

Make Your Own Lard

Praise the lard! You heard right. Lard is not the villain it has been made out to be. But there is a catch: It has to be home-rendered. Commercial lard is what has given this flavorful fat its bad name. In order to make the product solid, the molecules have to be filled or saturated—and that is the type of fat we need to avoid for health reasons. Home-rendered lard is 2/3 unsaturated and contains oleic acid, the same ingredient that in olive oil helps break down cholesterol.

Lard was the most popular fat until the 1950s, when scientists discovered that animal fats could lead to heart disease. But they did not know the whole story. The products that replaced lard in the kitchen—like margarines and vegetable shortenings—would have problems of their own, namely artery-clogging trans fats and hydrogenated fats.

Today, lard has made a come-back. Professional chefs like Mario Batali even put it on the table or on his menus as lardo and it is again very trendy.

Best of all, it is very easy to make: Buy unsalted pork fat from your butcher and put in the freezer for a few minutes to harden. Place in a heavy Dutch oven or deep frying pan and either cook it in the oven at 300 until nicely melted or do it on top of the stove where you can watch it.