

Hospital cooks with healthy sunflower oil

By Sharon Corcoran

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What's yellow and brown and good for your health and Goodland's economy at the same time?

Sunflowers — at least when they are used to make a cooking oil that lowers cholesterol 4.7 percent when compared to the average American diet.

The Goodland Regional Medical Center kitchen is using NuSun sunflower oil, allowing the hospital to set an example in promoting healthier food choices and to provide a market for sunflowers grown in the area.

A Penn State University clinical health study proved the worth of the NuSun oil, showing that people experienced a significant lowering of total and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (the bad kind) on a NuSun diet but not on an olive oil diet. Compared to the average American diet, the sunflower oil lowered total cholesterol 4.7 percent and bad cholesterol 5.8 percent.

This was exciting, said Sarah Linton, dietitian at the hospital, because it was the first controlled clinical study that showed the benefit. Hopefully, she said, NuSun will soon be used more in commercial kitchens.

It works well for frying, Linton said, because it is stable when heated. Most oils used for cooking need hydrogenation to make them stable, she said, but NuSun does not. Hydrogenation adds trans fats, she said, and new dietary guidelines recommend eating no trans fats at all.

Linton said she would like to see fast food restaurants use NuSun. People are still going to eat fast food, she said, and not think about trans fat. It's good for the hospital to use the oil, she said, and set an example; hopefully people will see it is healthier and use it in restaurants. It has a light taste, she said, and the girls in the cafeteria like cooking with it.

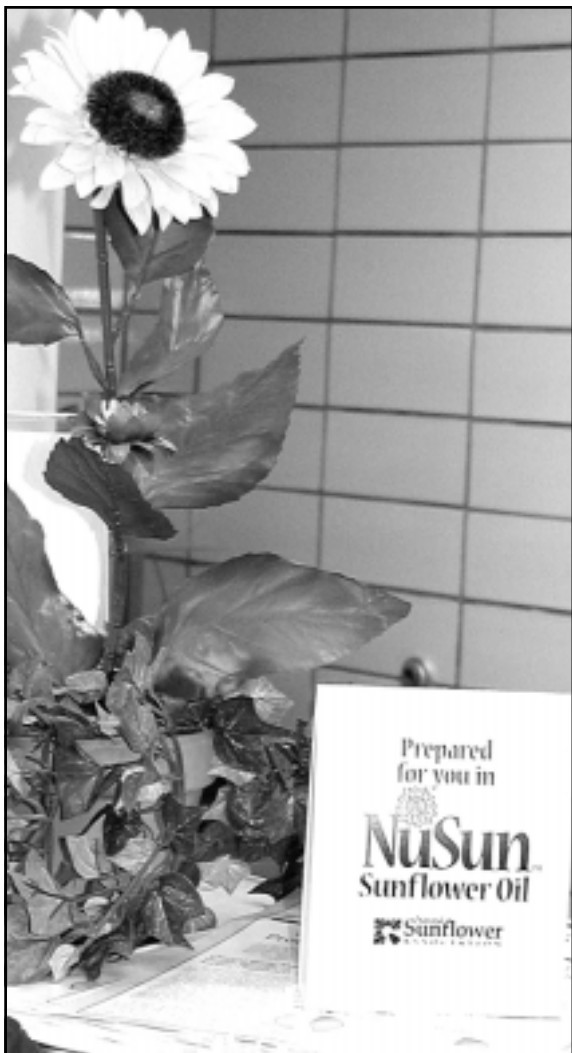
The main complaint from restaurants, she said, is the cost. For larger hospitals, that may be a major concern, she said, but the Goodland hospital doesn't use enough oil for the price to make a significant difference. It costs about \$100 more per year, she said.

Hopefully, Linton said, if more people use the healthy oil, the cost will come down, allowing more to afford it, and it will become more easily available. It is not well distributed right now, she said. Sunflower oil at the grocery store is still a healthy option, she said, it is not labeled as NuSun right now.

The hospital gets NuSun from Northern Sun Industries, she said. They have to order it from a packing plant in North Dakota, she said, but they get the oil from sunflowers grown here. In all likelihood, she said, local sunflowers are made into the oil and sent to North Dakota for packing and then come back here.

Northern Sun processes local sunflowers into oil, said Ken Berndt, a field representative for the firm, and then sends it to be refined and packed. About 95 percent of the plant's oil is used for NuSun, he said, which has been buying oil from the plant for the past six years.

Linton said she learned about NuSun while doing a project for her internship at Penrose Hospital in



Sunflowers adorn the cafeteria at the Goodland Regional Medical Center (above) next to a sign announcing that food there is made with NuSun Sunflower Oil. Kaitlin Lee (right), with dietary services at the hospital, poured some of the oil back into a storage container. The oil is used primarily for baking at the hospital cafeteria. A field of sunflowers beamed in the sunlight (below) when they were in full bloom this summer.

Photos by Patrick and Kathryn Burke
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Colorado Springs. The interns each had to plan a "theme meal" at the hospital, she said, that included food and decorations. Wanting to do something others had not done, Linton said, she chose to do a sunflower festival.

Linton, a Goodland native, called Lynn Hoelting, general manager at Mueller Grain, who was able to get her some sunflower oil and sunflower seeds. Linton served several hundred people at the meal and had information on the tables about the benefits of sunflower products.

When Linton came to work at the Goodland hospital, Hoelting called her, and they talked with Jay Jolly, hospital administrator, about using the oil in the cafeteria. Linton said she found out how much it would cost, and they decided it would be a good idea.

It worked out well, she said, since they changed oil at the same time as the cafeteria changed its menus. Stickers were put on patient menus, she said, and table tents were put out in the cafeteria to let patients know the hospital uses the oil.



New recipes make dessert, pizza heart healthy

Recipes using sunflower products can be found at www.sunflowersnsa.com.

A couple of recipes recommended by Sarah Linton, the dietitian at Goodland Regional Medical Center, are:

Oven Roasted Veggie Pizza

- Sunflower oil
- salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1 small yellow squash, cut in half lengthwise
- 1 small zucchini squash, cut in half lengthwise
- 1 small red onion, cut in fourths
- 1 medium bell pepper, cut in half
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon dried marjoram
- 1/4 cup light cream cheese
- 1/4 cup non-fat French onion dip
- 1 14-inch pizza crust
- 1/2 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/4 cup toasted sunflower kernels

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Coat the bottom of a large roasting pan with sunflower oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Place squash, onion and bell pepper cut side down, lightly brush with sunflower oil and sprinkle with garlic salt, oregano, thyme and marjoram.

Roast vegetables for 20 minutes or until vegetables are easily pierced with a sharp fork. Remove those which are ready and continue roasting until all are done.

After cooling, cut the vegetables into 1/2-inch pieces and reserve.

Mix cream cheese and dip together in a small bowl, then spread evenly over crust. Divide roasted veggies and arrange on crust.

Top with mushrooms and sprinkle with sunflower kernels. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until evenly heated.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving — Calories, 305; total fat, 11.6 grams; carbohydrates, 36.6

grams; saturated fat, 2.3 grams; dietary fiber, 2.5 grams; cholesterol, 10.5 grams; protein, 12 grams; sodium, 803 milligrams; and calcium, 171 milligrams.

Strawberry Cream Tart with Crunchy Sunflower Crust

- 1 cup all purpose flour
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped sunflower kernels
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup sunflower oil margarine, softened to room temperature
- 8 ounces reduced fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature (use block cream cheese; whipped tub will be too soft.)
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1/2 cup red currant jelly
- 3-4 cups whole strawberries

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Combine flour, sunflower kernels, brown sugar and margarine in a 13 X 9 inch pan. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, stirring once, until golden.

Use a spoon to firmly press remaining warm crumbs into an ungreased 9-inch pie pan or square baking pan. Cool in refrigerator.

In a medium bowl, blend cream cheese, vanilla and powdered sugar until smooth; spread over chilled crust.

Slowly melt jelly over medium heat until liquid; be careful not to boil.

Let cool slightly.

Starting in the middle of the tart, place largest strawberries, point up, in the middle and fill in with the smaller ones, completely covering the cream layer.

Pour the melted jelly over the strawberries and chill at least four hours before serving.

Makes 10 servings. Perserving — Calories, 319; total fat, 16 grams; carbohydrates, 39 grams; saturated fat, 4.7 grams; dietary fiber, 1 gram; cholesterol, 13 milligrams; protein, 5 grams; sodium, 230 milligrams; and calcium, 41 milligrams.

Food pyramid makes room for oil

Sarah Linton, Goodland Regional Medical Center's registered dietitian, is enthusiastic about the health benefits of NuSun sunflower oil.

It lowers cholesterol, she said, reducing the risk for heart disease, stroke and heart attacks. That's especially important for diabetics, she said, since one of their main killers is heart disease. The highest percentage of deaths of diabetics come from heart disease, she said.

The change of diet is good for anyone, though, Linton said; it's preventative.

NuSun is the trademark name chosen by the National Sunflower Association to represent a new class of sunflower seed and oil, referred to as mid-oleic. There are also linoleic and high oleic sunflower oils.

NuSun is higher in oleic acid and lower in linoleic acid than traditional sunflower oil. This was accomplished through plant breeding methods and provides oil that is naturally stable without hydrogenation, which means the oil can be used for cooking and contains no trans fats.

The oil is made at Northern Sun Industries in Goodland and at plants in several northern states, including Minnesota and North Dakota, said Lynn Hoelting, manager of Mueller Grain Co., and then is usually sent somewhere else to be refined. Archer-Daniels-Midland and

Cargill are among the companies that refine the oil, he said.

In the controlled clinical study, published in the July issue of the *Journal of American Dietetic Association*, the results of which are being promoted by the National Sunflower Association, each participant followed an average American diet for four weeks, a NuSun sunflower-oil diet for four weeks and an olive-oil diet for four weeks.

The sunflower-oil diet lowered the total cholesterol levels and the bad cholesterol levels, when compared with the average diet, but the olive-oil diet did not.

The published study includes graphs showing the fatty acid profile of NuSun oil and olive oil. It shows that 57.27 percent of NuSun is monounsaturated fat, 32.3 percent polyunsaturated, and 9.6 percent saturated. Olive oil is 69.4 percent monounsaturated, 13.98 percent polyunsaturated and 14.31 percent saturated fat.

Researchers think it is the balance of fatty acids in NuSun that provide the benefit, the published study says. It contains both mono- and polyunsaturated fats, is lower in saturated fat than olive oil and contains no altered "trans fat."

The study says the U.S. Food and Drug Administration will require trans fat labeling on

packaged foods in January, and some manufacturers have already switched to trans-free oils, including NuSun, and others are planning to.

The study quotes Harvard School of Public Health researchers as saying that replacing 5 percent of calories from saturated fat with calories from trans-free, unsaturated oil would reduce the risk of heart disease by 42 percent.

Sunflowers fit into the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new food pyramid, Linton said, since it recommends varying your protein by adding fish, beans, peas, nuts and seeds, which would include sunflower seeds.

The guidelines with the pyramid recommends making most of your fat sources from fish, nuts and vegetable oils, she said, which includes sunflower oil.

The new pyramid guidelines say to eat at least three ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice or pasta every day; eat more dark-green vegetables, orange vegetables and dry beans and peas; eat a variety of fruit; go low-fat or fat-free when you choose milk, yogurt and other milk products; and choose low-fat or lean meats and poultry and bake it, broil it or grill it.

It says for a 2,000-calorie-a-day diet, you should eat six ounces of grains, 2 1/2 cups of vegetables, 2 cups of fruit, three cups of dairy and 5 1/2 ounces of meat and beans every day. For those who need more or less calories, the guidelines are available at MyPyramid.gov.

