

Which cooking oil is the best?

Neil

And I'm Neil. Georgie, today we're talking about cooking oils and which products are best for our health. What do you use to cook with? Olive oil? Butter? Maybe avocado oil?

Georgie

Hmm, when I want my food to be rich and creamy, I use butter, but usually for everyday meals I just use olive oil. What about you?

Neil

Yes, it varies, but I guess for East Asian food, I might sometimes use sesame oil. Now, there are so many different oils we can use for our food, and some of them are very expensive and claim to have big health benefits. Today we'll be finding out whether these products are worth the money and can really help us eat more healthily.

Georgie

Yes, and don't forget to go to our website for a transcript of this programme to read along, and a worksheet to test what you've learned. Visit bbclearningenglish.com.

Neil

OK. Georgie, let's start with a question. In the UK, a popular oil to cook with is olive oil, but which country produces the most olive oil? Is it:

- a) Italy
- b) Greece
- c) Spain

Georgie

Ooh, that's difficult. I know that Spain produces a lot, but I think I'm going to go with Italy.

Neil

OK. Well, we'll find out if that's the right answer at the end of the programme. Now, lots of us are careful about the amount of fat we eat. We might avoid fast food and treats like chocolate or cake, but lots of the fat we eat comes from the oils we use to cook with.

Georgie

Yes, and some expensive oils claim to contain other vitamins that are good for us. But are these claims true? It can be confusing. Presenter of BBC Radio 4 programme Sliced Bread, Greg Foot, has lots of emails about the problem.

Greg Foot

I'll tell you what, Sarah – we have had an absolute **wok-load** of emails sent to sliced.bread@bbc.co.uk asking about cooking oils. Listener Alastair in Midlothian wrote that: "For years we were told to cook with polyunsaturated oils like sunflower oil. But now all the YouTube doctor experts are telling us seed oils are harmful. They **advocate** consuming extra-virgin olive oil, but as I understand it that's not suitable for frying a fish. Also, I hear that over a certain temperature olive oil turns harmful. **What the heck** do I use for frying and roasting?"

Neil

Greg says that he has received a **wok-load** of emails. A **load** of something is a lot of something. You'll also commonly hear the expressions **shed-load** or **truck-load**. These are used to emphasise how much of something there is.

Georgie

Yes, and Greg uses **wok-load** as a fun expression, because he's talking about cooking oils and a wok is a kind of pan.

Neil

Greg reads one of the emails from a confused listener, Alastair, who says that he's watched YouTube videos that argue that oils like sunflower oil are bad for you. These videos **advocate** using extra-virgin olive oil. If you **advocate** something, you encourage people to use it.

Georgie

But Alastair has also heard bad things about olive oil, and that you can't use it at high temperatures. He asks, **what the heck** can he use for roasting and frying? **What the heck** is an informal phrase we can use to express frustration or surprise.

Neil

It does seem like there's a lot of advice about cooking oils and that not everyone agrees.

Georgie

Yes, and some of the advice is to use very expensive options such as coconut oil and avocado oil. People who **advocate** using these oils say they are **wonder products**. A **wonder product** is an item, usually a food or medicine, that is very effective or beneficial for people.

Neil

But not everyone is convinced that expensive cooking oils are worth the money. Nita Forouhi is professor of population health and nutrition at the University of Cambridge and she talked to BBC Radio 4's Sliced Bread host, Greg Foot, about expensive cooking oils like avocado oil.

Greg Foot

What do you think, Nita? What might justify the price tag?

Nita Forouhi

Certainly, avocado oil is good for all the reasons mentioned, but is it worth justifying the cost? If you're a particular connoisseur of the taste it brings, and you prefer it and you have the money, then **knock yourself out**. But there's lots of myths about these super foods and **wonder oils** and **wonder** this and that. And it's just all, I'm afraid, **hogwash**.

Georgie

Nita says that avocado oil does have some health benefits, but she's not sure they are worth the cost of a bottle. She says if you like the taste and are happy to spend the money then '**knock yourself out**'. The expression **knock yourself out** means go ahead.

Neil

But Nita is also concerned about all the health claims about expensive **wonder products** like avocado oil. She says that many claims are **hogwash**: they are nonsense, and products are not worth spending money on.

Georgie

OK. Maybe I'll stick to my olive oil then. And that reminds me of your question, Neil.

Neil

Yes, I asked you which country produces the most olive oil.

Georgie

And I said Italy.

Neil

And I'm afraid you are wrong.

Georgie

No!

Neil

It is in fact Spain.

Georgie

OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned in this programme, starting with a **load** of something, which means a lot of something. We also commonly hear **shed-load** and **truck-load**.

Neil

If you **advocate** something, you encourage people to use it or do it.

Georgie

The expression **what the heck** is used to express frustration or surprise.

Neil

A **wonder product** is something that people think is very effective or beneficial.

Georgie

The expression **knock yourself out** means go ahead.

Neil

And if something is described as **hogwash**, it's nonsense or not true.

Georgie

Once again, our six minutes are up. Try the free interactive quiz on our website to test the vocabulary you've learned. Visit bbclearningenglish.com.

Neil

Goodbye for now!

Georgie

Goodbye!

Vocabulary

a load of (something)

a lot of (something)

advocate (something)

encourage people to use or do (something)

what the heck

informal phrase used to express frustration or surprise

wonder product

an item, usually food or medicine, that people think is very effective or beneficial

knock yourself out

go ahead

hogwash

nonsense or not true

TRANSCRIPT

Note: This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Georgie

Hello and welcome to 1 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Georgie.