

Nutrition  
**Big Fat Myths**

Some fats are better than others

● When it comes to your heart, olive oil puts the “med” in Mediterranean. Not only can it lower cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and your risk of death from heart disease, but in a new French study of people 65 or older, olive oil users slashed their risk of stroke by 41 percent.

If only the facts about other fats were so clear! Remember when margarine was supposed to be better for you than butter? Then research showed it was far worse. Ditto for vegetable shortening. “No wonder consumers are confused,” says Dawn Jackson Blatner, R.D., a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association.

**THE SKINNY ON FAT**

Butter	Saturated	100
Hard stick margarine	Trans fat	100
Soft tub margarine	Unsaturated	100
Vegetable shortening	Trans fat	115
Plant oils (olive, canola, safflower, corn, sunflower, soy)	Unsaturated	120
Tropical oils (palm, palm kernel, coconut)	Saturated	120



For the record, fat is an essential part of the diet; among its other functions, it helps the body absorb nutrients from foods. But not all fats are created equal. Unsaturated fats promote health, primarily by cutting cholesterol and

thus lowering heart attack risk. The two main types of these “good” fats are mono-unsaturated fats, including canola and olive oils, and polyunsaturated fats, like corn and sunflower oils. “Any oil that is liquid at room temperature is heart-smart,” says Blatner.

Saturated fats such as butter and lard have the opposite effect, raising blood cholesterol, particularly “bad” LDL cholesterol, and clogging arteries.

But of all the fats, the worst for your heart are trans fats, found in vegetable shortening and stick margarine. Trans fats



**CHEW ON THIS**  
By Brian Wansink, Ph.D.

**SIZE MATTERS WHEN SERVING**

When serving Thanksgiving dinner (or any dinner, really), it does matter which size bowls you use. If you need to make a little food go a long way, set it on the table in small bowls or platters. If you have plenty and want people to eat more, put the food in a bigger bowl. Your guests will use the size of the serving bowl as a cue for how much to take. Studies at my Cornell Food and Brand Lab find people will serve themselves 14 percent less from smaller bowls. (Our studies also show they’ll serve themselves less if you use smaller plates.)

result when liquid oils are pumped with hydrogen to make them solid. This trick of science gives processed foods a longer shelf life—but may shorten your own. The words *hydrogenated oil* or *partially hydrogenated oil* on food labels signal the presence of trans fats.

Keep in mind that even good fats are loaded with calories, so they should not exceed 25 to 35 percent of daily calories. —Beth Howard

FROM LEFT: TARA DONNE (FOOD STYLIST); ALISON ATTENBOROUGH; PROP STYLIST; STEPHANIE HANES; ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTOPH NIEMANN