

HAZELNUT MILK: Mixed with a bit of cacao powder and natural sweetener, this tastes just like liquid Nutella.

Most of these alternatives are simply nuts, seeds, coconut or grain and beans blended with water, natural extracts and sweeteners. They often contain a stabiliser or thickener to avoid separation in the carton and it's important to look at the ingredients when shopping. Most companies are really good at not using too many additives but it's still easy to find products with artificial sweeteners, flavourings and preservatives so keep your eyes peeled.

For those of you who love cooking, it's simple to make your own dairy-free milk. Just blend one part nuts, seed or coconut with three parts water, strain to get rid of the pulp and then flavour with some vanilla extract, a pinch of salt and a few dates or a tablespoon of your choice of natural sweetener. Or, if you're in a rush, blend two cups of water with a couple of tablespoons of nut/seed or coconut butter and you'll have the creamiest and smoothest milk you've ever tasted.

CHEESE, YOGHURTS AND ICE-CREAM

It's not only milk alternatives that are on the market. Soya and nut-based cheese can be found in health foods shops nationwide and are slowly spreading into the supermarkets and the same is true for oat, rice or coconut-based cream. They work as well as their dairy counterparts but are much lighter on the digestion due to being made of only a grain or nut with added thickener.

A range of dairy-free yoghurts can also be bought. Soya yoghurts are delicious with granola and come in a selection of flavours to please every palate, and coconut-based yogurts are available too. With their thicker texture they work well with fresh fruit, as pancake toppings or as a base for frozen desserts.

As the free-from offerings expand, you can find treats to satisfy even the sweetest of the sweet tooth. Coconut and cashew-based ice creams can rival the creaminess and smoothness of the best Italian gelato and almond and rice-based ones are being produced too. Again, when buying all these substitutes, it's best to avoid products that contain additives, artificial colours and flavours and refined sweeteners.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER ANIMAL MILKS?

Unfortunately, people who are suffering from either a temporary or permanent lactase deficiency may also have a problem with goat, sheep and buffalo milk as lactose is present in all animal milks. However, if the cause of lactose intolerance is a digestive issue in which it is specifically cows' milk proteins which irritate or damage the gut, the slightly different protein and nutrient composition of goat, sheep and buffalo milk may be tolerated making them great substitutes. It's a good idea to consult a doctor about your condition to determine whether you could incorporate other animal milks into your diet.

Some of
the best
alternatives to
cows' milk



ALPRO SOYA MILK,
1L, £1.40,
TESCO.COM



COYO COCONUT MILK YOGHURT,
250G, £3.50,
TESCO.COM



OATLY HEALTHY ORGANIC OAT CREAM, 250ML, 60P,
OCADO.COM



ST HELEN'S FARM ICECREAM, 500ML,
£3.99, OCADO.COM



WOODLANDS ORGANIC SHEEPS' MILK YOGHURT,
450G, £2.30,
OCADO.COM

of the most well-known milk alternatives on the market and is available in supermarkets, cafes and restaurants.

ALMOND MILK: Like soya milk, almond milk is ideal for use in teas, coffees and with cereals. It's also delicious sipped on its own.

RICE MILK: Slight thinner in texture and sweeter, this is useful for smoothies and desserts.

COCONUT MILK: The thick and creamy texture of coconut milk makes it brilliant for use in cakes and when making ice cream.

OAT MILK: Use this on porridge and in your baking.

HEMP MILK: High in omegas 3 and protein, hemp milk is a good addition to a post-workout smoothie.