



# From the Food Bank Kitchen

The Food Bank  
of Western Massachusetts

## Delicious Dairy

*Including dairy in the diet is one of the key ways to get a whole host of nutrients, including calcium, potassium, phosphorus, protein, vitamins A, D and B12, riboflavin, and niacin. Dairy packs a powerful nutritional punch. Dairy products also come in many varieties, including milk, many types of cheeses, and yogurt. Here we have some tips for choosing the best kinds of dairy products, and some quick-and-easy dairy recipes.*

**The Health Benefits of Dairy:** You've probably heard that dairy products are good for the bones, and this is true. Dairy is high in calcium and vitamin D, two key nutrients for bone health. For children and adolescents, who are still building up their bone mass, it is especially important that they get enough calcium and vitamin D. But dairy products have many other important nutrients and health benefits. Dairy products are also a good source of high-quality protein. One glass of fat-free milk has 86 calories and 8 grams of protein. Certain dairy foods, such as milk, yogurt, and soymilk, are also high in potassium, a nutrient that reduces risk of hypertension. However, full-fat dairy products can be high in saturated fat, so it is important to choose the fat-free or low-fat dairy options to get all the benefits of dairy without the extra fat and calories.

**How to Include Dairy:** The key to including dairy in the diet is to choose fat-free or low fat (1%) options. It is recommended to consume 3 servings of dairy a day. This could be 1 cup of fat-free milk or calcium-fortified soy milk, 8 ounces of fat-free yogurt, and 1 ounce of low-fat or reduced-fat versions of cheeses like cheddar, mozzarella, Colby, or Swiss.

**"What if I can't drink milk?":** Some people have difficulty digesting milk. The sugar in milk, lactose, requires the enzyme called LACTASE to be properly digested. Though most people's digestive systems produce enough lactase, some people have a deficiency of lactase, which results in "lactose intolerance". Some symptoms of lactose intolerance include gas, bloating, cramps and diarrhea. This is different than a milk allergy, where a person has a reaction to one or both of the proteins in milk (whey and casein), and cannot safely consume ANY dairy products. People who are lactose intolerant can still enjoy some dairy products that contain less lactose, such as yogurt and cheese, or products that have been processed to be lactose free (such as Lactaid® brand milk or ice cream and Yoplait® lactose free yogurt). People with lactose intolerance can also take lactase supplements when consuming dairy products or use milk alternatives such as calcium-fortified soy or rice milk. Everyone has different sensitivities. Try to figure out which products you tolerate best. Keep in mind that when dairy is mixed with solid foods or consumed within a meal, symptoms tend to be improved, since digestion is slowed down.

See next page for more tips and a simple dairy dessert recipe.

## Black Bean and Corn Quesadilla Adapted from [www.eatingwell.com](http://www.eatingwell.com) Serves 4

*Not only is this recipe simple and easy to make, but it also can be modified to fit your favorite ingredients. Swap the black beans for chicken or pinto beans. You can substitute your favorite veggie instead of corn. Don't forget to top your quesadilla with your favorite healthy toppings, such as salsa, avocado or fresh cilantro. Pepper Jack cheese can make a spicier filling.*

1 15-oz can of low sodium black beans, rinsed  
1/2 cup reduced-fat Monterey jack shredded cheese  
1/2 cup canned low sodium corn, drained  
4 8-inch whole wheat tortillas

2 teaspoons canola oil  
Additional Toppings: avocado, sour cream, fresh cilantro, salsa (optional)

**Directions:** Combine beans, cheese and corn in a medium bowl. Place tortillas on a work surface. Spread 1/2 cup filling on half of each tortilla. Fold tortillas in half, pressing gently to flatten. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add 2 quesadillas and cook, turning once, until golden on both sides and cheese has melted, 2 to 4 minutes total. Transfer to a cutting board and tent with foil to keep warm. Repeat with the remaining 1 teaspoon oil and quesadillas. Serve the quesadillas with optional toppings, including avocado, sour cream, or salsa.

**Nutrition Info:** Calories 310, Fat 8 gm, Saturated Fat 2 gm, Carbs 42 gm, Protein 14 gm, Sodium 300 mg, Fiber 7 gm

## MILK

**Varieties:** Milk comes either as fat-free (skim), low-fat (1%), reduced-fat (2%), or whole milk. Per 8 oz glass, whole milk has 9 grams of fat (and 150 calories), reduced fat has 5 grams, and low-fat milk has 2 grams of fat. To obtain all the same nutrients as whole milk without the extra fat and calories, it is best to choose fat-free or low-fat milk. If you are used to drinking whole, try switching to a lower-fat milk gradually, first trying reduced-fat (2%) milk, then switching to low-fat milk (1%).

**Storage:** Milk needs to be refrigerated as soon as possible after purchase, especially in warm weather. It is best to store milk as far back from the door of the refrigerator as possible to keep the milk cool. Shelf-stable milk is a variety of milk that has been ultra-pasteurized and can be kept in the pantry until opened, but once opened, must be refrigerated.

## CHEESE

**What is cheese?** Cheese is made when enzymes are added to milk, causing solids, called curds, to form. These curds are then pressed to form the cheese we eat.

**Varieties:** There are over 300 of varieties of cheese made in the US each year! The different varieties of cheese are made either from fresh cheese or are aged over time. Soft, fresh cheeses include feta, cottage cheese, and ricotta. Hard, aged cheeses include Swiss, gouda and cheddar. There are also semi-soft cheeses including Colby and pepper jack. Blue cheeses, including gorgonzola, have veins of mold that are safe to eat. Many cheese varieties also are available in low-fat versions.

**Storage:** Cheese should be stored in the refrigerator and wrapped in plastic wrap once opened. Beware of new moldy spots on cheeses like blue cheese which should then be thrown away; small spots on hard cheeses like cheddar can be cut off.

## YOGURT

**What is yogurt?** Yogurt is milk that has been fermented with healthy bacterial cultures. These bacteria won't make you sick; they are actually good for your digestive system. The bacteria digest some of the lactose in yogurt and give it a tangy flavor.

**Varieties:** Yogurt has been eaten for over thousands of years, and many different cultures have their own varieties of yogurt. Greek yogurt, which has much of its water removed, is thicker and higher in protein. Kefir is a yogurt drink, originating from the Black Sea region of Europe. Yogurt also comes in low-fat and fat-free varieties. Some yogurt comes flavored or with added fruit. Be sure to check the label for grams of sugar in flavored yogurts. For a healthier version of sweetened yogurt, plain yogurt can be sweetened with just a teaspoon or two of honey or jam.

## OPTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH LACTOSE INTOLERANCE (See [www.lactaid.com](http://www.lactaid.com) for more info)

**Lactose-free and Lactose-Reduced Dairy:** Lactose-free milk, which has been processed to digest the lactose in milk, is a suitable substitution for regular milk, and has all the same nutrition. Lactase enzyme supplements is another way to enjoy all the nutrition of dairy products. Aged cheeses & yogurt are often much better tolerated than milk.

**Dairy Alternatives:** There are many alternatives to dairy products, such as soy, almond, and rice milk, just to name a few. These alternatives have no lactose, but have very different nutrition compared to milk. Calcium fortified soy milk has the closest composition to cow's milk. It is high in protein and fortified with calcium and vitamin D. But soymilk may be sweetened with sugar, so it is best to choose unsweetened. Almond milk has similar calcium and less sugar than soymilk, but it has very little protein. Rice milk tends to have higher calories, sugar, and very little protein or calcium. Each alternative is different. When choosing a dairy alternative, its very important to check the labels to compare nutrition quality.

## Creamy Brown Rice Pudding

Adapted from [www.allrecipes.com](http://www.allrecipes.com)

6 Servings

*We recommend using brown rice for extra nutrition, but you can substitute any kind of available or leftover rice. For those who are lactose intolerant, unsweetened, calcium-fortified soy milk can also be substituted for the milk.*

1 1/2 cup water

3/4 cup uncooked brown rice

2 cups low-fat (1%) Milk

3 Tbsp sugar

Pinch of Salt

1 large egg

3 Tbsp raisins (dried cranberries can be substituted)

1 Tbsp butter

1/2 tsp vanilla extract

1/2 tsp cinnamon

**Directions:** Combine water and rice over high heat in a sauce pan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, cover and cook until tender, about 45 minutes. Combine cooked rice, 1 1/2 cups of milk, sugar, and salt in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat until thick and creamy, about 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in remaining 1/2 cup milk, beaten egg, cinnamon, and raisins. Cook for 2 more minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in butter, vanilla, and cinnamon.

**Nutrition Info:** 170 calories, Fat 3 gm, Saturated Fat 1.5 gm, Carbs 31 gm, Protein 6 gm, Sodium 115 mg, Fiber 1 gm