

# A Different Oil

*Grapeseed oils made from wine varietals impart new flavors in cooking.*

In my restaurants, I use a variety of oils. Each has a distinct role, from baking to sautéing to finishing salads. The ubiquity of olive oil is giving way to a new wave of artisan oils that can open up your cooking to flavors that olive oils can't deliver. I recently cooked my way through a portfolio of artisan grapeseed oils that are changing the way cooks think about this generally flavorless oil.

Salute Sante! has been producing extra-virgin cold-pressed varietal grapeseed oils since 2010. Owners Valentin and Nanette Humer began their quest to introduce grapeseed oil in America in the 1990s. They use the leftover seeds of grapes after they have been crushed at wineries. The seeds are carefully collected, sorted, and then pressed through stainless-steel rollers that press the oil without heat or oxygen, allowing the oil to flow at temperatures that the grapes would naturally experience in nature. The oil then settles into tanks without filtering out its biologically active substances, and is packaged into protective glass bottles. It takes 10 pounds of grape seeds, which would normally be discarded, to make one 200-milliliter bottle (about 7 fluid ounces) of grapeseed oil.

The health benefits of grapeseed oils have been well documented. They are high in vitamin E, beneficial omega-6 fatty acids, natural chlorophyll, and antioxidants, while low in saturated fat. Grapeseed oil contains no preservatives, is not hydrogenated, and contains no solvents or trans-fatty acids.



What makes these oils so interesting are their bold flavors. They have a vibrant green-golden flavor with the aroma of freshly crushed grapes. Their mouthfeel is lush and clean. The oils are labeled by their varietal origins, and the taste is subtly different between Chardonnay, Zinfandel, and even Chenin Blanc grapeseed oils.

Grapeseed oils can generally be substituted for olive oil, but grapeseed oils will impart a more vibrant and fruitier flavor than the spicier flavors of olive oil. Roasted Carrot Salad with Grapeseed Oil Vinaigrette contrasts the intensity of the oil with the rich flavor of roasted carrots. The sweetness of the carrots and the punch of the anchovies carry the vinaigrette perfectly.

Focaccia is a recipe in which the quality of the oil is essential. In addition to the grapeseed oil, I also incorporated some grapeseed flour, which adds a sweetness and nuttiness. This is a complex savory-sweet focaccia that is a perfect accompaniment to a plate of cured meats and cheeses. I was surprised at just how much I liked this recipe and how different it tasted from a traditional olive oil focaccia.

The final recipe replaces olive oil in a signature recipe I have been making at my restaurant for years—edamame hummus. The grapeseed oil's fruitiness balances nicely with the nuttiness of the tahini and the greenness of the edamame. It actually improved upon the taste of the original. And that doesn't happen very often in my kitchen.

Grapeseed oil seems poised to become a wonderful new option for home cooks to add to their pantries.

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