

PODCAST – JANE WRIGGLESWORTH
Editor of *Sweet Living* magazine

Interview with Kate Walker of Lifespark Nutrition

- Transcript -

Jane: Right, here we go. Right, welcome, everybody. I have nutritionist Kate Walker, of Lifespark Nutrition, with me today. Kate is an advocate for better health and well-being through good food and exercise. She has transformed the lives of hundreds of individuals and families across Auckland with her sensible and sustainable approach to nutrition. Kate's also worked with the NZ National Heart Foundation as well as Plunket.

Welcome Kate.

Kate: Thank you, Jane, Thanks very much.

Jane: No Problem. It's a real pleasure having you here today. And I'm so excited because you have some fabulous information for us on what many of us, including myself, struggle with to understand – and that's what oils are the best ones for cooking and baking with. Because there is so much contradictory information out there in the media.

So first, Kate, let's start with a really basic question first, is it important to know what types of fats and oils there are from a nutritional point of view?

Kate: Yes, Jane, I know the information can be very confusing. But from a nutritional point of view it is really important. Fats are so important for our bodies. I think we, you know, a couple of decades ago went really away from fats and thought fat was the devil but actually the benefits of fats in our diets are huge, from neurological issues, to they can stop cravings, keep you fuller for longer, help with skin, collagen replacements.

Jane: Right.

Kate: All sorts of cellular health benefits. So it is important to have that in our diet and we typically have three types of fats, healthy fats. So we've got your polyunsaturated, so your Omega 3s. People probably would have seen that's from our fishes, and you have flaxseed oils. And we've got your mono-unsaturated fats, so that's your avocado, your nuts and your seeds. And then we've got your saturated that you might get from red meats and pork chops and your butter, you know, forms of dairy. And those are all good wholesome fats.

Jane: Okay.

Kate: And then of course the one thing we just want to make sure that we try to avoid, which is really important for families to know this, and to look at the

ingredients list, is this hydrogenated vegetable oil that you'll see in biscuits and commercially made baked goods. So it's really important for families to actually look at the ingredients lists and not just the nutrition panel to avoid these hydrogenated fats.

Jane: So can I ask, what are these hydrogenated fats? Is that something that's been manufactured, a man-made type of thing?

Kate: Correct. It goes through a bit of a process. And they basically alter the structure of the fats, the good fats, and then it becomes oxidized and it becomes inflammatory to the body.

Jane: Okay.

Kate: So when anything has been hydrogenated, it's been chemically changed under high pressure. So, yeah, that's one thing to be just aware of. So when people buy biscuits for their kids, thinking that they're doing their kids a little bit of a treat, actually you're causing a little bit of damage there.

Jane: Okay, that's not good. And just one thing – does it actually say on the label hydrogenated fats?

Kate: Yes, hydrogenated vegetable oil. It will be listed there. So that's one thing to just stay away from. So those are the good fats we can have from our food sources. And then we've got the lovely fats that we can cook with as well.

Jane: Okay, so that's a good thing to move on to. So what is good for the cooking? And perhaps a distinction of better oils for cooking and better oils for baking from a nutritional point of view. And a food safety point of view.

Kate: Yes. So it depends on what you're cooking. I always tell people be a little bit aware of are you just sautéing, are you stir-frying at high heat? Barbecuing and baking? Because when you cook at high heat you want to use oils that are stable and don't oxidize or go rancid easily. Because you know when oils undergo oxidization they can turn into sort of harmful compounds. So I don't know if you have ever burnt olive oil or if you have ever burnt butter and you see that smoke, that's not a good sign. So you don't want to burn your oils basically.

Jane: Okay. So when you set off the smoke detector, you're burning your oils and that's not good?

Kate: It's not good, yes, definitely.

Jane: Okay.

Kate: So basically if we think about high heat – so you might want to have a healthy stir fry, you might have gas and a wok going, you want to be using – one of the best oils actually is coconut oil.

Jane: Oh, okay.

Kate: And coconut oil I would – and coconut oil is a fantastic – if you're going to put the oven on over 200 degrees C (400 degrees F).

Jane: Okay, so it's got a high...

Kate: Very high smoke points. Yes. So baking is one where people tend to rely on butter a lot but coconut oil is very good for baking as well. So if you're doing – so if you are healthy – that's why I always recommend people making their own biscuits or muffins, rather than buying things.

Jane: Sure, sure. So with the coconut oil as an example people might be thinking, is that quite high in saturated fats? So people might be thinking why would that be a good oil to use, for example?

Kate: Saturated fats do actually maintain the chemical structure so that's why they've got high smoke points. And one must remember that coconut oil, without getting too technical, it's slightly different to your animal fats, saturated fats. And coconut oil is also wonderful for, you know, they're got all the lauric acids which are natural anti-inflammatories and which are antifungal and antibacterial. So it's actually sort of a plus plus from a nutritional point of view.

Jane: Sure, sounds great.

Kate: So we've got coconut oil and there's also macadamia oil and avocado oils actually also have quite a good smoke point as well. If you are doing some frying, yeah, avocado and you can buy these from a supermarket as well. You don't have to go and press your avocados.

Jane: Okay, sure.

Kate: If people wanted to deep fry or fry anything, or stir fry at high points, that would be my sort of two or three main ones.

Jane: Oh okay, so that's a good one for deep frying as well. Or those three.

Kate: Yeah. You know, light frying, baking at 180 degrees C, you know if you're just frying some chicken up or you're frying, sautéing mushrooms doing an omelet or something like that, then your olive oil is brilliant. And same as butter, it's okay to sauté things in butter. We just want to make sure that with olive oil you do want to have the cold pressed oils as well. You might want to look out for extra virgin cold-pressed olive oil. Actually, it's the same with any oils, anything that can be cold-pressed. It just means it hasn't gone through a heat extraction.

Jane: Okay, because the heat extraction would diminish some of the goodness in it?

Kate: Yes. I'll talk to you about that very shortly. But yes, I would say other healthy oils I would say olive oil is the most common one that we do see. And then you see a little bit of sesame seed oil as well for frying.

So there are super healthy oils and these are your polyunsaturated oils, which don't have a good smoke point. These are your flaxseed oil, your hemp oil, your hazelnut oil, evening primrose oil, which are super healthy. However, you want to use them as dressings.

Jane: Okay.

Kate: So...

Jane: Because they have a low – did you say they have a low... what?

Kate: Smoke point.

Jane: Yeah, smoke point.

Kate: So you pretty much actually don't want to cook them at all. You want to use them in your dressings.

Jane: Okay.

Kate: And it's so amazing, people always forget that a lot of our vitamins and minerals need fat to help the uptake of them.

Jane: Yes, sure.

Kate: So things like actually putting a dressing on, putting some flaxseed oil on your salad is so important because you'll help the uptake of vitamin A that we get from carrots.

Jane: Okay.

Kate: So it's really important to add to your food.

Jane: Yeah, sure.

Kate: And if you've got a lovely piece of salmon, it's not a good idea to burn it for a long time on the pan, you want to sort of almost flash fry it.

Jane: Oh okay.

Kate: Because then you've got those lovely omega 3s in the salmon, so you don't want to actually fry it for a long time.

Jane: Yes, great point. So and one last question, Kate, and you have touched on this, but what fats should we reduce or avoid?

Kate: What's interesting now with the new research, I've talked about trans fats, but the ones that now have come up, which is so interesting when they've done the research and looked at inflammation, looked at cellular health, there are actually ones that are very commonly stored in many kitchens, like your rice bran oil, sunflower oil,

canola oil, soy bean oil, all these are actually too high in Omega 6s and they're actually doing damage to the body. So that's one advice I can say to people. You know, once you're finished, if you do have them in your house, don't buy more of them. Go for your olive oils, go for your coconut oils. Because these oils actually go through quite a refining process where they get chemical extraction basically.

So if you think about rice, it takes a lot of – I mean, rice doesn't naturally have a lot of oil in it you know when you think about it. So...

Jane: Yeah, sure.

Kate: The chemical process that it actually has to go through to actually get that oil out is quite stringent you know. And it takes a long time. So that's one thing for mums is to actually start reducing and not having some of those common oils in the pantry.

Jane: That's very interesting because I have some of those oils in my pantry myself, so when I run out – I do have olive oil as well – I'll go on to coconut oil and all those other good oils, avocado, etc. as well.

Kate, thank you so much for being here today. That was so interesting and I'm sure our listeners will get a great deal out of that.

Now make sure you check out Kate's website and join her weekly newsletter which is chock full of great tips and nutritional advice. Kate, just remind us what your website is?

Kate: Thank you Jane, it's lifespark.co.nz.

Jane: So Lifespark – LIFESPARK.co.nz.

Kate: Yes, can I just give a couple of final advice and oil tips?

Jane: Sure.

Kate: Don't buy large batches at a time. So just buy a couple of things because you don't want them sitting in your cupboard for two years. Also, just make sure you store your oils in a cool dark place because light also oxidizes it. So don't leave olive oil on the bench if it's in a lighter container, next to heat, next to the cooking lights. So yeah, just put it in the pantry afterwards and do make sure you screw the lid on properly because it stops the oxidization.

Jane: Okay, great. Awesome. Thank you so much, Kate. That's fantastic. Thanks everybody for listening and I'm Jane Wrigglesworth of Sweet Living magazine and we'll talk to you again soon. Thank you.

Kate: Thank you.