

Fenceline

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June is Dairy Month!

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Finding sound nutrition advice can be difficult in an era of food fads, mixed messages and passionate “experts” who share their opinions. Many people may choose foods for their families based on the way a product is marketed or something they read online along with numerous other reasons. Much of this confusion has made its way to the milk aisle. Milk alternatives like almond, soy, coconut and rice milk continue to share shelf space with real cow’s milk. People are placing them in their carts, believing that they are equal to real cow’s milk. Typically, milk alternatives are more expensive, have more added ingredients and are not standardized in a way that ensures you are always getting the same product. Every time you buy cow’s milk you are getting the same 9 essential nutrients regardless of the fat content. So if you choose 2 percent milk or fat-free milk, the same nutrients are there...all for about a quarter per 8-ounce serving.

Decades of science support dairy foods’ nutrition and health benefits. Dairy is also an essential piece in the 2015-20 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and a key player on My Plate and its Spanish equivalent, Mi Plato. These guidelines recommend three servings of dairy each day to help address the nutrient shortfall many Americans have including three of the four nutrients of concern: calcium, vitamin D and potassium. Yet Americans currently only consume about two servings of dairy each day.

There are some food pairings that go together perfectly like milk and cereal, warm cookies and milk, the list goes on. People can enjoy the flavor of real cow’s milk and know the same great economical nutrition is delivered very time. Here are a few facts worth noting:

Not all “milks” are created equal. Milk alternatives, some of them fortified and engineered to mimic the nutrient profile of real cow’s milk, are in fact not nutritionally equivalent to real cow’s milk. Many of these alternatives include 10 or more added ingredients, including added sugar and salt.

Substituting another beverage for milk can lead to gaps in calcium and other key nutrients like high-quality protein, phosphorus and B vitamins – nutrients you need to stay healthy; nutrients your children need to grow. Dairy foods are associated with many health benefits, such as better bone health, especially in children and adolescents; reduced risk for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes; and lower blood pressure in adults.

Almond milk is highly processed. It’s designed to mimic cow’s milk nutrition and taste through a combination of 10 or more ingredients, including added sugar and salt. Cow’s milk contains three simple ingredients: Milk, vitamin A and vitamin D.

Real cow’s milk and soy milk are both good sources of a complete protein. Real cow’s milk provides 8 grams of high-quality protein; soy milk provides between 6 to 8 grams. This complete protein offers the body all nine essential amino acids that the body can’t make on its own. Calcium-fortified soy beverage (it’s technically not milk) is the only milk alternative listed in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the foundation for eating recommendations by the U.S. government. But remember, you’re getting very different nutrition when you select soy milk.

Rice milk is mostly carbohydrates, sweetened or unsweetened. One cup of original rice milk, with added sugars for palatability, contains 23 grams of carbohydrates, almost twice as much sugar as a glass of milk. The flavored varieties contain as much as 34 grams of sugar. Rice milk is also high-glycemic, which means it digests quickly and may cause fluctuations in your blood sugar. For people with diabetes or anyone watching their sugar intake, real cow’s milk is the better choice

Mark your calendar! Dairy Talks June 28th, a morning session on Basic Milking for Spanish speaking employees, lunch with Dairy Managers and a repeat Basic Milking school in English. Please RSVP, there is no charge for this program. Call 785-336-2184 to attend!