

# DRINK YOUR MILK (AND ALTERNATIVES!)

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Milk has certainly come a long way from the bottles that have been dropped off on people's front porch each morning by the milkman. What used to be an American staple is now often overlooked or replaced by alternative milk-like products which people did not even realize could produce a milk-like substance. The abundance of milk products available can be overwhelming when deciding which milk is best to purchase. To combat confusion, we're here to explain some of the most common varieties of milk you will come across.



Cow's milk, the traditional milk, is the one we have all known and loved from the start. There are several varieties of cow's milk you are probably familiar with including whole, low-fat, reduced-fat, and non-fat. From a nutritional standpoint, 1 cup or 8 ounces of milk provides is a good source of protein, calcium, vitamin D and potassium. The different kinds differ in fat content and calories:

- Whole (3.5% fat) milk: 150 calories, 8 g fat (5 g saturated fat)
- Reduced fat (2%) milk: 125 calories, 5 g fat (3 g saturated fat)
- Low-fat (1%) milk: 100 calories, 2.5 g fat
- Non-fat milk: 80 calories; 0.5 g fat

In general, Americans consume a higher proportion of saturated fats than recommended. Therefore, low-fat and non-fat milk are healthier alternatives since milk fat is predominantly saturated fat. Regardless of the

type of cow's milk consumed, one cup of any variety supplies approximately one-third of the recommended daily value of calcium and contains approximately 20% a person's daily phosphorus, vitamin D, and riboflavin. Additionally, cow's milk supplies approximately 8-9 g protein per cup.

Lactose is the carbohydrate found in cow's milk. To breakdown lactose, our bodies produce an enzyme called *lactase*. However, people who are lactose intolerant do not produce sufficient amounts of the enzyme *lactase* and therefore cannot breakdown lactose. This results in nausea, gas, diarrhea, and other unpleasant symptoms. Choose lactose-free cow's milk such as Lactaid® or milks from alternative sources if you experience these problems. Almond milk in particular has become an extremely popular milk alternative free of lactose. Similar to almond milk includes lactose-free milk alternatives cashew milk (made from cashews)

and hemp milk (made from hemp seeds) and soy milk. Despite not coming from an animal source, most varieties are fortified to provide approximately 25-30% of a person's recommended daily value of vitamin D as well as vitamin A and calcium. With the exception of soy milk which has a similar amount of protein to cow's milk, other forms of milk alternatives are low in protein. Be aware that if you choose plant-based milk alternatives that are flavored or sweetened the caloric and sugar content will also be significantly higher. Further nutritional information on these milk alternatives are as follows (based on 1 cup of Silk® unsweetened milk products):

- Almond milk is made from ground almonds, water and may have added sweeteners. It is a good source of vitamin E providing about 50% of Daily value in 1 cup. 30 calories; 2.5 g fat (0 g saturated fat); 1 g protein

- Cashew milk: 25 calories; 2 g fat (0 g saturated fat); <1g protein
- Hemp milk is made from hulled hemp seeds and water. It does not contain any of the psychoactive components of marijuana but it does contain a healthy balance of omega 6 and omega 3 fatty acids although in the form of alpha-linolenic acid not the more desirable EPA and DHA fatty acids as in fish oil. 120 calories; 3-7 g fat (1 g saturated fat); 4 g protein.
- Soy milk is made from soybeans and water and comes in many variations of fat and sugar content. It also includes antioxidant isoflavones. 80 calories; 4 g fat (0.5 g saturated fat); 7 g protein.
- Rice milk is the most hypoallergenic milk. It is made from boiled rice, brown rice syrup and starch. 120 calories; 2 g fat (no saturated); 1 g protein.
- Coconut milk is another lactose free milk product seen commonly in Asian cuisine. Extracted from coconuts, unsweetened coconut milk supplies 45 calories, 4 g fat (3.5 g saturated fat) and 0 g protein per cup. Coconuts are high in saturated fat, which translates over to their milk products. Therefore, someone watching their saturated fat intake should proceed with caution regarding coconut milk. However, “lite” varieties of coconut milk are available. In addition, coconut milk provides approximately 25% of a person’s daily vitamin D and offers calcium.
- Goat’s milk, although from an animal source, contains a lower proportion of lactose compared to cow’s milk. Therefore, those with lactose intolerance may tolerate goat’s milk well. Additionally, goat milk in general is easier to digest than cow’s milk due to the structure and size of the fat globules. Like cow’s milk, goat’s milk comes in several fat content varieties, the most common being whole and low-fat. Whole goat milk offers approximately 150 calories and 8 g fat (5 g saturated fat). Low-fat goat’s milk offers

approximately 90 calories and 2.5 g fat (1.5 g saturated fat). Both forms of goat milk supplies 7-8 g of protein, up to 30% the recommended daily value of vitamin D, and contain calcium. Products made from goat milk, such as cheese, are also well tolerated.

This wide selection of milk products and alternatives can be confusing. However, you now have a better understanding of the varieties of milk and nutritional composition. So try the different types of milk available, find one that you prefer, and enjoy all the health benefits and delicious taste milk products and alternatives can supply.

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