



## Drizzle, Sizzle, and Eat

To some, cotton is viewed only as a textile crop, but Chef Patrick Tarantino, from the Overton Pecan Grill in Lubbock, said it is more than just a tool to make clothes; it can also be used as oil for your food. Acala Farms Flavor-infused Cottonseed Oil has many purposes for cooking. Chefs from the southeast and west Texas areas appreciate this product, because it is made from the crop that is home grown in the surrounding areas.

Director of Cottonseed Research and Marketing for Cotton Incorporated, Tom Wedegaertner said he was determined to create a special type of flavored cooking oil made from cottonseed. He teamed up with Oregon State University's Food Innovation Center and perfected recipes for flavor-infused cottonseed cooking oils.

Later on, Wedegaertner and Cotton Incorporated collaborated with Botham Brands to develop the Acala Farms brand and to produce, distribute and market the finished product. Botham Brands also owns Botham Vineyards & Winery in Wisconsin.

"Botham Brands was willing to produce the product, website, label and packaging," Wedegaertner said. "We are in the process of figuring out what the popular flavors are to turn into a mass distribution."

Vice President of Communications for the Cotton Board, Brad Robb, explained that cottonseed oil is one of the healthiest forms of cooking oil, because it has a

high smoke point and is an excellent source of vitamin E, with no trans fat.

"Cottonseed oil enhances the natural taste of

foods," Robb said, "rather than contributing to other flavors, which brings out the regular taste."

Wedegaertner explained the classic taste of cottonseed oil is very neutral, so it will not overwhelm the taste of foods cooked in this type of oil.

"We use cottonseed oil as a salad dressing ingredient," Wedegaertner said. "It's so wonderful, because it doesn't burn or disappear in the pan and is very light tasting."

Cottonseed cooking oil has a smoke point of 450 degrees Fahrenheit, which makes it great for frying.

It doesn't leave an oil residue on foods, and unlike many vegetable oils, it can be stored for long periods without turning rancid. Many chefs like Tarantino use a cottonseed oil for the kitchen's fryers because of the smoke point.

The Acala Farms Flavor-infused cottonseed oil is available in the following flavors: Fresh Cilantro, Smokey Chipotle, Fresh Roasted Garlic, Jalapeño-Lime, Hot Habanero, and of course, 100% Pure Cottonseed Oil.

The cooking oils are intended to add depth to many delicious dishes such as pasta, salad dressings, grilled chicken or steak. They are an unexpected ingredient in the making of most any delicious meal.

"Drizzle, sizzle, sample and eat" is the message Acala Farms uses to promote its oils and to raise awareness about cotton as more than a textile crop.

Acala Farms gets its name from the variety of cotton from which it is derived. The cotton is grown throughout New Mexico and Texas.

The purpose of the Acala Farms company is to experiment with edible versions of cotton and to raise public awareness about cotton as a food crop.

The Cotton Incorporated research center is in the process of researching different uses of the kernel part of the cottonseed, but has created the actual flavor-infused cottonseed oil within the past year. The researchers said they are hoping to develop other food products that use the cottonseed kernel as a main component.

Cottonseed oil has been used in American food products for more than 100 years. It is commonly found in products such as ice cream, potato chips, salad dressings, mayonnaise, peanut butter, and hot dogs.

A little known fact, Wedegaertner said, is that the name Crisco, commonly identified with shortening

used for baking, is also the acronym for crystallized cottonseed oil.

"Flavor-infused cottonseed oil gave me the idea to warm up people's thoughts about the different options for edible cotton," Wedegaertner said, "and bringing it to the grocery shelves and stores will help to get the general public to realize that it is an edible food item and not just a textile."

Wedegaertner said his goal is to research and create edible products made from cotton because it is beneficial as a food. Cottonseed oil is healthier than vegetable and other oils and can be a great substitute for other products. For example, someone who is allergic to peanuts could fry foods in cottonseed oil and still enjoy cooking with high-quality oil.

Cottonseed oil is in high demand for the food industry, because this product is not sold in retail stores, but consumers do have access to the product wherever turkey fryers are sold. It can also be purchased on the Acala Farms website at [www.acala-farms.com](http://www.acala-farms.com). A five-ounce bottle retails for \$6.99. 

