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around the world enjoy a variety of dairy products and foods for delicious, nutrition taste to balance their diets. Whether you rely on milk or yogurt for your overnight oats or cheese for your taco, there are countless ways to benefit from dairy in everyday life. What Are Dairy Products? Dairy products are derived from milk, which has been an important source of nutrition for people for thousands of years. These products include cheese, butter and yogurt. Milk consists of water, carbohydrate (in the form of lactose, a type of natural sugar), fat (unless non-fat), vitamins, minerals and protein. Nutritional Benefits of Dairy Products These foods contain nutrients your body needs. For example, milk, cheese and yogurt contain protein, calcium and vitamin B12, which help rebuild and repair muscle tissue, build and maintain strong bones and teeth, and keep your nervous system healthy, respectively. In addition, the protein, zinc, selenium and vitamins A and D found in every cup of milk help support a healthy immune system. Dairy products are rich in essential nutrients that support overall health and well-being. Here are some of the key benefits: Protein: Supports muscle growth and repair. Calcium: Essential for strong bones and teeth. Vitamin B12: Important for nerve function and red blood cell production. Vitamin D: Helps the body absorb calcium and supports bone health. Vitamin A: Supports vision, immune function, and skin health. Zinc: Important for immune function and healing wounds. Selenium: Acts as an antioxidant to protect cells from damage. A variety of dairy products in your diet can help ensure you meet your nutritional needs. Dairy Recommended Daily Intake The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, or DGA, recommend consuming 3 cups of dairy products per day. This includes milk, yogurt, cheese, and ice cream. For example, a 1-cup serving of milk is 8 ounces, a 1-cup serving of yogurt is 6 ounces, and a 1-cup serving of cheese is 1.5 ounces. For adults, this translates to about 2½ to 3 cups of dairy products per day. For children, the recommendation is 2 to 3 cups per day. Types of Dairy Products There are a wide range of dairy products, including numerous types of cheese, yogurt, milk and milk products. Check the list of dairy products below and read more about what all your favorite dairy products offer. Examples of Dairy Foods: Milk: Available in various forms such as whole, skim, and flavored. Cheese: Includes varieties like cheddar, mozzarella, Brie, Gouda, and more. Yogurt: Available in plain, Greek, flavored, and drinkable forms. Cream: Includes heavy cream, light cream, and sour cream. Butter: Available as salted, unsalted, and spreadable. Cream: Comes in various flavors and is a creamy, frozen treat. Kefir: A fermented milk drink that can contain live and active cultures. Whey: A byproduct of cheese-making that is also used in protein supplements. Eggs: A Dairy Product? No, eggs are not a dairy product. Dairy products are foods or beverages made from the milk of mammals such as cows. Eggs, on the other hand, come from birds like chickens, ducks, and quails. Desserts: Added being commonly found in the dairy aisle of grocery stores, eggs do not fall under the dairy category. How to Incorporate Dairy into Your Diet Here are tips for including dairy products in your daily meals: Breakfast: Add yogurt or kefir to your smoothies, or enjoy a bowl of cereal with milk. Lunch: Include cheese in your sandwiches or salads for added flavor and nutrition. Dinner: Use cream or butter to enhance the taste of your soups and sauces. Snacks: Enjoy a piece of cheese or a cup of yogurt. Desserts: Treat yourself to a scoop of ice cream or a serving of pudding. Incorporating dairy into your diet can be both delicious and nutritious. Dairy is a non-profit food and farm families of the Southeast. We work directly with dairy producers, scholars, scientists, and professionals to promote dairy products, research, and the people who produce dairy products. Knowledge about the dairy industry and the efforts that dairy producers make to provide a safe, secure, and abundant supply of dairy products is essential for making informed choices. Making informed choices about dairy products can help you make the best choices for your health and the environment. Alliances mission is to provide accurate information about dairy products. We provide nutritional information about dairy so the public is aware of its numerous health benefits, as well as information about managing lactose intolerance. Great things are happening with dairy products and there are always here to help. Look to The Dairy Alliance for support, training, new ideas, and valuable resources. We partner with schools to expand opportunities for students to make healthy food choices. From creamy classics to innovative delights, we've curated a selection of culinary creations that make the most of dairy's deliciousness. Whether you're a cheese connoisseur or a milkshake lover, we've got a range of recipe ideas for you to experiment with and enjoy. Press Release: Dunk into better performance this season with Milk's Got Game! The Dairy Alliance, a nonprofit funded by dairy farm families in the Southeast, is taking to the courts with collegiate basketball superstars to show how dairy milk is the ultimate MVP for your everyday routine. The Spring Hand-Off of Milk's Got Game features basketball players Zamareya "Zam" Jones of North Carolina State, Jaxson Robinson of the University of Kentucky, and Zakai Zeigler of the University of Tennessee. 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Willett W, Rockström J, Loken B, Springmann M, Lang T, Vermeulen S, Garnett T, Tilman D, DeClerck F, Wood A, Jonell M. Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems. The Lancet. 2019 Feb 2;393(10170):447-92. Last reviewed October 2020 More14-Jul-2025ByTeodora Lyubomirova11-Jul-2025ByTeodora Lyubomirova09-Jul-2025ByTeodora LyubomirovaMore21-Jul-2025ByOliver Morrison18-Jul-2025ByAugustus Bambridge-Sutton14-Jul-2025ByBethan GryllsMore17-Jul-2025ByTeodora Lyubomirova22-May-2025ByTeodora Lyubomirova20-May-2025ByTeodora Lyubomirova20-May-2025ByElizabeth Crawford Dairy products are beloved staples around the world, but what exactly defines them? From creamy cheeses to refreshing yogurts, dairy products are made from the milk of mammals like cows, goats and sheep. They offer unmatched versatility and nutritional value, serving as essential ingredients in countless dishes. But as we enjoy these products, its also worth exploring their production, uses, nutritional profiles and the ethics of their creation. Lets dive in. The world of dairy products is incredibly diverse, encompassing everything from fresh milk to aged cheeses and cultured creations like yogurt and kefir. Each type of dairy product serves unique culinary purposes and offers distinct nutritional benefits. Understanding these differences helps us appreciate their roles in our diets and the effort that goes into their production. Lets take a close look at some of the most popular types of dairy foods. Of course, milk is the foundational dairy product, often pasteurised to eliminate harmful bacteria. It can also undergo homogenisation to prevent cream from separating. Variants include raw, whole, skimmed, semi-skimmed and lactose-free options. Milk is versatile, used in beverages, cereals, cooking, baking and making other dairy products. It forms the base for sauces like béchamel and is essential for desserts such as custards and ice creams. Milk is also a key ingredient in various beverages, from coffee to milkshakes. Milk provides essential nutrients like calcium, protein, vitamins B2 and B12 and phosphorus. Whole milk contains more fat than skimmed or semi-skimmed versions but also offers fat-soluble vitamins such as A and D. Lactose-free milk offers the same nutritional benefits but is suitable for those with lactose intolerance. Cheese is made by curdling milk using rennet or acid. The curds are then processed, aged or moulded into various textures and flavours. Cheddar, Brie, Feta, Gouda and Havarti are just a few examples of the vast cheese family. Cheese is incredibly versatile. It enhances dishes with its melting properties, making it ideal for pizzas, pastas and grilled sandwiches. Hard cheeses like Parmesan are grated over pasta and salads, while soft cheeses like Brie and Camembert are enjoyed on crackers or bread. Cheese is also central to many traditional dishes, such as fondue and quesadillas, and serves as an excellent pairing for wines on cheese boards. Beyond savoury uses, cheeses like Ricotta and Mascarpone are pivotal in desserts like cheesecakes and tiramisu. Cheese can also be crumbled over soups, stuffed into meats or baked into pastries. Cheese is a dense source of protein, calcium and fat. The nutritional profile varies widelysoft cheeses like cream cheese have higher water content but lower protein, while aged varieties like Parmesan are nutrient-rich. Blue cheeses like Stilton and Gorgonzola provide unique probiotics alongside their robust flavours. High-fat cheeses are energy-dense, while lower-fat options like cottage cheese offer a lighter alternative. Yoghurt is made by fermenting milk with specific bacterial cultures. The fermentation thickens the milk and imparts a tangy flavour. Varieties include plain, flavoured, Greek, and plant-based yogurts. Yoghurt can be eaten as is, used in smoothies, salad dressings or marinades, and serves as a base for desserts like frozen yoghurt. Greek yoghurt works as a creamy substitute for sour cream in recipes, while plain yoghurt adds tang to curries and soups. Its also a key ingredient in Middle Eastern dishes like tzatziki and Indian raita. In baking, yoghurt tenderises cakes and muffins, while flavoured yoghurts are enjoyed as a standalone snack or breakfast option. It is also used as a healthier base for dips and as an accompaniment to spicy dishes. Frozen yoghurt offers a lighter dessert option, while yoghurt-based drinks like lassi are refreshing and nutritious. Rich in probiotics, yoghurt supports gut health. It also provides protein, calcium and vitamins B2 and B12. Greek yoghurt has a thicker texture and higher protein content compared to regular yoghurt. Low-fat varieties cater to those watching calorie intake while still offering probiotic benefits. On the other hand, full-fat yoghurts provide satiating fats and a creamier texture, while flavoured yoghurts can include added sugars that should be consumed in moderation. Butter is made by churning cream to separate fat from buttermilk. It can be salted or unsalted and may come in cultured or clarified forms (ghee). Butter is a staple in baking, cooking, and as a spread. It enhances flavour and texture in recipes, from flaky pie crusts to sautéed vegetables. Clarified butter, or ghee, is prized in Indian cuisine for its nutty flavour and high smoke point. Butter is essential for sauces like hollandaise and beurre blanc and adds richness when melted over steaks or popcorn. As a finishing touch, compound butters infused with herbs or spices elevate simple dishes. In baking, butter creates tender cakes, cookies and pastries, while in savoury dishes, it enriches mashed potatoes, risottos and pasta sauces. While margarine may look similar to butter, it will almost always fall short when it comes to flavour, texture and applications in cooking and baking. Butter is high in fat and provides fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. Its calorie-dense and best consumed in moderation. Ghee, in particular, retains vitamins and is lactose-free, making it suitable for those with specific dietary restrictions. Moreover, grass-fed butter contains higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids and CLA (conjugated linoleic acid), which have potential health benefits. Cream is the fatty portion of milk, skimmed off before homogenisation. It comes in different fat levels, such as single, double, and whipping cream. Cream adds richness to soups, sauces, desserts and beverages like coffee. Double cream is whipped for toppings, while single cream is stirred into soups for a silky texture. Its also used in decadent desserts like panna cotta and crème brûlée. In savoury dishes, it forms the base of Alfredo and carbonara sauces, while in beverages, it transforms coffee and hot chocolate into indulgent treats. Heavy cream is essential in frostings, ice cream bases and ganache, while sour cream adds tanginess to baked potatoes, dips and cakes. Cream is high in calories and fat but low in protein. Its a good source of vitamin A. Whipping cream contains slightly more protein than single cream, making it a versatile choice for both culinary and nutritional needs. Like butter, cream from grass-fed cows offers higher levels of beneficial fatty acids. Made from cream, sugar, and flavourings, ice cream is churned and frozen. Its a popular dessert but high in sugar and fat. Varieties include gelato and sorbet, offering diverse textures and flavours. A fermented milk drink rich in probiotics, kefir supports digestive health. Its tangier and thinner than yoghurt. It can be consumed plain, added to smoothies, or used as a base for salad dressings. Milk can be dehydrated into powder for long-term storage. It retains nutrients but lacks the freshness of liquid milk. Its often used in baking or as a backup for emergencies. A by-product of cheesemaking, whey is rich in protein and used in supplements, smoothies, and baked goods. It is also used in certain beverages and food products to enhance nutritional content. High-protein options: Cheese, Greek yoghurt and whey are excellent sources of protein, making them ideal for muscle repair and growth. Whey protein, in particular, is a staple for athletes due to its quick absorption. Low-fat options: Skimmed milk and low-fat yoghurt cater to those monitoring their calorie intake while retaining essential nutrients. Rich in probiotics: Yoghurt and kefir support gut health by maintaining a balanced microbiome. Probiotics also contribute to immunity and digestive efficiency. Energy-dense: Butter, cream and aged cheese provide concentrated energy, but their high-fat content makes them suitable for occasional indulgence rather than everyday consumption. Each product offers unique benefits. Choosing the right one depends on dietary goals, health conditions and culinary needs. Additionally, nutrient bioavailability varies among dairy products. For example, calcium in hard cheeses is often more concentrated than in milk, making them a good option for bone health. Conversely, lactose content is lower in aged cheeses and fermented products, making them more tolerable for those with lactose intolerance. Staples: Milk and cheese are indispensable in both sweet and savoury dishes. Milk forms the base for sauces like béchamel, while cheese elevates everything from casseroles to salads. Desserts: Ice cream, cream and yoghurt add richness and variety to sweet treats. Whipped cream complements pies, while yoghurt is the foundation of creamy parfaits. Health-focused: Kefir and yoghurt serve as nutritious snacks and can replace higher-calorie ingredients in recipes. Yoghurt can substitute sour cream and kefir can enhance smoothies with its tangy flavour. Gourmet touches: Specialty cheeses like Brie or Gouda bring depth to cheese boards and pasta dishes. Clarified butter (ghee) adds a nutty richness to sautéed vegetables. Creams luxurious texture enhances soups, while butter creates flaky pastry crusts. Modern dairy farming often involves intensive practices. Ethical concerns include animal confinement, milk production demands, and calf separation. Dairy farming contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, and land use. Methane from cattle and the carbon footprint of transporting dairy products are significant factors. Organic dairy: Focuses on animal welfare and reduced environmental impact. Plant-based alternatives: Almond, soy, and oat-based products mimic dairy with lower environmental costs. Precision fermentation: Emerging technology for producing dairy-like proteins without animals. Precision fermentation uses microorganisms to produce casein and whey proteins identical to those found in traditional dairy. These proteins can be used to create milk, cheese and yoghurt analogues, offering a promising alternative with a significantly lower environmental footprint. It eliminates the need for livestock, reducing methane emissions and resource use while enabling ethical production practices. Dairy products are defined as foods derived from the milk of mammals. Eggs, while animal-derived, come from birds and are not related to milk production. Additionally, plant-based products, such as almond milk or soy yoghurt, mimic the characteristics of dairy but are entirely plant-based and lack the animal origin that defines dairy. These distinctions are important for dietary choices, such as veganism, and for those managing allergies to animal milk proteins. Dairy products are diverse and indispensable in many cuisines. They offer a broad range of nutritional benefits, but their production comes with ethical and environmental challenges. Exploring sustainable and humane alternatives can help balance enjoyment and responsibility. Cheese lover. Scientist. Created a website and a Youtube channel about cheese science because he could not find answers to his questions online. When I was a growing teenager, I drank as much milk as possible (often straight from the carton while standing in front of the open fridge, much to my mother's chagrin). I'd seen the TV ads milk and other dairy foods were the express ticket to stronger bones and bigger muscles. But today dairy's nutritional reputation is as clear as, well, a glass of milk. Dairy is either good or bad for you depending on the latest diet trend or recent study. So what is the truth is dairy healthy, or a health risk? "Dairy isn't necessary in the diet for optimal health, but for many people, it is the easiest way to get the calcium, vitamin D, and protein they need to keep their heart, muscles, and bones healthy and functioning properly," says Vasanti Malik, nutrition research scientist with the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Dairy products as a source of calcium and protein Dairy products like milk, yogurt, cheese, and cottage cheese, are good sources of calcium, which helps maintain bone density and reduces the risk of fractures. Adults up to age 50 need 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium per day. Women older than 50 and men older than 70 need 1,200 mg. (For comparison, a cup of milk has 250 mg to 350 mg of calcium, depending on the brand and whether it's whole, low-fat, or nonfat. A typical serving of yogurt has about 187 mg of calcium.) Milk is also fortified with vitamin D, which bones need to maintain bone mass. Older adults also need protein to protect against sarcopenia, the natural age-related loss of muscle mass and strength, and dairy can be a decent source. The recommended amount for older adults is 0.8 grams per kilogram of body weight. A 180-pound man would need about 65 grams of protein per day, and a 140-pound woman would need about 50 grams. Still, when it comes to the direct health impact of dairy, the existing science is mixed. Some research warns against consuming too much dairy, while other studies show some benefits from regular dairy consumption. Is one form of dairy better than another? The American Heart Association still recommends adults stick to fat-free or low-fat dairy products. But new research suggests full-fat dairy might not be much of a threat to heart health. A report presented at the 2018 Congress of the European Society of Cardiology looked at 20 studies involving almost 25,000 people, and found no association between the consumption of most dairy products and cardiovascular disease. The exception was milk, but the results showed that only very high milk consumption an average of almost a liter a day was linked with a higher risk of cardiovascular disease. Some science has even suggested that the right kind of dairy may prevent heart disease. A study involving 2,000 men published by the British Journal of Nutrition found that those who ate plenty of fermented dairy products like yogurt and cheese had a smaller risk of coronary artery disease than men who ate less of these products. This supports earlier studies that showed that fermented dairy products have more healthful effects on blood lipid profiles and the risk of heart disease than other dairy products. Another proposed benefit, however, has not panned out. "Despite the push by the US dairy industry to promote dairy products, especially milk, as a weight-loss tool, research hasn't supported that except when also restricting calories," says Malik. The bottom line When it comes to overall health benefits, it seems that dairy is neither a hero nor a villain. Adding some dairy to your daily diet a splash of milk in your coffee or a cup poured over your breakfast cereal, or a slice of cheese on a sandwich can help you get some of the vital nutrients you need. "But keep in mind that eating a well-balanced diet that includes plenty of green leafy vegetables and nuts can better help you get the calcium and protein you need rather than relying too much on dairy," says Malik. Malik still prefers most people stick with low-fat dairy, as this helps reduce your intake of saturated fat but still offers good amounts of nutrients. Alternatively, you can choose almond and soy milk substitutes but be aware that they have lower amounts of protein than regular milk. For a single go-to dairy source, Malik recommends plain Greek yogurt. (Avoid flavored versions, which are high in sugar). "It has more protein than regular yogurt and contains probiotics that help with gut health. And it's quite versatile, as you can eat it alone or add it to other dishes like smoothies and use it as a substitute for cream in recipes."

**Dairy farming australia. Dairy industry australia. Dairy production in australia. Australian dairy industry. How is dairy produced.**

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