

PA Milk Marketing Board
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Playing the Broken Record

What is the old saying? Beating a dead horse to death? Or am I going to try to play the broken record? Again?

What is it that consumers don't understand about the goodness of milk and most dairy products? What is the lure of a grain or nut soaked in water, ground, and then fortified with the nutrients found naturally in milk?

Why am I seeing television advertisements for grain and nut beverages at what seems to be 5-minute intervals, yet the last ad I saw for a dairy product was weeks ago? Now is the time to capitalize on the increase in milk consumption, particularly whole milk, that occurred during the pandemic and when kids were home from school!

I searched the internet for an ingredient list for a popular, new oat beverage and found that the only things NOT added to the "oat milk" are oats and water. The manufacturer, in order to claim that the beverage is nutritious, adds calcium, phosphorus, salt (for taste, I am sure), gelatin (to create creaminess, touted in the advertisements), and vitamins (A, D and several B). The only naturally occurring nutrients appear to be a small amount of iron (2% RDV) and two grams protein; oat beverage is also a source of fiber, but is relatively high in carbohydrates compared to milk per serving (19 g vs 12 g, respectively).

Dairy milk naturally contains calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and several B-vitamins. The protein level in an 8-ounce serving is four times that in the oat beverage I researched. To be fair, most processed dairy milk contains added vitamins A and D, but it is possible to buy milk that has not been fortified.

Now, let's move on to the popular almond beverages which I recently saw advertised and featuring smiling, eager children asking for "more."

As with the oat beverage, the naturally occurring ingredients in a popular almond beverage are almonds and water. The added ingredients are sugar, calcium, vitamins, salt, gelatin, lecithin (keeps almond oil suspended in water), a preservative, and flavor enhancers. In addition to the gelatin, locust bean gum is added as a thickener.

The above nutritional information can be found on the labels that are required on all food items, so I did nothing extraordinary in researching and presenting them.

The most eye-opening comparison can be found by examining a label from a carton of processed dairy milk. The ingredient list—milk, vitamin A, vitamin D. Quite a difference, huh? Some of the same individuals who tout the benefits of plant-based beverages and slur the consumption of dairy products also have adopted "don't buy canned or processed foods with more than four

ingredients on the label.” Interesting. They must not be reading the labels on oat and almond beverage.

I don't want to save the world from plant-based beverages! Quite the contrary. Consumers in a free society are entitled to choose what they buy and serve in their homes. I just want people to be educated consumers. For whatever reason they choose those plant-based beverages, they should be offered the chance to purchase them; however, they are NOT milk and nothing will MAKE them milk (unless the FDA changes its on-the-books definition of milk as a secretion of a mammary gland).

Plant-based beverages are not bad. But neither are milk and dairy products. In fact, I think my comments show that milk is a naturally healthy choice to make at the grocery store for children and adults alike. And, if there are issues with lactose or A1 protein, there are dairy alternatives for those concerns.

Excuse me while I go pour a glass of milk to go along with my freshly-baked, warm-out-of-the oven chocolate chip cookies!

PMMB is always available to respond to questions and concerns. I can be reached at 717-210-8244 or by email at chardbarga@pa.gov.