



Summary

Fats and oils are constructed of building blocks called “triglycerides” resulting from the combination of one unit of glycerol and three units of fatty acids. They are insoluble in water but soluble in most organic solvents. They have lower densities than water, and may have consistencies at ambient temperature of solid, semisolid, or clear liquid. When they are solid-appearing at a normal room temperature, they are referred to as “fats,” and when they are liquid at that temperature, they are called “oils.” For simplification purposes, the terms “fat” and “oils” are used interchangeably in the remainder of this topic.

Fats and oils are classified as “lipids” which is a category that embraces a broad variety of chemical substances. In addition to triglycerides, it also includes mono- and diglycerides, phosphatides, cerebrosides, sterols, terpenes, fatty alcohols, fatty acids, fat-soluble vitamins, and other substances.

The fats and oils most frequently used in India for food preparation and as ingredients include soybean, canola, palm, cottonseed, olive, coconut, peanut, lard, beef tallow, butterfat, sunflower, corn, palm kernel, and safflower.