

## Coconut oil can substitute for butter in some recipes

Some people love coconut oil. Others hate it. I fall somewhere in the middle.

The pros of coconut oil are that it's natural and has a rich coconut aroma and luxurious texture. It's plant-based, as opposed to butter, which is animal-based. Although it touts medium-chain triglycerides, reputable sources warn that this attribute doesn't result in fat loss. Conventional wisdom points to the fact that 1 tablespoon delivers

13 grams of saturated fat, which is more than half of most people's daily limit. Meanwhile, butter contains 7 grams of saturated fat, 100 calories, and 30 milligrams of cholesterol — 10 percent of the daily limit.

I rely on plant-based cooking fats, which is why I chose coconut oil for this recipe. Olive and canola oil are still my first choice for cooking, but in the case of creamed corn, you want the buttery taste that coconut oil delivers. And ounce for ounce, light coconut milk has significantly fewer calories and saturated-fat grams than the heavy cream that is typically used in this dish.

So, to use or not to use? If you're looking to eat a more plant-based diet or for a more coconutty flavor, coconut



Coconut milk brings a creaminess to the corn portion of this diver scallops dish.

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oil is a good substitute for butter. Extra-virgin olive oil and expeller-pressed canola oil remain my top choices for nutritious oils to use in recipes. What's your experience with coconut oil?

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## Thyme-Seared Scallops With Coconut Creamed Corn With Red Bell Peppers

From Michelle Dudash

### For the corn

2 teaspoons virgin coconut oil  
1 cup diced red bell pepper  
3 scallions, white and green parts divided, thinly sliced  
4 ears corn, husks removed  
½ cup light coconut milk  
1 teaspoon raw sugar, or to taste

### For the scallops

1 pound diver scallops, rinsed and blotted dry (about 8-12)  
Freshly ground black pepper  
Salt, to taste (optional)  
1 tablespoon virgin coconut oil  
A few thyme sprigs

**To make the corn:** Heat a large skillet on medium-low and add oil. Add bell pepper and cook gently

until tender, about 6 minutes, adding the white parts of scallions halfway through cooking. While the peppers cook, place a corn husk over a bowl and cut off the corn kernels, not cutting all the way to the root of the corn. Using a soup spoon scrape the remaining pulp and juice from the cobs into the bowl. When the peppers are tender, add the corn and juice and cook until the liquid cooks down, 2-3 minutes. Add coconut milk, ¼ cup water and sugar and simmer until corn is tender, 30 minutes. Stir in green parts of scallions at the end of cooking.

**To make the scallops:** Season the scallops with pepper and salt. Heat a large saute pan on medium-high and add oil, tilt-

ing the pan to ensure even coverage. Add scallops and brown on one side, 4-5 minutes, tilting the pan occasionally to evenly distribute oil. Turn the scallops onto an area of the pan coated with oil and add thyme, browning 4 minutes. Cook scallops until they reach desired doneness, with medium rare being recommended.

Spoon the corn into wide shallow dishes and top with scallops.

Makes 4 servings, 2-3 scallops each (with ½ cup corn).

*Per serving: 292 calories, 10 g total fat (5 g saturated fat, 0 trans), 848 mg sodium, 46 cholesterol, 27 g total carbohydrate (4 g fiber), 27 g protein.*