

GoodBelly Organic Probiotic Fruit Drinks (Vegan, Soy-Free, Wheat-Free)

What does the founder of the world's largest soy foods and soymilk company do after stepping away from his empire? Why he starts a new product of course! But, Steve Demos could not settle for just any product, it had to be new, innovative, and address an untouched niche. I would dare to say that he truly has succeeded, as there is nothing else quite like his latest venture, GoodBelly.

GoodBelly is a new probiotic fruit drink line from Steve's latest company, NextFoods. Anyone who wants the benefit of probiotics, but doesn't like the taste of yogurt, or simply wants a non-fat option (it can be hard to find a low fat dairy-free yogurt especially) will be dazzled by this new creation. Plus, it is a nutritious option for fruit juice lovers and their little ones.

Like Steve's prior products, GoodBelly is dairy-free, vegan, and wheat-free (it does contain oat flour and barley malt), but GoodBelly has one added advantage, it is also soy-free! For those who are concerned about the source of the probiotics used, they are grown on oat flour, and thus 100% dairy-free and vegan.

GoodBelly quarts currently come in three flavors and can be found in the refrigerated section, near the milk alternatives:

Black Currant - Having never tasted a black currant flavored beverage (or anything else with black currants for that matter), I had no idea what to expect. My taste buds prepared for a tart cranberry flavor, but to my pleasant surprise they were greeted with a perfectly palatable berry flavor that had a character all its own. Not too sweet, nor too tart, this was a wonderful flavor that I could enjoy anytime of day. It was almost like a cross between overly sweet ripe blueberries and the tang of slightly tart cranberries to keep the overall flavor in check.

Mango - This variety tasted quite like my favorite Odwalla flavor, Mo's Beta. It had a nice refreshing, yet deep mango flavor. I found it very drinkable with the perfect mix of fruit sweetness and just the slightest touch of tart.

Watermelon & Cranberry - This flavor had a slightly fizzy taste, and unlike the others, it definitely struck me as more of a "drink" than a juice. It was sweet, not as sweet as watermelon flavors can be, but without the tart cranberry notes I was expecting. I definitely had no problem in polishing off the entire quart, with a little help from my husband of course.

The texture of the GoodBelly quart flavors was a bit thicker than your average juice. I would describe it as a juice / thin smoothie hybrid. I found it to be perfect when simply chilled over ice. However, my husband, who likes both juice and smoothies, wasn't too keen on the midway texture. He added a bit of water to reach his ideal consistency in one case, but later, I decided to blend GoodBelly with some fruit to create homemade smoothies. This was a big hit with both of us.

Not satisfied to stop with the GoodBelly Quarts, NextFoods has also created GoodBelly Multis. These are very similar to the quarts, but instead of a larger, single carton, each package comes with four 2.7-ounce containers, shaped like Yoplait Yogurts. Also, these fruit drink "shots" have a couple of additional benefits, they are fortified with a "Multi" blend of vitamins and minerals, and they contain a double dose of probiotics. To ensure the Multis truly have their own identity, they also come in three unique flavors (rather than simply mimicking the quarts), Blueberry Acai, Peach Mango, and Strawberry Rosehips.

I must apologize, as I lost my notes on the GoodBelly Multi Flavors! But, while I can't describe the various nuances of each of the three selections, I can tell you, they all tasted great! I am not sure if this is true, or if they just had a different textural vibe from the medium in which they were delivered, but I do recall that the Multis seemed just a tad thicker. At 2.7 ounces per beverage, they were literally large shots of fruit drink. I really liked this feature. After lunch, while I am a bit thirsty, I don't usually feel like downing a huge glass of water, a little sugar would offer a sweet finale to help round out the satisfaction of my meal, and sure, why not add the benefit of some digestion-boosting bacteria!

My only complaint with GoodBelly is the added sugars. This truly is a nutritional drink, not a 100% juice, but to their defense, the flavors are spot on; not too bland, not too tart, and not too sweet. This is a third party review by Alisa Fleming, author of *Go Dairy Free: The Guide & Cookbook*. For more information on these products, see the GoodBelly website.