

### Greek Yogurt

Greek yogurt is a dairy-based nutritional powerhouse that is excellent eating as is, yet even better adding to baking recipes. In 8 ounces of whole milk Greek yogurt, there are 20 grams of protein, 190 calories, and 9 grams of fat (6 grams saturated). There are even nonfat options so that you only get a dose of protein. However, the whole milk version will give the softest baked goods since there is still fat being added. It works well to add moisture and structure for quick breads and cakes.

When substituting: For every 8 ounces (1 cup) of butter, replace with 1/2 cup Greek yogurt.

### Nut Butters

Nuts are tiny but mighty in that they naturally pack protein and fat. One tablespoon contains 5 grams of protein, 8 grams of fat, and 96 calories. Skip the hydrogenated fat versions loaded with sugar, look at the label for simply peanuts and salt as the ingredients. It works well in more dense products like cookies and bars. Nut butter is typically 50% fat compared to butter at 80% fat, so it needs some additional fat incorporated. Nuts like peanut, almond, cashew, and macadamia will add its characteristic flavor which is best for cookies, bars, cakes, brownies, muffins, and quick bread.

When substituting: A 1:1 replacement for butter can be used. Combine equal parts nut butter with oil before adding into a recipe. For example: 1/2 cup nut butter with 1/2 cup melted coconut oil mixed together until smooth.

### Olive Oil

Olive oil is a favorite fat to use because of its naturally rich taste and healthy unsaturated fat profile. Due to its savory and sometimes spicy flavor, olive oil isn't always the best option for sweeter baked goods, so it's best used in bread, certain muffins, pot pie or meat pie crusts and biscuits. Choose a light olive oil for a more neutral taste or extra-virgin olive oil for a more robust flavor.

When substituting: For every 1 cup of butter, 3/4 cup of oil should be used.

### Black Beans

Who would have guessed that legumes could be used for baking, but it's true! Adding a bean puree to cut the fat down in baked goods also provides fiber, protein and other vitamins and minerals. Any bean could be used, like cannellini beans for a yellow cake and black beans are great for chocolate cakes and brownies. The beans should be blended first to create a smooth puree. If needed some water can be added, 1 tablespoon at a time to make it easier to process. You can even add some oil (1 to 4 tablespoons) like melted coconut oil or vegetable oil to a 15.5 ounce can of beans and process for an even creamier fat replacer.

When substituting: Bean puree can be replaced 100% for butter and will yield a more cake-like texture, which is good for cakes, muffins, and quick bread.

### Avocado

Either avocados or avocado oil works well as a butter substitute, but I prefer using an actual avocado. Use the same ratio you would with butter—I puree it first and find that it offers a higher vitamin and fiber alternative to butter, with heart-healthy benefits, too. One avocado tends to yield 3/4 of a cup. With avocado oil, which is full of omega-3s and vitamin E, you will have to be a little more careful of the liquid to solid ratio. In general, 7/8 cup to 1 cup of butter seems to work well. The neutral flavor and creamy texture of avocados work well for darker colored muffins, quick bread, brownie, and cookies.

When substituting: I use the same amount of avocado compared with the amount of butter called for in a recipe. With avocado oil, I use 7/8 cup to equal 1 cup of butter.

## Coconut Oil

Coconut oil is a popular choice, mainly because it cools as a solid and turns to liquid when warm, as butter does and will help maintain thickness and viscosity in a recipe. Something to note with coconut oil is the taste, though. In small amounts, there isn't too much of a difference (if any), but in recipes that require a lot of butter, more significant amounts of coconut oil may change the taste. Choosing a refined coconut oil will yield a more neutral-tasting product compared to unrefined.

When substituting: In general, I use the same amount of oil compared with the amount of butter called for in any one recipe.

## Applesauce

Applesauce not only replaces butter in recipes, but it also adds additional natural sweetness if you're looking to cut down the added refined sugar. The cooked and pureed apples add structure and moisture to baked goods, plus extra fiber that helps bind water. Choose the unsweetened version to keep the calorie load at a minimum.

When substituting: You can replace 100% of butter for applesauce, however using some fat from yogurt, nut butter or alternative oil can help cakes, muffins, and quick bread from tasting too dry.

## Pumpkin Puree

It couldn't be a more perfect match than to use pumpkin puree for replacing butter, especially for those seasonal fall and winter baking recipes. Each serving will pack in more fiber and nutrients like beta-carotene, potassium, and vitamin K in each slice of muffin, quick bread or coffee cake.

When substituting: Pumpkin puree can replace butter by 100%, as well as any oil, adding its orange color, sweet, earthy and creamy flavor to the baked good.

## The Role of Butter in Baking

Of course, I love cooking with butter. Its high-fat content (around 80%, the rest mainly water and milk solids) makes it the near-unparalleled darling of baked goods—for dense, flaky, spongy cookies, cakes, pastries, and other things. Overall, certain things really are best with butter, like pie crusts, shortbread cookies, and puff pastries, as butter makes up the main ingredients, meaning fat content could be crucial for the recipe's success.

Overall, butter is a leavening agent. When sugar combines with butter (and its fat), the granules beat into the fat and aerate it, giving baked goods texture and flavor. However, as animal fat, it's also high in calories, cholesterol, and saturated fats (7 grams per tablespoon) and is a dairy product, so it may have to be avoided for people with certain diets or health concerns like lactose intolerance or milk allergy.

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