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Avoid adulterated edible oil, says food safety dept

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Trichy: The food safety and drug administration department has warned consumers not to fall prey to poor quality edible oil just because it is sold on the cheap, saying it is mostly made without following prescribed norms .

Random searches by food safety officials on some of the oil mills manufacturing edible oils revealed traces of malpractice of adulterating sesame oil and groundnut oil with palmolein oil.

“Palm oil is mixed with sesame oil and groundnut oil. Unaware of the adulteration, people buy them because it’s cheap. People should avoid inferior and unhealthy products and obtain oils from reputed mills because palm oil will cause several health complications particularly heart related ones,” designated officer (DO), food safety and drug administration department Dr R Chithra told ToI on Wednesday.

Acting on a tip-off, the team led by Chithra visited an oil mill in Musiri on Tuesday. The team found packets filled with adulterated sesame and groundnut oil. The adulterated sesame oil or groundnut oil will have 70 % of palm oil, said DO Chithra. The violators add an essence to the palm oil to give the flavour of sesame oil and groundnut oil.

The food safety department has no idea as to what is the name of the essence. Food safety officers say that the traders are well aware of the loopholes to bypass the rules. A food safety officer said he had seen a private oil mill misbranding the oils in Musiri in 2018.

Instead of selling the adulterated oils in the name of sesame oil or coconut oil, they cheat consumers using small fonts on the pack. They print cooking oil in bold letters on the packet while say they have mixed it with palm oil in small fonts which cannot be easily noticed.

In Tamil, they print Nalla Ennai instead of Nallennai for sesame oil. For groundnut oil, they use picture of the groundnut without mentioning the name. Though they have been receiving complaints, they are yet to take a full-blown action on them.

Though mixing palm oil in other oil is permitted in FSSAI, the manufacturers deliberately avoid mentioning the ratio of blending on the label to sell oils for high price. Whatever may be the rules, the doctors suggest avoiding the use of palm oil in any quantity.

Interventional cardiologist Dr Kader Sahib Ashraf at Apollo Speciality Hospitals in Trichy was of the view that any oil consumed in excess quantity will take its toll on the cardiac system. "I would suggest intake of mustard oil and olive oil which won't be harmful if taken in limited quantity. In general, the consumption of adulterated oil will no way good for heart," he said on Wednesday.