



Milk Minus the Moo

Evaluating Alternatives to Dairy

by Judith Fertig

When dietary concerns, food sensitivities or curiosity prompt us to try alternative milks, it helps to know the basic facts about the leading types, to choose the best ones for us.

Almond Milk

Pro: Almond milk is low in fat and can be easily made at home, so ingredients are known. One cup of homemade almond milk has about 40 calories, one gram of protein, 6 percent of the daily value (DV) for calcium, three grams of fat and eight grams of carbohydrates. As for store-bought options, one cup of Silk Organic Almond Original contains 60 calories, with one gram of protein, 10 percent DV for calcium, two-and-a-half grams of fat and eight grams of carbohydrates.

Con: Almond milk is neither high in protein nor calcium; it's not as nutritionally packed as other alternatives. Some might not care for the faint nutty flavor.

Coconut Milk

Pro: Dr. Josh Axe, a functional medicine physician who owns the popular natural health website, *DrAxe.com*, and the Exodus Health Center, near Nashville, Tennessee, points out, "High in medium-chain triglycerides, coconut milk is a very filling, fat-burning food." One cup of homemade coconut milk has about 450 calories, six grams of protein and 64 grams of fat, plus trace minerals such as manganese, phosphorus, magnesium, iron and copper. Canned coconut milk is similar: one cup of Native Forest Unsweetened Coconut Milk Classic contains 420 calories, three grams of protein and 45 grams of fat, plus trace minerals such as manganese, phosphorus, magnesium, iron and copper in each cup.

Con: High in fat and calories, coconut milk may not be the best choice for drinking every day, but is delicious in Asian-style soups and curries.

Hemp Milk

Pro: Hemp milk, made from hulled hemp seeds, contains 10 essential amino acids, including key fats. "Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are vital for healthy functioning of the brain," says Axe. Hemp milk works well for people with tree nut allergies.

One cup of Pacific Hemp Original has 140 calories, three grams of protein, 50 percent DV for calcium, five grams of fat and 20 grams of carbohydrates. Living Harvest Tempt Hemp Milk has 80 calories per cup, two grams of protein, 30 percent DV for calcium, eight grams of fat and one gram of carbohydrates.

Con: Grassy-tasting hemp milk tends to separate in hot coffee.

Rice Milk

Pro: High in vitamins and calcium when fortified, rice milk made from brown rice is also high in vitamins. According to Ted Kallmyer, author of

Flexible Dieting, in Bend, Oregon, rice milk is the least likely alternative milk to trigger an allergy.

One cup of Pacific Rice Milk has 130 calories, one gram of protein, 30 percent DV for calcium, two grams of fat and 37 grams of carbohydrates. One cup of Rice Dream Organic Rice Drink has 120 calories, one gram of protein, 30 percent DV for calcium, 2.5 grams of fat and 23 grams of carbohydrates.

Con: Low in fat and protein, it's also relatively high in carbohydrates. It has a less creamy texture than hemp, coconut or soy milks.

Soy Milk

Pro: Soy milk provides more protein than other alternative milks. Look for a calcium-fortified, organic brand that doesn't contain the thickening agent carrageenan, suggests Dr. Andrew Weil, founding director of the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, in Tucson.

Different brands have different nutritional components. For example, one cup of Organic Valley Soy Original has 100 calories per cup, with seven grams of protein, 30 percent DV for calcium, three grams of fat and 11 grams of carbohydrates. One cup of Organic EdenSoy Extra Original Soymilk contains 130 calories, with 11 grams of protein, 20 percent DV for calcium, four grams of fat and 13 grams of carbohydrates.

Con: Some people might not like the thick texture and soy aftertaste. Dr. Frank Lipman, founder and director of Eleven Eleven Wellness Center, in New York City, says that limiting soy is a good idea due to soy's prevalent pesticide saturation and its researched links to thyroid, endocrine system and sex hormone dysfunction (Tinyurl.com/SoyDarksideStudies). If soy is eaten, "Choose certified organic, soy products—preferably fermented versions like miso, natto and tempeh—with the Non-GMO Project seal; and do so sparingly, no more than twice a week," advises Lipman.

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DIY MILKS

With fresh ingredients, a high-speed blender and a reusable nut milk bag or strainer, we can make our own alternative milk in minutes at home.

Almond Milk

Yields: About 4 cups

- 1 cup raw, unsalted organic whole almonds
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 4 cups pure filtered water
- Sea salt, stevia, agave nectar, honey, a date, vanilla bean or lemon juice

Soak the almonds in salted water for at least 12 hours before blending.

Using a high-powered blender, start blending on low and increase to high to reach a smooth milk consistency. Strain through a nut milk bag to remove any almond skin or pieces. (OPTIONAL: Add a preferred flavoring.) Pour into a container and store covered in the refrigerator for up to three days.



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Coconut Milk

Yields: About 3 cups

- 2 cups hot water
- 1 cup fresh organic, unsweetened, shredded coconut

Place hot water and then shredded coconut in a high-speed blender, starting on low speed and increasing to high for a total of three minutes. Strain the coconut milk through a nut milk bag into a container. Store covered in the refrigerator for up to three days.



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