

COOKING WITH LARD IS HEALTHY



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Lard has gotten a bad reputation over the years as a source of [saturated fat](#), but it may be making a comeback as concerns over trans fats grow. While consuming too much fat overall can be decidedly unhealthy, it may be time for lard to regain a place in the arsenal of cooking fats that you can use to create meals that are both tasty and healthy overall.

Lard

Lard is rendered pork fat. It is commonly used for frying and baking and makes up a large proportion of the cooking fat used in many traditional cultures. Using lard in cooking lends a light and airy quality that is not commonly replicated when using other fats. Shortening replaced lard as a common cooking fat for home use after research into saturated fat in the 1950s made many people view lard as unhealthy for the heart. Many fast-food restaurants and bakeries ceased using lard as a fat source in the 1990s as concerns over the saturated fat content of fast food grew.

Trans Fats

One big advantage of cooking with lard is that pork fat contains no [trans fats](#). The main alternative to lard is shortening, a product made by partially hydrogenating liquid oil to turn it solid, a process that imbues shortening with high levels of trans fats. Trans fats are one of the most dangerous forms of fat. They raise total blood cholesterol levels and levels of low-density lipoprotein, the type of cholesterol that contributes to arteriosclerosis. The American Heart Association recommends keeping intake of trans fats below 1 percent of your total daily caloric intake and avoiding it completely if possible.

Saturated Fat

The saturated fat content of lard is what originally scared people away from using it as the go-to cooking fat it once was. About 39 percent of lard is made up of saturated fat. Saturated fat also increases cholesterol levels, contributing to arteriosclerosis and heart disease. The [American Heart Association](#) recommends consuming only 7 percent or fewer of your total daily calories in the form of saturated fat.

Monounsaturated Fat

Surprisingly, the majority of the fat in lard, about 45 percent, is monounsaturated fat, the kind touted as heart-healthy and more commonly associated with olive oil than pig fat. However, just because it is high in monounsaturated fat doesn't mean that lard is automatically a health food. The healthy effects of monounsaturated fat have not been studied specifically with regard to lard because the monounsaturated fat is not the only fat component present.

Considerations

Overdoing it on lard can, of course, damage your health, just like eating too much of any fat. However, the [American Heart Association](#) recommends that 25 to 35 percent of your daily calories come from fat, and lard can be a portion of that amount as long as you also watch the saturated fat content of your meal.

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/365504-is-cooking-with-lard-healthy/#ixzz2JJMjnRxR>