

Dairy Delights

What better way to kick off summer than National Dairy month! Dairy products are all food products that are made from or contain milk.

When National Dairy Month first became a holiday in 1937, it was known as National Milk Month. This was started to encourage people to drink more milk and stabilize the dairy demand while the milk production was at a surplus. This promotional attempt soon developed into an annual tradition that many use to celebrate the dairy industry's contributions to our world. After the Dairy Council became involved in promoting the cause, the name was soon replaced with National Dairy Month.

Foods included in the MyPlate Dairy Group contain nutrients necessary for the health and maintenance of your body. Dairy products can provide many health benefits when regularly consumed. One of the main benefits of consuming dairy products is that the calcium in the milk helps your body build and maintain strong bones. Dairy has essential nutrients other than just calcium like protein, vitamin A, vitamin D, and potassium.

Milk

When dairy is mentioned, the first topic of conversation is milk! It is a liquid that is white in color. Milk comes from the mammary glands of mammals. Some of the most common mammals used for commercial milk production are cows, sheep, and goats. When purchasing milk at the store, the shelves are filled with many different varieties. The most common types are whole (3.25% fat), reduced-fat (2% fat), low-fat (1% fat), and fat-free or skim milk. All of these options have different tastes and nutritional profiles.

Butter

Butter is made from fresh or fermented cream or milk. To make butter, the milk or cream is churned until the butter is formed and is separated from the liquid, which is now buttermilk. Butter is most commonly used as a spread or used to cook, bake, and pan-fry recipes. Butter is made of butterfat, milk proteins, and water.

Cheese

Cheese is another fantastic product of milk! Cheese is a fermented dairy product, and it comes in many different sizes and shapes. The texture of cheese ultimately depends on the type of cheese you purchase. Some cheese is mild and soft, and others are extremely strong and hard. Cheese is a great source of protein, and depending on the type of cheese, fat content may vary.

Ice Cream

Ice cream, yet another dairy product, started with milk. The most basic form of ice cream is made with cream and/or milk, eggs, and sugar. Once the basic form is made, all different ingredients can be added, like strawberries, peanuts, marshmallows, chocolate, and more! This delicious treat is frozen and typically eaten as a dessert or snack. According to the USDA, ice cream must have at least 20 percent butterfat and milk.

Yogurt

Yogurt is not only healthy but also delicious and comes in almost any flavor. How does this delicious snack turn from milk to yogurt? It starts with the milk being heated at a high temperature. As the milk gets hotter, it thickens and forms a yogurt consistency. Once thick enough, the temperature is rapidly reduced, and bacteria are added. If you have ever heard the term “yogurt cultures,” the bacteria is what is being referred to. The milk is then fermented. This means the harmless bacteria convert lactose, or milk sugar, into lactic acid, making the milk proteins curdle. This causes the mixture to thicken, making yogurt! Fat-free or low-fat is a healthy option to add to any meal or enjoy as a snack.

Dairy is an affordable and nutrient-rich option to include in your diet. Next time you go grocery shopping, add some of your favorite dairy products. Start your morning with a cereal bowl with ice-cold milk poured on top. Midday, stop and grab yourself a delicious fruit and yogurt cup for a healthy boost. End your day with an indulgent creamy bowl of ice cream for dessert. There are many different ways to add dairy into your diet, so choose your favorite!

(Sources: www.daysoftheyear.com; www.dietaryguidelines.gov; www.drink-milk.com; www.idfa.org; www.myplate.gov)