, omega-3 can present the sensory challenge of a fishy taste. Greg describes the methods used to tackle this, while explaining why ahiflower doesn't have this problem.

"Ahiflower has a very clean taste and aroma. What is typically done to prevent that fishy taste and aroma, often called the 'fishy burp syndrome'

with fish oil, is the maintenance of the freshness and refining process is done using techniques such as molecular distillation to prevent the oxidation of the oil.

"The fishiness is coming because of that. So, there's steps in the manufacturing process to preserve that freshness and minimise the exposure to oxygen."

To round off the conversation, Greg gives his answer to what trends are happening in the food industry concerning healthy oils and also how ingredients are sourced in the future.

"Key consumer trends are shifting to food and beverage type applications moving away from pill forms. Transparency and traceability and the supply chain, so that consumers know where their oil is coming from is a big trend."

"Not only that, but innovative, functional blends as well. These are key trends." ●

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