



Lowering the “Trans Fat” in Fried Foods with a New Soybean Oil

Reducing *trans* fats in the diet is an important issue in nutrition, because research has shown that these fats raise cholesterol levels and impact heart health. The newest statement required by FDA on nutrition labels is the amount of “*trans* fat” that is present in a serving.

Trans fats occur naturally in meat and dairy products, and account for about one-fifth of the *trans* fat in the American diet. Vegetable oils, on the other hand, do not contain *trans* fats. When oils (soybean, canola, cottonseed or sunflower) are hydrogenated, *trans* fats are formed. This processing step makes them more solid, as in margarines and shortening, and more useful for certain food industry applications such as frying and baking.

Fried foods are usually prepared using partially hydrogenated fats because the color, texture and flavor are preferred. Fast food restaurants are the biggest users of partially hydrogenated oils for French fries and other fried foods.

This past week, KFC announced that they would no longer use partially hydrogenated oils, but will switch to a new soybean oil. This new oil comes from soybeans that are low in linolenic acid, a polyunsaturated fatty acid, which makes it more stable, with less need for hydrogenation for frying purposes.

There are several varieties of soybeans that are low in linolenic acid, and the one most common at the present time is *Vistive*. *Vistive* soybeans were developed through conventional breeding by Monsanto and are being grown under contract for processing into cooking oil.

The use of “low-lin” soybean oil will reduce the amount of *trans* fat in fried foods. Nutritionists recommend that we consume as little *trans* fat as possible, recognizing that it is difficult to eat a diet completely devoid of these compounds.

Illinois Center for Soy Foods Consumer Information Sheet

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