



NATIONAL EDIBLE OIL DISTRIBUTORS ASSOCIATION

# Information About Oils

The National Edible Oil Distributors' Association

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## Groundnut (Peanut) Oil

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### Introduction

Like the garden pea, the groundnut plant is a member of the family Leguminosae. It is an annual, herbaceous plant growing approximately 30-60 cm high, with hard, angular stalks. The flowers are brilliant yellow, develop rapidly and bloom for only a few hours. The seeds are packed in twin layers. The seedpods are yellow with a wrinkled surface, each containing 1-4 seeds the size of hazelnuts. The yellow-white nuts are enclosed in thin, red-brown shells that are easily opened when the seeds are dry and ripe. Groundnuts are mainly exported unshelled since the shells prevent transport damage.

### The Oil

Peanut oil, also known as groundnut oil or arachis oil, is a vegetable oil derived from peanuts. The oil has a strong peanut flavour and aroma. It is often used in American, Chinese, South Asian and South-east Asian cuisine, both for general cooking, and in the case of roasted oil, for added flavour.

Today the most important areas of cultivation are China, India, West and North Africa and the USA. The main export countries for groundnut oil are Argentina, Sudan and Senegal. Because there are relatively limited supplies, and a constant high demand, groundnut oil usually commands a considerable price premium over most other cooking or frying oils.

The oil is relatively robust and has a characteristic slightly nutty taste although it is odourless.

Groundnuts contain 40-50% fat and 24-35% proteins. Groundnuts are pressed to derive the oil. The protein-rich press residues are used as animal feed.

### Nutritional Composition

	<i>per 100g</i>
<i>Energy</i>	<i>3700KJ/900Kcal</i>
<i>Saturates</i>	<i>18g</i>
<i>Monounsaturates</i>	<i>48g</i>
<i>Polyunsaturates</i>	<i>34g</i>

### Allergies

Food allergies are caused by the protein components of food. Edible oils and fats in the EU undergo extensive refining processing which removes virtually all protein from the oil. It was always thought unlikely that refined groundnut oil could be allergenic and this has now been scientifically tested. Research has shown that refined groundnut oil would not cause reactions for the overwhelming majority of peanut allergic individuals and if any reaction did occur, it would almost certainly be mild. As predicted, the research did show, however, that unrefined oil could cause a reaction in some people, so should be avoided by those with peanut allergy.

New EU regulations on food labelling require the labelling of certain known allergens. Whilst refined groundnut oil is thought to be safe for peanut allergics, all groundnut oil, refined or unrefined, is now listed on the packaging, if not already included in the product name.

