



## Omega 3: Making food healthier

**W**hen it comes to creating new ways to capture the heart healthy benefits of Omega 3 fatty acids in everything from eggs and milk to pasta and chocolate, Ontario leads the way, says Dr. Bruce Holub, professor emeritus at the University of Guelph.

He has spent a career studying naturally occurring forms of Omega 3 in plants and animals and then finding new ways to incorporate them into various homegrown foods. Largely due to his research, consumers around the world can now buy Omega 3-rich eggs and milk.

But Canada's impressive initiatives into making foods healthier do not end with eggs and milk. In Barrie Ont., Greg Herriott's company, Oilseed Works Inc., is extracting Omega 3 from locally-grown hemp and flax for use as an additive in baked goods, salad dressings and soy-based milk alternatives.

"We are doing research now on new ways of adding Omega 3 to pasta and meat products as well," he says.

As Dr. Holub says of his field: "Ontario researchers have been world leaders in creating technology to incorporate Omega 3 in eggs and milk."

The benefits of Omega 3 fatty acids – whatever their source – lie in their ability to help prevent some forms of heart diseases, lower triglycerides in the blood and support brain development and function. These unsaturated fats occur naturally in plants such as flax, canola seeds and hemp and in some fatty substances, such as that from salmon.

Dr. Holub found that laying hens are marvellous converters of some Omega 3s. Feed a hen 300 milligrams of a plant-based Omega 3, called LNA, and it not only incorporates that LNA into its eggs but also 20% of the fatty acid into another Omega 3 called DHA – most commonly found in fish. Feed cows a supplement based on DHA, and the same form of Omega 3 is absorbed into the fat content of the milk.

"In full-fat milk, you can get 30 mg of DHA a glass," Holub says.

Omega 3 eggs and milk are vital when considering Canadian three-year-olds average 18 mg of DHA a day and Canadian pregnant and nursing mothers average 80 mg a day, while the minimum required intake for optimum health in Europe is set at 200 mg a day, he adds.

At Oilseed Works, Mr. Herriott says his efforts to get Ontario and Canadian bakers and food producers to incorporate another beneficial form of Omega 3 – ALA – into their products is still a work in progress. In addition to Omega 3, Oilseed also naturally produces Omega 6 and Omega 9 additives.

"Ontario is a leader in this area – in the ability to combine the rich array of foods we produce with the ability to make them even healthier."

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