

# Margarines now nutritionally better than butter after hydrogenated oil ban

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In the U.S. the year-end holidays are here, which not only makes it the season of joy and celebration, but also of butter as many Americans make batches of cookies and creamy comfort foods to celebrate. In

2018, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned partially hydrogenated oils from food products such as margarines in order to reduce the amount of heart-damaging trans fats people consume. A new study from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health recently compared the nutrition composition of margarine products to butter to see which is now the healthier choice in terms of cardiovascular health.

"What we found is that in the U.S. marketplace today, margarines are now a better option than butter for your health," said study lead author and public health nutrition student Cecily Weber. "In the past there was a lot of debate about which product was better for you, but now that trans fats have been removed from margarines, they're the best choice in terms of heart health."

The study, led by Weber and co-authored by Professor Lisa Harnack, is the first to comprehensively look at [margarine](#) versus butter since the FDA ban went into effect. The details of the study were recently published in the journal *Public Health Nutrition*.

Weber examined the fatty acid profiles and relevant vitamin and [mineral content](#) of 83 margarine/margarine-like and butter blend products available in the U.S. marketplace in 2020 and compared them to butter. Weber collected the information using the Food and Nutrient Database from the University of Minnesota Nutrition Coordinating Center (NCC), which is a database detailing the nutritional content of thousands of foods. Harnack is the director of the NCC.

The study found:

- Following the ban, margarine and butter blend products contain substantially less saturated fat and cholesterol in comparison to butter, and contain no man-made trans fat.
- Softer tub and squeeze-tube margarine products were found to

contain less saturated fat than stick margarines, making them the better nutritional choice among margarine products.

"The findings are particularly important for registered dietitians and other nutrition-related health professionals so that they can update their advice and offer people the best options in order to promote heart health," says Weber.

Weber says the news is also important for consumers so that they know it's nutritionally wisest to choose tub and squeeze-tube margarines in particular over [butter](#) when shopping for food. Tub and squeeze-tube margarines typically contain the least amount of saturated fats, which makes them softer than stick products at room temperature. Weber also added that food manufacturers are to be commended for reformulating their products to eliminate trans fats and maintain their taste and quality while keeping their saturated fat content low.

"It's a public health success story," says Weber. "Consumers no longer have to worry about reading product nutritional labels to see if they contain hydrogenated oils and trans fats. They can just know that they no longer do."

**More information:** Cecily Weber et al, Nutrient comparisons of margarine/margarine-like products, butter blend products and butter in the US marketplace in 2020 post-FDA ban on partially hydrogenated oils, *Public Health Nutrition* (2021). [DOI: 10.1017/S1368980021004511](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980021004511)

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