

Health Benefits of Almond Milk

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Introduction. In the past, the development of industrial food processing sometimes privileged productivity rather than nutritional properties of the products, even arising some concern for consumer health and safety. With the demographic imperative of an aging population worldwide, there is an understandable emphasis today in the food industry to manufacture products that can be labeled with claims for health promotion, quality and safety (Chen et al., 2006). The establishment of production processes preserving the nutrient content of foods is hence the new frontier of process innovation in the food industry.

Materials and methods. Plant milk is a general term for any milk-like product that is derived from a plant source. There is no formal or legal definition for plant milk. Plant milks have been consumed for centuries in various cultures, both as regular drinks (such as the Spanish horchata) and as a substitute for milk, such as by some Christian denominations during Lent. The most popular varieties internationally are soy milk, almond milk, rice milk and coconut milk.

Results. There is a variety of reasons for consuming plant milk, including health conditions such as lactose intolerance, milk allergy and PKU, religious/spiritual reasons; veganism and ovo-vegetarianism; simple taste preference.

In the United States, soy milk was long the most popular non-dairy milk, but starting around 2010 almond milk began to see an explosion in popularity, and in 2013 it surpassed soy milk as the most popular variety [1].

Most people are used to the easily accessible dairy milk. Though not very common, almond milk has been used for years as a substitute for cows' milk that is readily available and relatively easy to get. Dairy milk is known for its high content of various vitamins and minerals but almonds have been proven to contain extra nutrients. This is why almond milk is recommended as a good option for those who do not consume any form of dairy products, those who have cow milk allergy/intolerance (CMA/CMI) or those people who are vegetarians.

The health benefits of almond milk include the improvement of vision, weight loss, stronger bones and a strong, healthy heart. It helps in building strong muscles, maintaining ideal blood pressure and maintaining a properly-functioning kidney. It is also a good alternative for nursing mothers' milk.

Almond milk prepared from almonds is low in fat, but high in energy, proteins, lipids and fiber. It contains vitamins like calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium, and zinc. The other nutrients available in this milk include vitamins such as vitamin C, B-6, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, folate and vitamin E. All these nutrients have various benefits which are essential for a healthy body.

Almond milk contains no cholesterol or lactose and it can be extracted using simple equipment found in most homes. This milk is prepared by grinding almond seeds together with water. The use of a blender is one of the modern ways that can be used to get almond milk extracted with all of its nutrients intact. This is the easiest and simplest way to obtain this nutritious and delicious milk.

Due to its nutritional content, it is the best alternative for those who have intolerance to dairy products or soy products. The nutritional value of almond milk is equivalent to that found in rice milk, which is also recommended by nutritionists.

Conclusions. Almond milk is a nondairy alternative to milk chosen by those suffering from lactose intolerance or a dairy allergy, vegans or people who simply prefer the taste or health benefits. Almond milk is considered safe for most people, but sensitive people might find it triggers allergies or intolerance.

References:

1. Wong, Venessa . - "Soy Milk Fades as Americans Opt for Drinkable Almonds". - *BusinessWeek*. – August 21. 2013.
2. Victoria. Jump up^ Epperly./ *Daniel's Lifestyle Fasting Cook Book*. -Xulon Press, 2008. - P. 248–250.