

Product review

Melrose Omega Gold margarine



By DOMINIC O'BRIEN

INGREDIENTS Organic sunflower oil, purified water, organic flaxseed oil, isolated soy protein IP, inulin fibre, xanthan, sea salt, sorbic acid, vitamin E, citric acid, rosemary extract, vitamins A and D.

For decades we were told butter is bad for us and margarine is the answer because it is lower in saturated fats. But in recent years scientists have learned that hydrogenation – the process of turning oil into margarine – produces trans-fatty acids. These acids increase the likelihood of heart disease and possibly a range of other things.

I never use margarine but I try to minimise my intake of butter on account of my insufficiently active lifestyle (aka laziness). So what is one to do. Spread water on your toast? Thankfully, no.

Melrose produces a table spread made from sunflower and flaxseed oils that contain no hydrogenated oils. They have figured out how to turn oils into a creamy table spread with heating or hydrogenating. The best of both worlds? It could be.

Another benefit is that Omega Gold contains the appropriate balance of Omega 3 and Omega 6 fats that we need in our diet. This balance is believed important as many people consume insufficient Omega 3s.

FLAVOUR The flavour is a little hard to describe. It has a stronger flavour than margarine but is not as salty. This may take a little adjustment after years of salty margarine but don't overdo it and you'll find it adds a new dimension to your food.

ORGANIC INGREDIENTS The two main non-water ingredients, sunflower and flaxseed oil, are

certified organic. Looking at the other 2% of ingredients, I suspect they are not easily, or not at all, available organically. Hopefully, Melrose will keep working on it.

PRICE It retails at about \$4.50 for a 250-gram tub. It is more expensive than margarine but uses higher-quality oils that are not hydrogenated. To me, it is a small price to pay for better health.

AVAILABILITY Omega Gold is available in health food stores Australia-wide, IGA stores in Victoria and selected independent supermarkets in other states.

NATURALNESS The very fact that the oils are not hydrogenated and damaged in the same way as margarine oils means it is a much more natural product than margarine. Of course some manufacturing is required but Melrose has kept the process as natural as possible.

LABELLING The label on Omega Gold is very good. It displays the ACO 'Bud' logo and explains on the back label the fact that it contains no hydrogenated or trans fats. It also explains on the front that the product is packaged in a black plastic tub to shield Omega 3s from harmful light.

On the edge of the label and inside the cardboard can be found detailed information about Omega 3, Omega 6, Omega 9 and saturated fats. I applaud inclusion of this information as it is important that consumers understand the importance of these.

So oils ain't oils, as they say. At least, margarines ain't margarines any more. The development of a healthy table-spread alternative is long overdue and very welcome. For the sake of your arteries (and perhaps your palette, unless you really, really like dry toast and sandwiches), give Omega Gold a go and ... you guessed it ... butter up. ■

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