

description

Canola oil is a light, clear edible oil made by pressing the seeds of the canola plant. Canola has been selectively bred from rapeseed – a plant that produces a heavier oil used as a machine lubricant. Canola oil is a good stable cooking oil that is high in the essential fatty acids linoleic and alpha-linoleic acid. In addition, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) requires that canola oil shipped as food aid be fortified with vitamin A (a fat soluble vitamin).

The Foodgrains Bank provides canola oil in 200 litre (190kg) barrels or cases of four 5-litre jugs.

uses

Canola oil can be used in a variety of ways, from dressings to deep-frying. Its high smoking temperature makes it a good cooking oil, and it does not have a distinctive flavour of its own, making it acceptable in a range of recipes.

In general, oil is a source of essential fatty acids required for the healthy functioning of organs such as the brain, eyes and skin. It also increases the palatability of dry foods.

The World Health Organization's recommended full daily ration includes 50g of oil. In general, the oil-to-cereal (wheat, corn, rice etc.) ratio is approximately 1:8.

limitations

In general, cooking oil does not encounter the problems of local acceptability common with other staple commodities. Possible limitations of the product include:

- **storage:** As described below, edible oil will go rancid if stored for many months in less than ideal conditions. Oil may spoil if the project encounters delays during which the oil is exposed to heat and/or light.
- **dietary fat intake limits:** Nutritionists recommend that no more than 30% of dietary energy come from fat. This may be a useful statistic to bear in mind for centralized feeding programs such as hospital or school feeding. Most people are used to cooking with oil, and will use appropriate amounts.
- **vitamin A loss:** Although the oil is fortified with vitamin A, this nutrient will be lost if the oil is cooked. Since most of the oil shipped is used as cooking oil, there is generally little or no benefit from the fortification.

nutritional information

Nutritional content per 100g

Source: USDA

commodity	energy (kcal)	protein (g)	fat (g)	vitamin A (IU)
Canola oil (fortified)	884	0	100	3300

cost

Spring 1999 prices for canola oil are approximately US\$800 / CDN\$1200 per metric tonne for oil packed in cases. At this price, canola oil yields 7370 kcal of energy per Canadian dollar. Oil packaged in barrels is priced at a discount to oil packaged in cases.

shelf life

Canola oil may last for a year if kept cool and dark. Exposure to light and heat will speed the oxidation process, turning the oil rancid.

substitutes

Canola oil is the primary edible oil shipped by the Foodgrains Bank. Canola is healthier than many other oils, due to its low saturated fat content. However, locally produced oils may be preferred, if available, as they are a sustainable choice in the long term.