

THE KEY INGREDIENT MACADAMIA



Words: Steve Snow Photography: Brian Usher
Photography location: Brookfarm, Byron Bay, www.brookfarm.com.au
Bath courtesy of Who Bathroom Warehouse, www.whobathroomwarehouse.com.au

Let me give you the lowdown on a fabulous fat: wonderful macadamia oil.

First of all let's dispel the myth that all fats are bad. Fat is great, as long as it is the right kind.

Good fats are essential to a healthy diet. If you want the best food, then start with the best produce, and fat is integral to great food. Fats give food taste and flavour but are often overlooked by both home cooks and chefs.

In fact, we need more fat than we are led to believe. The important point is: there are good and bad fats, so you need to choose carefully.

The best oils or fats to cook with are saturated fats like butter and coconut oil as they are the ones that best handle heat. When cooking, you can see when oil or fat is being damaged as it will go brown.

The worst fats to cook with are margarines and shelf-stable cooking oils (including many commercial vegetable oils) which when heated can be toxic to the body and brain.

When possible, always choose organic oils. There is a whole list of nutrients that are critical to a healthy, balanced diet that are best found in natural oils and fats such as macadamia nut oil, coconut oil, extra virgin olive oil and butter.

Currently, extra virgin olive oils are all the rage. In my experience these oils are great when fresh and local, however, they are too often imported and stale. At my restaurant, Fins, we use Brookfarm macadamia nut oils from Byron Bay in all our cooking. Because it is local, the carbon footprint is down and the use-by date is longer. >



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Local macadamia oil is cholesterol-free and a rich source of monounsaturates – the "good fats". In addition, it has no trans fatty acids, which have been linked to dementia, cardiovascular disease, depression and accelerated ageing. It is not genetically modified and contains no chemicals or preservatives.

The main reason I love using macadamia oil is because it has a considerably higher smoking point than olive oil (210 degrees Celsius compared to 100 degrees), which means the great flavour of the oil is not diminished in the cooking process. The high smoke point when cooking fish, or anything else, allows a crispy crust that adds contrast and texture.

The smooth "butteriness" inherent in macadamia oil allows us at Fins to serve fish with the creaminess of butter without tainting our sauces with a burnt-oil flavour. Basting the fish with a marinade comprised of Brookfarm macadamia nut oil, organic local garlic, lemon juice, thyme and local butter is our way of reaching for culinary heaven.

Many people think macadamia nuts are imported from Hawaii. In fact, macadamia nuts are only native to Australia. They are our present to the world and an excellent source of protein and antioxidants.

Don't restrict yourself to only using macadamia oil for cooking. Variety and moderation is the key. Extra virgin olive oils are fabulous in salad dressings and drizzled over finished dishes. Just don't waste your money cooking with them. Better to use a cheaper olive oil with a higher smoke point when heating above 100 degrees.

Butter tastes fabulous but for various dietary reasons may be off the menu for some people. Try replacing it with an equivalent amount of macadamia nut oil. It works beautifully in most dessert recipes.

Macadamia oil – wondrous taste and fabulous flavour from a fantastic fat.



"THREE OF MY FAVOURITE INGREDIENTS ... BROOKFARM MACADAMIA NUT OIL, DARK CHOCOLATE AND BEETROOT."

chocolate beetroot cake

Serves 6 as a dessert

- 125g Brookfarm macadamia nut oil
- 185g chopped dark chocolate
- 175g flour
- 125g cocoa powder
- pinch salt
- 3 large eggs
- 5ml vanilla
- 250g brown sugar
- 150g cooked and shredded beetroot
- 100g toasted and chopped macadamias
- 100g chopped dates

Combine oil and chocolate over a low heat and allow to cool. Sift cocoa, flour and salt. Combine sugar and chocolate mixture, add eggs one at a time, when well incorporated add vanilla. Fold in remaining ingredients and pour into a parchment-lined pan and bake at 190°C for 30-40 minutes. Serve with whipped cream or yoghurt.



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