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Americans' Dairy Consumption Below Recommendations

Americans are consuming more dairy products than in 1970, but the average American diet still falls short of the daily recommendations for milk and milk products. The good news is that many Americans are taking other dietary messages to heart and have switched to lower fat milks and cheeses.

According to ERS's Loss-Adjusted Food Availability data, Americans on average consumed 1.8 cups of dairy products per person per day in 2005. The 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the supporting MyPyramid Food Guidance System recommend that Americans consume 2-3 cups of milk and milk products daily, depending on their age, gender, and level of physical activity.

The total amount of dairy products available for consumption in the U.S., according to ERS's Food Availability data, grew from 564 pounds per person (milkfat basis) in 1970 to about 601 pounds per person in 2005, with some products rising and others declining. ERS's per capita availability estimates are calculated by dividing the total annual supply of a commodity by the U.S. population that year. Although these estimates do not directly measure actual quantities ingested, they provide an indication of whether Americans, on average, are consuming more or less of various foods over time. Cheese contributed significantly to the increase in dairy product availability. Higher sales of resealable bags of shredded cheeses used for snacks or as ingredients in cooking accounted for part of the tripling of per capita cheese availability from 11 pounds to 31 pounds from 1970 to 2005. Cheeses are also used in commercially prepared foods, including pizzas, stuffed pastas, and frozen and refrigerated entrees. Yogurt and cream products were also up from 1970.

In contrast, availability of other dairy products is down from 1970 levels. Milk availability dropped from 31 gallons to 21 gallons per person from 1970 to 2005. Part of this decline can be attributed to competition from other beverages, such as carbonated soft drinks, coffee, and bottled water. Bottled water availability grew from 1.6 gallons per person in 1976 to 25.4 gallons per person in 2005. Availability of cottage cheese, evaporated and condensed milk, dry milk, and frozen dairy products declined between 1970 and 2005.

The *Guidelines* recommend choosing fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. Are Americans doing this? Whole-milk availability decreased from 26 gallons per person in 1970 to 7 gallons per person in 2005, while lower fat milks grew from 6 to 14 gallons per person suggesting that 68 percent of milk is now lower fat varieties. Americans also are increasingly choosing lower fat cheeses. According to the International Dairy Foods Association, supermarket sales of reduced-fat, low-fat, and nonfat cheese grew by 134 million pounds between 1999 and 2005. During the same period, sales of regular cheese declined by 58 million pounds. Mozzarella, which is lower in fat than other cheeses such as Cheddar and Swiss, has overtaken Cheddar to become America's favorite cheese. \mathbb{W}



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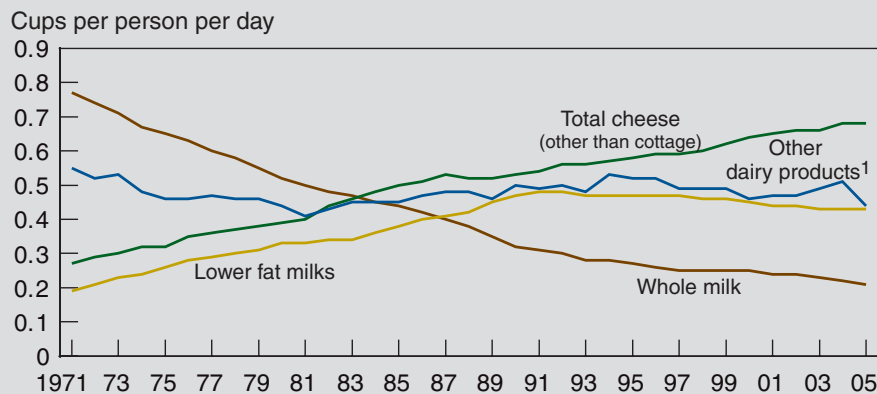
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For more information . . .

ERS Food Availability (Per Capita) Data System, available at: www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/

Americans are eating more cheese and switching to lower fat milks



Note: According to MyPyramid, 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1.5 ounces of hard cheese, 2 ounces of processed cheese, 2 cups of cottage cheese, or 1.5 cups of ice cream count as 1 cup from the milk group.

¹Includes frozen dairy products, cottage cheese, cream products, yogurt, dry milk, and evaporated and condensed milk.

Source: ERS Loss-Adjusted Food Availability data.