

GOT MILK?

A ONE-STOP MILK REVIEW



May is Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month, so that gets us thinking about our bones. Calcium is essential for children to build strong bones, and for adults to maintain them. Although calcium can be taken in supplement form, research suggests that calcium from food sources is preferred. Dietary sources of calcium include leafy greens, fish (such as sardines), winter squash, and edamame, but the biggest contributor of calcium in the diet comes from milk and milk products. Choosing milk used to be simple – whole or reduced fat. Now, the milk aisle has exploded and includes varieties from not only different animals, but a plethora of plants as well. If you have felt slightly to severely overwhelmed with all the milk choices, you're not alone. Let's get our milk mustaches back on as we review all the milks... well, mostly all of the milks – there's bound to be a new one popping up soon!

ANIMAL MILK

COW'S MILK

Main Types: Whole, 2%, 1%, skim (varying fat content), lactose free, A-2 (free of A-1 protein)

Why we like it: Cow's milk is not only a natural source of calcium, but it contains other necessary micronutrients including vitamin D, phosphorus, B vitamins, and potassium. Cow's milk is a great source of complete protein – it contains all 9 essential amino acids. Casein, a slowly digested protein, makes up the majority of the protein found in milk which supports satiety and has been shown to aid weight loss. Cow's milk also contains good-for-you fatty acids such as CLA and omega-3s (more plentiful in grass-fed milk).

Possible down sides: Individuals with lactose intolerance are unable to digest lactose, the natural sugar found in milk. Milk is one of the top 9 major food allergies, so those with a milk allergy will need to avoid.

The bottom line: If you can tolerate cow's milk, it's our top pick. The balance of protein and carbohydrates make it a great choice for a beverage or snack, especially for picky eaters. Don't be fooled by the sugars on the label - these are natural, not added, and the benefits of milk far outweigh the grams of sugar. Also, there are NEVER hormones added to milk. If you are worried about bovine hormones, opt for organic. Choose reduced fat or skim milk for anyone over the age of 2. If digestive discomfort is an issue, try lactose free and A-2 milk (separately) before switching to a plant-based alternative.



GOAT'S MILK

Types: Full and reduced fat, raw and pasteurized

Why we like it: Goat's milk can be easier to digest than cow's milk for some due to the structure of its protein and fat molecules. It also has slightly more protein, fat and calories than cow's milk, and tolerable for **some** individuals with milk allergies (speak with your doctor before trying if you have a milk allergy). Goat's milk contains good-for-you nutrients like calcium, magnesium, potassium, and vitamins A and C.

Possible down sides: Most pasteurized goat's milk found in grocery stores may have a taste that takes getting used to – it's a little "goaty." Goat's milk still contains lactose, so is not suitable for those who are lactose intolerant. It is not as rich in B vitamins as cow's milk, and full fat goat's milk will contribute saturated fat and extra calories to your diet.

The bottom line: There's a reason goat's milk is the most widely consumed milk in the world – it's a great source of calcium, protein and carbohydrates. Goat's milk makes a good alternative for those who may be allergic to cow's milk or have trouble digesting it. Opt for pasteurized milk if you have a weakened immune system, and if not, try a local goat's milk from a farmer's market for some milk variety.



PLANT-BASED MILK

ALMOND MILK

Main Types: Sweetened, Unsweetened, Vanilla, Chocolate

Why we like it: Almond milk is fortified with calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin E which are important for bone and overall health. This plant-based alternative is free of saturated fat and cholesterol, and its mild, sweet taste is appealing to most. It works well as a substitute in most recipes.

Possible down sides: Almond milk is mostly water (it contains only about 2% almonds!) with added thickening agents, stabilizers, sweeteners, and vitamins and minerals. Some brands use carrageen as a stabilizer which is a potentially inflammatory ingredient that's safety is questionable. Moreover, natural occurring micronutrients (over fortified) are preferred by the body. Most importantly, almond milk is **not** a good source of protein with only about 2 grams (compared to 8 grams in cow's milk) per serving.

The bottom line: Almond milk is by far the most popular plant-based milk taking over 60% of the market share. Its lack of protein makes it less than ideal, but if looking for a low-calorie liquid to add to a high protein shake or cereal, choose an unsweetened variety with a short ingredient list.



OAT MILK

Types: Sweetened, unsweetened, barista blend, extra creamy

Why we like it: Oat milk has a creamier texture than most plant-based alternatives making it a fan-favorite for coffee drinks such as lattes and cappuccinos. Most are fortified with calcium, vitamin D, and B vitamins and are suitable for those with allergies to milk, soy and nuts – it's also lactose free.

Possible down sides: Many oat milk varieties have added sugar and oils such as sunflower or palm oil and are often higher in calories than cow, soy, or almond milk. It's low in protein – an average about 2g per serving which is less than ideal. The claim of added fiber in oat milk typically only applies when making it yourself from whole oats, and those suffering from gluten sensitivity or a wheat allergy should avoid (unless certified gluten-free) as most oats are cross-contaminated with wheat during processing.

The bottom line: Oat milk in our eyes is a great "sometimes milk" for specialty coffee beverages or smoothies requiring a little creaminess or foam. Due to its higher calories, added sugar, and low protein content, it doesn't top our list of plant-based milks.



SOY MILK

Types: Sweetened, unsweetened, vanilla, chocolate

Why we like it: Soy milk is lactose, gluten, and nut free making it a great choice for those with allergies. It is also a complete plant-protein which has close to the same amount of protein as cow's milk. It contains calcium, vitamin D, and is low in saturated fat.

Possible down sides: Some say the taste of soy milk is not as enjoyable as other plant-based milks as it can have a slightly chalky taste when unsweetened. Flavored and sweetened varieties can have added sugar and calories. While the protein aligns with cow's milk, it is not as slowly digested, making it less satiating. Although nutrient rich, many worry about the GMO status of most soy, so choose a brand made from non-GMO soy beans to alleviate this controversy.

The bottom line: The protein status of this plant-based choice gives soy milk some major points. Choose an unsweetened variety with a short ingredient list that is non-GMO when possible.



COCONUT MILK

Types: Canned, carton, sweetened, unsweetened, lite

Why we like it: Traditional, canned coconut milk is a delicious, rich ingredient used in cultural cuisine. Its high fat content can make it quite filling, and it naturally contains electrolytes potassium, magnesium and phosphorous. Canned coconut milk also contains fiber (5 grams) and a moderate amount of protein (5 grams) per cup.

Possible down sides: Canned coconut milk is a very high calorie food (about 550 calories per cup!) with over 90% of its calories coming from fat – specifically saturated fat (don't be fooled by marketing campaigns - saturated fat is saturated fat!). Carton coconut milk is far from the canned variety. It is mostly water with additives such as sugar, oils, salt, vitamins and minerals. Unsweetened coconut milk in the carton is only about 40 calories per cup but has 0g of protein and 4g of fat – a less than ideal combo. Although safe for many, coconut is recognized as a tree nut and may not be suitable for those with nut allergies.

The bottom line: Choose traditional canned coconut for authentic recipes or decadent desserts that are eaten in moderation. You can opt for lite coconut milk if you're looking for the same creamy flavor but fewer calories. Skip the carton variety and choose an alternative plant-based milk for larger servings in cereals, smoothies, or coffee drinks.



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