

# Dairy and the Best No Dairy Alternatives



I was born in Wisconsin. America's Dairyland. I was proud to be from Wisconsin. Still am.

In June, the "June is Dairy Month" commercial jingles would come on the radio across the Midwest. My favorite that ran for years went like this:

*"Dairy foods are great foods. Dairy foods are great. Live better, yet be healthier, with milk in your glass, butter on your bread and cheese upon your plate. Dairy foods are great foods. Dairy foods are GREAT."*

That ditty still runs through my head each June.

I want to talk about dairy and I want to talk about dairy alternatives.

First, we have to talk cow or no cow.

Milk: With all due respect to dairy farmers, we don't need cow's milk. We don't need any milk but we like it. Right? We were raised on it. As a young adult, I was drinking a full gallon of

skim milk every two days. Dairy companies loved me. In college, I ate a block of cheddar cheese for my dinner as I studied. Again, dairy companies loved me. Then, on college football Saturdays at the University of Wisconsin I used to treat myself to a Babcock Hall ice cream sundae for breakfast. Yep, even the University of Wisconsin's dairy companies loved me.

We don't need milk for a myriad of reasons but one of them is the lactose. That's milk sugar. The less fat they leave in the milk the more lactose it will have in it. That means carbohydrates are hiding in your cow's milk.

Good news is lactose-free cow's milk is now available and it tastes great. Take it from me. I bought the Fairlife version and bought the full-fat one even. I took a few sips and I was bolted back to my childhood like something out of the movie Back to the Future. I had not touched cow's milk in over 8 years.

I probably won't go back to drinking cow's milk. I now know my body doesn't need it. I drink mostly water now. The withdrawal I went through (at least psychologically) was killer when I gave up cow's milk. For years I could not look at scrambled eggs or mashed potatoes without wanting a glass of milk to go with them.

Here are the kinds of milk I drink now and the one I'm trying:

**Coconut milk** is my favorite. I don't sit down with a glass of it but I will make a smoothie out of it.



**Almond milk.** Same thing. My husband makes his smoothies often with this milk. Or there is one on the market that is a combo of almond and coconut in one carton. My only caution is to get one that's UNSWEETENED. You can always add stevia drops to it to sweeten your smoothie if you need that sweetness.

Pea milk is the new one I'm trying. Seems fine in a smoothie. I won't be drinking a glass of it when I have Fairlife as an option but it seems like a suitable secondary option and none of the last three I mentioned have any lactose in them.

Cheese: Let's talk cheese. My recommendations here are to first off, eat good cheese! Go to the cheese pro at your grocery store. Try to learn about new cheeses. Expand beyond cheddar.

Quit eating processed cheese "food." Some cheese isn't really even cheese. It's closer to plastic, or at least that's the joke made about it. Have I had any American cheese since I got enlightened? Sure. But not much.

Here's what the Mental Floss website says about American cheese.

*American cheese—the kind you get in the individual plastic wrappers—is processed cheese or “cheese food,” meaning it’s not actually real cheese. The next time you’re at the grocery store, take a look at the packed singles and notice how many don’t actually have “cheese” in their name. Kraft Singles, for example, are made with milk, whey, milk protein concentrate, milkfat, less than 2% of calcium phosphate, salt, sodium citrate, whey protein concentrate, sodium phosphate, sorbic acid as a preservative, cheese culture, enzymes, annatto, and paprika extract (for color). In short, Kraft Singles are made with less than 51% actual cheese, so it can’t legally be called “cheese.”*

You can leave the cheese out of American cheese, but you can’t take out the Americana. That stuff is still classic and gooey.

Try finding other cheeses you love. And explore **sheep cheese** and **goat cheese** while you are there. Many people are sensitive to cow’s milk cheese, but they don’t realize they might still be able to eat goat or sheep’s milk cheese. I found out they even make sheep cheddar now. It’s great.



Yogurt: I've become a big yogurt consumer. Most often I buy a **coconut milk-based yogurt**. I buy the unsweetened. Then I add stevia drops; just a few. A little vanilla and maybe some berries. That's a full and focused breakfast that will tide you over until lunchtime.

Just recently I discovered yogurt made from cow's milk but it's lactose-free. That came into my life during a trip to France. I could not find any yogurt that was not from a cow. Those French love their dairy, too.

I steer totally clear of soy-yogurt, soy-milk, and soy-based cheeses. What I have read about soy increasing the risk of breast cancer scared the daylights out of me. And watch out. Soy is the protein in a zillion other processed food products, including power bars. I used to think those were good for me. Not anymore.

Butter: **Full fat butter** is for me. None of those “I can’t find the butter in the butter” products anymore. I used to love that stuff because it melted so well. Now I know better. I know the butter won’t clog my arteries like they used to think. It’s the inflammation caused by other foods that cause the plaque to start to form.

I also cook with ghee. That’s **clarified butter**. It has many health benefits and it has a high flash point so it’s great for sautéing. That’s what they use in restaurants. When your steak comes glistening with that butter coating, that’s ghee. When your veggies are swimming in wonderful goodness, that’s ghee. Don’t be afraid of ghee. It’s even shelf stable. You don’t have to refrigerate it, so you can find it by the oils and baking supplies in the store.

**Coconut oil** is my other favorite. Again, so many health benefits. That stuff will even fix your hair if it’s brittle. Google the benefits of coconut oil and all kinds of things pop up. Here’s one you’ll be interested in if your doctor is telling you that you’ll need cholesterol meds if you don’t straighten up and fly right.

Coconut oil contains natural saturated fats that increase the good HDL cholesterol in your body. They may also help turn the bad LDL cholesterol into a less harmful form. By increasing HDL, many experts believe that coconut oil could be good for heart health compared to many other fats.

This concludes my dairy lecture for the month of June 2024.

Enjoy!

Cheers,

Zola



## Zola's Favorite Breakfast Smoothie

Want to know how Zola starts her day? Here it is!