

Low Fat Dairy Products

As with meat, the fat in dairy products is quite saturated and contains cholesterol. Therefore, it is best to choose the lowest fat version of a dairy product that will perform well in your recipe.

Liquid milk

Choose skim milk or 1% milk instead of whole milk or 2% milk. There is no difference in cooking properties between these types of milk.

Evaporated skim milk

This thick and creamy product substitutes well for high-fat creams in sauces and desserts.

Cheese

Fat-free cheese can add flavor to some dishes, but it does not melt well. It is not appropriate for baked dishes. Some of the newer low-fat cheeses have good flavor and melting characteristics. Try different kinds and see which work well in your recipes. Use them as an accompaniment to soups, stews, and main dishes. Or, add a small amount of strong-flavored, high-fat cheese (such as Parmesan or sharp cheddar) to enhance flavor without adding a lot of fat.

Cream cheese

Fat-free cream cheese is suitable for spreads, but it does not hold up well in recipes where beating or baking is required. A tasty reduced-fat cream cheese, called Neufchâtel (noo-shuh-TELL), works very well and is lower in fat, saturated fat, and calories than regular cream cheese.

Yogurt

Reduced-fat yogurt and nonfat yogurts both taste good. However, it's important to read the labels, because the low-fat varieties often still contain quite a bit of sugar. It is better to buy yogurt that has been sweetened with sugar substitutes, or choose plain yogurt, to which you can add fruit and/or a sugar substitute to taste. Plain yogurt can also be substituted for sour cream or mayonnaise in many recipes.

Here is a checklist of good low-fat dairy products. When incorporated into recipes, they usually perform similarly to versions that are higher in fat.

- Skim milk and 1% milk
- Buttermilk and nonfat buttermilk
- Low-fat Cheddar cheese
- Reduced-fat mozzarella cheese
- 1% cottage cheese
- Nonfat ricotta cheese
- Neufchâtel (low-fat cream cheese)
- Nonfat yogurt without added sugars
- Nonfat sour cream

