

adapting to oil-free cooking

Transitioning to zero-oil cooking is not as difficult as it may seem



by DR NANDITA SHAH

I must admit that I loved fried foods – even more than desserts. And like most of us, I grew up cooking with oil. Now having left oil far behind, I really enjoy my oil-free foods!

Why cook without oil? Isn't oil natural? SHARAN advocates a whole plant-based diet to allow the body to heal and to prevent disease. This means eating foods the way nature designed them i.e. whole rather than man-made or refined.

When we consume oil, a refined product of coconut/olives/peanuts/sesame, etc. we are actually taking out all the nutrients and protective fibre. If we can avoid several diseases just by changing the way we cook, and have fabulous food too, why not? Try it. You too may love it!

Yes, our body does need a certain amount of fat, which is easily available in whole foods such as nuts, beans, seeds, avocados, etc.

When you eat coconut or peanuts, you get fat in a natural form as opposed to refined oil, which is free of fibre, heated and extracted with solvents.

As for your taste buds, rest assured, they will adapt to oil-free cooking pretty soon.



Let us help you to transition to zero-oil cooking with a few steps...

Remove the oil from your kitchen: no oil, no choice!
Water is the new oil: while sautéing your onions, heat your steel pan and simply plop the onions. If they start sticking, sprinkle a few drops of water and that's it! Another way is to sprinkle some salt so the onions automatically release their own water. They will easily brown in that.

Tempering: Remember mustard seeds have oil within. When you heat your pan to temper, simply add the seeds and they begin popping by themselves. The same can be

done with cumin, curry leaves, etc. Just make a note here, that if you are tempering with powdered spices like asafoetida, turmeric, etc. then turn off the stove to dry roast them to prevent them from burning.

Oil-induced flavours: When you sprinkle peanut powder or grated coconut in your dish, the fat gets released and adds flavour.

Baking: For the samosas, vadas, fritters and more, baking is the ideal option. Simply add peanut butter in your dough and the magic is done! For cakes, replace oil with mashed bananas or apple sauce. For savouries or french fries, etc. steaming first and then baking is the key.



Peanut butter magic: To make dosas, pancakes, chillas, simply smear your iron tava with a muslin cloth bag filled with peanut butter, even your parathas turn out delicious when you add peanut butter to the dough.

Nuts and seeds: Add these to your salads instead of the oils. Add fresh olives instead of olive oil.

Think before ordering: While eating out, go for steamed options and avoid the deep-fried. Request the chef to use no oil!

Pro tip: The most important tip is not to tell anyone in your family that the food is oil free. Simply cook without oil and offer it to them. With daily meals of vegetables and curries, they won't even know the difference! That's quite a lot of oil removed from your family's system.

Dr Nandita Shah is the founder of SHARAN, an organisation devoted to disease reversal through food. For the past 14 years, she has presented the health workshops in India, and all over the world, inspiring others to make dietary and lifestyle changes resulting in positive health. She is also the author of the book *Reversing Diabetes in 21 Days*.

Oil-free pakodas

SERVES 4

1 cup mixed chopped vegetables (you can use cabbage, onions, carrots or any vegetables of your choice)

½ cup besan/ gram flour

Spices of your choice – ginger, garlic, chillies, red chilli powder, whole dhania

¼ tsp turmeric

Salt to taste

Minced fresh coriander

Water if at all needed to make the blend thick and sticky like a dough

- 1 Mix all the ingredients and make small 1-inch balls and put in a steamer.
- 2 Steam till done – if you put a fork in, it will come off clean or the pakoda does not stick to the steamer and can be easily removed.
- 3 Take them out of the steamer and pop them in the oven at 200C for a short time till outer crust is brown.