

DAIRY ADDICT

Your Guide to Delicious Substitutes & Breaking the Dairy Addiction



Dairy's a funny thing. Even though much of the US population is at least somewhat lactose intolerant, you still find it everywhere. Once you decide to avoid dairy, you begin to realize just how common it is. You notice every shred on pasta and salads, and you find yourself wondering why inconsiderate restaurants are so quick to just toss a slice of cheese on sandwiches without even asking. You notice that ranch-flavored tortilla chips include powdered milk, as do many store-bought donuts. If you're a vegetarian, it gets even tougher – since dairy avoidance as a vegetarian means you're almost a full-fledged vegan (not that there's anything wrong with that – but it can be challenging).

To show you just HOW hard it can be to avoid dairy, consider all the foods you'll have to skip:

- M&M's
- Reese's Peanut Butter Cups (in fact, nearly all milk chocolate is off-limits, save for a few rare vegan options)
- Standard ice cream and gelato
- Fettucini alfredo
- Clam chowder
- Cool Ranch Doritos
- Nearly all ranch seasoning packets
- Sour cream

- Cheese
- Milk
- Yogurt
- Many prescription medications (check the ingredients for lactose, or check with your pharmacist)
- Most processed grain products like waffle or pancake mixes
- Many brands of hot dogs and bacon contain lactose
- Instant hot chocolate
- Instant mashed potatoes (and most homemade mashed potatoes)
- Instant coffee
- Many canned soups, even those you wouldn't necessarily expect
- Creamy liquors like Bailey's
- Many brands of margarine (check the label)
- Nearly all boxed cereals
- Prepared breadcrumbs
- Many deli meats use lactose, casein, or caseinates
- Many store-bought granola mixes
- Most protein bars
- Many vegetarian meat products contain casein or whey protein isolates

If you're trying to get dairy out of your diet, be sure to check labels for both the obvious and less obvious sources of dairy or lactose. Items like whey, casein, curds, milk by-products, milk solids or dry milk powder may be listed in place of more familiar terms, so be sure to look out for them.

Depending on your reasons for avoiding dairy and your personal sensitivity, you may not have to be as careful as some, but it's good to at least be aware of where you're getting dairy. Some people can tolerate a small amount of dairy in baked goods, but they experience breathing trouble with pizza or cheesy pasta. Some hyperactive children may experience more symptoms with even trace amounts of dairy. Similarly, some vegans try not to stress about the occasionally accidental ingestion of a small amount of dairy (like in a medication), but they want to get it right on the big things. The goal here is to help you learn to be as strict as you personally need to be – and to learn some alternatives to satisfy your dairy cravings.

Dairy-free Products

On the bright side, there are quite a few surprising dairy-free products you don't have to buy in health food specialty stores. If you're steering clear of dairy, consider some of the common dairy-free food items below. Bear in mind that many are snack or convenience foods, and none will take the place of a nutritious, home-cooked meal. Sometimes, though, it can help to know where to turn for the occasional store-bought indulgence.

- Oreos – both standard and double-stuff versions are dairy free
- Larabar fruit and nut bars (most, if not all, are both gluten-free and dairy-free)
- Many common non-chocolate candies – Smarties, Airheads, Brach's cinnamon hard candies, root beer barrels, and orange slices, Charms lollipops, Cracker Jacks, Fruit by the Foot, and Nabisco Iced Oatmeal or Nutter Butter cookies
- Barbecue and Original Fritos
- Manischewitz Whole Wheat Matzo, Unsalted Matzo, and Savory Garlic Matzo
- Most Nature Valley granola bars
- Cinnamon Life cereal
- Most Quaker Oatmeal flavors
- Thomas New York Style Bagels in blueberry, cinnamon swirl, everything, and plain
- Weight Watchers Fork Split English Muffins
- General Mills Italian Style Vegetables
- Kashi Black Bean Mango frozen dinners
- Kashi Ranchero Beans frozen dinners
- Pillsbury Cherry or Apple Frozen Turnovers
- SuperPretzel Frozen Soft Pretzels

Please bear in mind that any of these items could be changed without notice, so it's important to check the labels before you buy, especially if you're extremely sensitive to dairy. For more "accidentally vegan" items, check out [PETA's extensive list here](#).

Even if you're not a vegetarian, you'll find vegan websites and Facebook groups to be very helpful as you figure out new ways to eat without dairy. Because vegans strive to avoid all animal products, 100% of their recipes are dairy-free. This also comes with the added benefit that most vegan recipes utilize a lot of fresh, whole foods like fruits, vegetables, and grains. Nearly everyone would benefit from eating more vegetables, so don't be afraid to try out some new recipes and ingredients. You might be pleasantly surprised.

We can also thank Judaism for the Pareve/Parve certification, which is a great help to anyone looking to avoid dairy. Anything with this designation is certified as dairy-free. It's frequently designated by a circled letter U on the label, but it's also very common to see it fully spelled out.

Dairy Substitutes

Merely avoiding dairy isn't always enough, though. For those of us who have grown to know and love the creamy, satisfying taste of dairy-enhanced foods, dairy substitutes will play an important role in making the change. Luckily, there are good replacements for most of the dairy items you might be missing.

Milk

Milk is perhaps the easiest dairy item to replace, as there are numerous milk alternatives on the market. When it comes to drinking milk or putting in coffee or cereal, you may need to try a few different alternatives before you find one that tastes just right to you. For baking, the best milk substitute will depend on what you're trying to achieve. We've included a short guide below to help you get started with non-dairy milk products.

Soy Milk

Soy milk is by far the most common, widely available milk substitute. It's been around for a long time now, and it's relatively easy to find in even the smallest rural locations. Popular brands include Eden Soy, West Soy, Silk, Soy Dream, 365 (Whole Foods brand), Trader Joe's Soy Milk, Zen Soy, Greenway, Pacific Natural Foods, and Earth Balance. Each brand has a slightly different taste and texture, so don't write off the entire category just because you don't like one or two. Some are very sweet, some are not. Some are thicker and creamier, while others are quite thin. You'll also find that some brands have added flavoring like chocolate or vanilla.

Soy milk is also one of the most popular milk substitutes for baking purposes, both because it has a realistic, dairy-like texture and because it curdles well with apple cider vinegar (which is great for adding complexity to the flavor and texture of your baked goods).

Almond Milk

Almond milk is another common milk substitute, and it's made by soaking almonds in water overnight, then draining, blending, and straining until you end up with something that's roughly the consistency of dairy milk. It's relatively easy to make on your own (which allows you to determine the thickness), but you can also buy almond milk produced by companies like Blue Diamond, Silk, 365, So Delicious, Califia Farms, and Pacific Organic. As with soy milk, you'll find

varieties that are both sweetened and unsweetened, along with a variety of flavored options. One of the added benefits of almond milk is that it contains significant amounts of the minerals found in almonds – manganese, magnesium, selenium, and Vitamin E (along with fiber and healthy fats).

Almond milk is typically not as creamy as soy milk, and it doesn't curdle as well with apple cider vinegar. For this reason, it's not as commonly used in baking as soy milk, but it certainly CAN be used. When it comes to vegan baking, experimentation is the name of the game. It's a relatively unexplored area of the food world (compared to dairy baking), so you may find it difficult to adjust at first.

Rice Milk

If your dairy milk preferences have always run towards the non-fat, watery varieties, rice milk may be a good substitute for you. Rice milk tends to be very thin and much clearer than other non-dairy milks, and you can find it in sweetened and unsweetened varieties, along with chocolate and vanilla flavors. It tends to be higher in carbs than real milk, and most commercial brands add vitamins and minerals for extra nutritional benefit. Protein content is relatively low. Rice Dream, Pacific Natural Foods, and 365 (Whole Foods brand) all produce rice milk.

For baking, rice milk is a weak dairy substitute. The texture is very different from dairy milk, so it requires adjustments to the other ingredients to compensate – and it has little to no ability to curdle with apple cider vinegar.

Hemp Milk

Hemp isn't just for hippies anymore! Hemp milk is moderately creamy, and many say it's quite similar to dairy milk. Some feel it has a slight bitter aftertaste when mixed into tea or coffee, but that's rarely reported when it's consumed alone. Hemp milk is commercially available from Pacific Natural Foods and Living Harvest, though it can be harder to find as many different varieties as you'd find with soy milk.

In terms of baking, hemp milk is another good choice. It has a reasonable level of natural creaminess, and it curdles slightly with apple cider vinegar. Some report that it adds a slightly "malty" flavor to foods.

Coconut Milk

Coconut milk can be a little confusing, because there are two distinctly different types sold in the US. The first, often canned, is a thicker variant that's often used in Asian cooking. A thinner,

more watery version is sold as a milk replacement, and that's what you would typically use in baking (unless the recipe specifically calls for canned coconut milk). Coconut milk is sold by So Delicious, Native Forest, Silk, Trader Joe's, and 365. Coconut milk can be a significant source of saturated fats, though, so moderation should be exercised with its consumption.

As far as baking is concerned, coconut milk is not generally as good as soy or hemp milk. It's less creamy, and it doesn't curdle well at all.

Making Your Own

Although pre-packaged non-dairy milk occasionally has additives you may not like, the nice thing about it is that if you like, you can make any of them on your own. A simple Google search will bring up instructions for any of them. If you decide to pursue this option, you'll find a nut milk bag and a Vitamix blender very useful.

Dairy-Free Thin Mint Cookies Recipe

1/2 cup brown rice flour
1/2 cup white or whole wheat flour
1/2 cup cocoa powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/3 cup coconut oil
1/4 cup applesauce
1/3 cup almond milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
1 cup vegan dark chocolate chips
(optional) Shredded unsweetened coconut and/or crushed candy canes for a garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F
2. Combine dry ingredients (flours, cocoa powder, salt, and baking soda) in a large mixing bowl and mix.
3. In a medium bowl, melt the wet ingredients (almond milk, coconut oil, applesauce, vanilla, and peppermint extract) and whisk until well blended.
2. Fold together the wet and dry ingredients. When the ingredients are mixed, knead the dough until you have a ball.

3. Roll the dough to 1/4" thickness on a well-floured surface.
4. Use a round cookie cutter to cut out 1.5-2" diameter circles.
5. Bake on parchment paper for 12-16 minutes.
6. While cookies are cooling, prepare the chocolate coating by melting the dark chocolate chips in the microwave (or with a double boiler) and adding a few drops of peppermint oil.
7. Brush the tops of the cookies with the melted chocolate, or dunk each cookie in for a more thorough coating. Top with your garnish(es) as desired.
8. Allow cookies to cool in the fridge or freezer before eating.

Butter

Butter is a relatively easy item to replace, though neither butter nor its substitutes should be eaten in large quantities due to their high fat and calories. Many common margarines are butter-free, but you should always check to be sure. Some are, and some are not. You'll also find that some are healthier than others, in terms of their ingredients. Earth Balance makes a variety of relatively healthy dairy-free butter options, both sticks and spreads.

Coconut oil is another excellent butter replacement, though you'll need to experiment a bit to find the flavor you like best. Some have a very distinct coconut flavor, while others aren't noticeable at all once combined with other ingredients.

Vegetable shortening is also a common butter substitute in many baked goods. Look for one with as few trans fats as possible (partially hydrogenated oils). If a shortening contains palm oil, you may also wish to ensure that the company is orangutan-friendly, though this isn't a concern for everyone. Spectrum Organic makes one particularly high-quality shortening, but it's not the only one on the market.

Cheese

Cheese is probably the hardest dairy product to replace with a non-dairy alternative. Great strides are being made in the world of fake cheese, but nearly everyone who has eaten real cheese recently will notice a significant difference in taste and texture. If going dairy-free is a priority for you, you'll have to find a way to wean yourself from the cheese dependence – but I won't lie and say it's easy.

If you visit any Whole Foods or local health store, you'll find a number of fake cheese products. Daiya is probably the most popular and highly-reviewed, and you can even find Daiya-brand frozen pizzas in many places. It's one of the few commercially available vegan cheeses that melts and stretches a little, almost like real cheese. Sheese is another, but it can be hard to find in the United States since it comes from a Scottish company. Kite Hill makes high-end nut-based soft cheeses, but they can be a bit pricy for some, at roughly \$15 per small wheel of cheese.

You'll also find a number of nacho cheese and macaroni and cheese products, as both can be difficult for a newly dairy-free person to live without. If you have a sensitive palate, you'll find that while cheese substitutes are getting better, none of them truly live up to their dairy-based counterparts. However, you may acquire a taste for them over time. The other alternative is to learn to rely less on cheese, and it's something worth considering if you can't afford to spend a small fortune on fake cheese products.

More Dairy-Free Recipes

Green Bean Casserole

1/4 cup non-dairy margarine
1/4 cup flour
1 1/2 cups vegetable broth
2 tsp soy sauce
3/4 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp onion powder
2 tbsp vegetable oil
3 tbsp nutritional yeast
2 14 oz. cans green beans, drained
1 3 or 4 oz. can of French-fried onions

1. Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.

2. In a small saucepan, melt the margarine and mix in flour.
3. Add in vegetable broth, soy sauce, garlic powder and onion powder, stirring constantly until the sauce thickens.
4. Whisk in the vegetable oil and nutritional yeast.
5. Mix the sauce and green beans in a casserole dish, then add a portion of the french-fried onions (to your preference).
6. Bake for 15 minutes.
7. Sprinkle the remaining French fried onions on top of the casserole.
8. Bake for 10 more minutes until thoroughly heated. Enjoy!

Cheese-less Mac & Cheese

1/2 cup dairy-free cheddar substitute
1/2 cup dairy-free mozzarella substitute (1/2 cup additional cheddar substitute can also be used in place of mozzarella)
16 oz. elbow macaroni
1/2 cup dairy-free milk
2 tbsp dairy-free butter

1. Cook the macaroni in lightly salted water.
2. Drain pasta.
3. Add in all remaining ingredients and stir until melted. For extra flavor, add in a pinch of garlic powder or a dash of Italian seasoning.

A Final Word

When you first give up dairy, the idea of living without it can seem almost impossible. If possible, it may be easier to give it up slowly over a period of time – though that's not always an option when it comes to allergies.

With some time and effort, you'll find yourself thinking less and less about dairy products. You'll find alternatives that work for you, and you'll learn new recipes to replace the ones you no longer use. Though it may be more difficult, you'll also find new dairy-free dishes at local restaurants. I can assure you, it does get easier. Best of luck!