

Suet

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Suet is the raw, hard fat of beef or mutton found around the loins and kidneys.

Suet has a melting point of between 45 °C and 50 °C (113 °F and 122 °F) and congelation between 37 °C and 40 °C (98.6 °F and 104 °F). Its high smoke point makes it ideal for deep frying and pastry production.

The primary use of suet is to make tallow, although it is also used as an ingredient in cooking, especially in traditional puddings, such as British Christmas pudding. Suet is made into tallow in a process called rendering, which involves melting and extended simmering, followed by straining, cooling and usually by repeating the entire process. Unlike tallow, suet that is not pre-packed requires refrigeration in order to be stored for extended periods.



Calf suet

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Trade

In the 17th century economy of the Viceroyalty of Peru, Chile's husbandry and agriculture based economy had a peripheral role exporting mainly suet, ch'arki and leather to the other provinces of the viceroyalty. The importance of this trade led Chilean historian Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna to label the 17th century the *century of suet* (Spanish: *siglo del sebo*).^[1]

Cuisine

Suet is essential in several traditional British dishes. Suet pastry is soft in contrast to the crispness of shortcrust pastry, which makes it ideal for certain sweet and savoury dishes. Suet is most widely used in sweet puddings, such as jam roly-poly and spotted dick. Savoury dishes include dumplings, which are

made using a mixture of suet, flour and water rolled into balls that are added to stews during the final twenty minutes or so of cooking. In the savoury dish steak and kidney pudding, a bowl is lined with suet pastry, the meat is placed inside and a lid of suet pastry tightly seals the meat. The pudding is then steamed for approximately four hours before serving. Suet is also an ingredient of traditional fruit mince. In recipes calling for suet, substitute (e.g. vegetable) fats usually do not work as well.

Suet should not be confused with beef dripping, which is the collected fat and juices from the roasting pan when cooking roast beef. Suet should also not be confused with all beef or sheep fat. It is normally the fat found around the heart and kidneys of cattle and sheep, and nowhere else in the animals.

Due to its high energy content, suet is used by cold weather explorers to supplement the high daily energy requirement needed to travel in such climates. Typically the energy requirement is around 5,000–6,000 Cal per day for sledge hauling or dog-sled travelling.^[2] Suet is added to food rations to increase the fat content and help meet this high energy requirement.

Suet

Nutritional value per 100 g (3.5 oz)		
Energy	3,573 kJ (854 kcal)	
Carbohydrates	0 g	
Fat	94 g	
Saturated	52 g	
Monounsaturated	32 g	
Polyunsaturated	3 g	
Protein	1.50 g	
Minerals		
Zinc	0.22 mg	(2%)
Other constituents		
Cholesterol	68 mg	
Selenium	0.2 mcg	
Fat percentage can vary.		
Units		
µg = micrograms • mg = milligrams		
IU = International units		
Percentages are roughly approximated using		
US recommendations for adults.		
Source: USDA Nutrient Database (http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search/list)		

Comparative properties of common cooking fats (per 100 g)

Type of fat	Total fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Monounsaturated fat (g)	Polyunsaturated fat (g)	Smoke point
Sunflower oil	100	11	20	69	225 °C (437 °F) ^[3]
Sunflower oil (high oleic)	100	12	84 ^[4]	4 ^[4]	
Soybean oil	100	16	23	58	257 °C (495 °F) ^[3]
Canola oil	100	7	63	28	205 °C (401 °F) ^{[4][5]}
Olive oil	100	14	73	11	190 °C (374 °F) ^[3]
Corn oil	100	15	30	55	230 °C (446 °F) ^[3]
Peanut oil	100	17	46	32	225 °C (437 °F) ^[3]
Rice bran oil	100	25	38	37	250 °C (482 °F) ^[6]
Vegetable shortening (hydrogenated)	71	23	8	37	165 °C (329 °F) ^[3]
Lard	100	39	45	11	190 °C (374 °F) ^[3]
Suet	94	52	32	3	200 °C (392 °F)
Butter	81	51	21	3	150 °C (302 °F) ^[3]
Coconut oil	100	86	6	2	177 °C (351 °F)

Availability

Suet can be bought in natural form in many supermarkets. As it is the fat from around the kidneys, the connective tissue, blood and other non-fat items must be removed. It then needs to be coarsely grated to make it ready to use. It must be kept refrigerated prior to use and used within a few days of purchase, just like meat.

Pre-packaged suet sold in supermarkets is dehydrated suet. It is mixed with flour to make it stable at room temperature. Because of this, some care is needed when using it for older recipes that call for fresh suet as the proportions of flour to fat can alter. Most modern recipes stipulate packaged suet.

Vegetarian alternative

Vegetable suet is available in supermarkets in the United Kingdom, made from fat such as palm oil combined with Wheat Flour (Aora^[7]/Tesco^[8]) or rice flour (Morrisons^[9]). It resembles shredded beef suet, and is used as a vegetarian substitute in recipes, but with slightly different results from animal suet. Vegetable suet is also available in light versions with lower fat content.

Cultural and religious restrictions

Consumption of suet is forbidden according to the Jewish religion as it was reserved for ritual altar sacrifices. This restriction only applies to those animals which were used for sacrifices, and thus does not include wild animals such as deer.

Bird feed

Woodpeckers, goldfinches, juncos, cardinals, thrushes, jays, kinglets, bluebirds, chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, and starlings are all known to favour suet-based bird feeders.^[10]

Bird feed is commonly used in the form of cakes of suet, which can be made with other solid fats, such as lard. Rolled oats, bird seed, cornmeal, raisins, and unsalted nuts are often incorporated into the suet cakes.^[11]



Red-breasted nuthatch feeding on suet

Suet-based recipes

- Christmas pudding
- Dumplings
- Haggis
- Jamaican patty
- Kishka/Kishke
- Mincemeat
- Rag Pudding
- Spotted dick
- Steak and kidney pudding
- Suet pudding
- Sussex Pond Pudding
- Suet Crust Pastry
- Windsor pudding
- Cloutie Dumpling (Scottish)

See also

- Dripping
- Leaf lard
- Schmaltz



Wikimedia Commons has media related to ***Suet***.

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