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Which Plant Milk Is Best?

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THE VEGETARIAN RESOURCE GROUP



Plant milks 101

FORTIFICATION: Plant milks, such as soymilk, oat milk, almond milk, and other alternatives are increasingly being used in the United States and globally. They are often fortified with nutrients, commonly calcium, vitamin B12, and vitamin D. However, fortification or lack of fortification can greatly vary, so read labels. For example, we found that in a 2025 survey, fewer than a quarter of nut and seed milks were fortified with B12, but over half of soy, grain, and pea milks were fortified with vitamin B12. This survey can be found at <https://bit.ly/issue3-2025>

PROTEIN: Those who have higher protein needs (during pregnancy and lactation, older people, elite athletes, and others) may benefit from a higher protein milk. Generally speaking, soymilks are highest in protein, and coconut milks are lowest. Some, grain, pea, nut, and seed milks have higher protein versions. Check the label or see product listings on line.

INFANTS: Plant milk should not be used to replace infant formulas or breast milk. They are not suitable as a main food source for infants since they do not resemble the nutrient composition of breast milk.

TODDLERS: After the first year (or later) vegan infants who are growing normally and eating a variety of foods can be transitioned to soymilk or pea protein-based milk fortified with calcium, vitamin B12, and vitamin D. Low-fat or non-fat soymilks should not be used before age 2. Milks based on rice, oats, hemp, almonds or other nuts, and coconut are not recommended as a primary beverage for toddlers as they are often quite low in protein and/or calories.



SCHOOL FOODSERVICE: The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025 permits (but does not require) schools to offer all children nondairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk and meet specific nutritional standards. Schools are required to provide a substitute for cow's milk for students whose disability restricts their diet.

WIC: WIC state agencies have the option to authorize plant-based milk alternatives that meet nutritional requirements to replace dairy on a quart-for-quart basis.

WHICH PLANT MILK SHOULD I USE?

In addition to nutrition, flavor is also an important consideration when selecting plant milks. Try a variety of options until you find one or more that both taste good and meet your nutritional needs. All can work for most uses with a reasonable measure of success, but for the best results, here are the top recommendations from our editors, members, and interns. Read labels carefully and be aware of family or guests who may have allergies.

• **Tea or Coffee:** Oat milk's creaminess and mild flavor pair well with both tea and coffee.

• **Pancakes/Waffles:** Almond milk is light and slightly sweet, so it works well in a wide range of batters. (In case of nut allergies, many of us find soymilk is a good alternative.)

• **General Baking:** Unsweetened soymilk's protein content is similar to dairy, making it versatile for various recipes.



• **Stroganoff:** Cashew cream or vegan sour cream both add richness and depth.



• **Rice Pudding:** Coconut milk's creaminess and slight sweetness enhance the dish.

• **Cream Soup:** Cashew milk is smooth and creamy, imparting a rich texture. (For those with nut allergies, soymilk also works well.)

• **White Sauce:** Soymilk's stability and subtle savoriness makes it a good base for béchamel.

• **Mac and Cheese:** Nutritional yeast mixed with cashew milk or oat milk provide creaminess and a cheesy flavor.



• **Creamed Spinach:** Cashew cream is rich and thick, complementing the spinach well. (Soymilk or oatmilk are good nut-free options.)

• **Ice Cream:** Coconut milk's high fat content creates a creamy texture with fewer ice crystals.

• **Condensed Milk:** Coconut milk, reduced on the stove with organic sugar, thickens easily to make an ideal vegan version.

• **Biscuits:** Soymilk mixed with vinegar mimics buttermilk well for a nice rise.

• **Muffins:** Almond milk's flavor is subtle, which works well in sweet and savory muffins. (Soymilk, a nut-free milk, is also suitable.)

• **Quick Breads:** Oat milk's creamy texture is great for various quick bread recipes.

• **Mashed Potatoes:** Almond milk adds creaminess without overpowering the flavor. (Nut-free soymilk also works.)



• **Milkshakes:** Oat milk's thickness makes for a good base for shakes.

• **Smoothies:** Almond or oat milk both blend well with fruits and provide a nice texture.

• **Hot Chocolate or Hot Cocoa:** Oat milk's creaminess complements the rich bittersweet chocolate perfectly.



• **Hot Carob:** Almond milk's nutty flavor pairs nicely with carob. (Soymilk is a good nut-free option.)



• **Lassi:** Coconut yogurt blended with water creates a refreshing, creamy drink.

• **White Russian:** Almond or oat milk adds creaminess without overpowering the drink.

• **Chocolate Pudding:** Soymilk's protein content helps thicken the pudding.

• **Other Puddings:** Almond or soymilk thicken easily and complement many flavors.

• **Cakes:** Soymilk is great for maintaining moisture and texture in cakes.



• **Cookies:** Almond milk is light and subtly sweet, working well in most cookie recipes. (Nut-free soymilk also works.)



VIDEOS FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WHICH IS THE BEST PLANT MILK FOR LATTES?

[youtube.com/shorts/UrwjvN7ec2U](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/UrwjvN7ec2U)

WHICH PLANT MILK SHOULD I USE FOR PUDDING?

[youtube.com/shorts/WeMCqn1H23s](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/WeMCqn1H23s)

WHICH PLANT MILK WORKS BEST?

[youtube.com/shorts/0NWPJHjqzm0](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/0NWPJHjqzm0)