

## Dairy-Free and Vegan Consumers Can Imbibe with Caution During the Holidays

Many foods and beverages may seem obviously free from dairy, but these days, even those opaque carafes of wine and hearty stouts may pose a threat for those with milk allergies, lactose intolerance, or who choose to follow a diet free from dairy. With the holiday party season in full swing, and various alcoholic beverages beckoning, the need for extra caution is even greater. Yet, there is no need to foresake the festivities altogether. Use the following suggestions and words of caution to help identify some "safe" and delicious alcoholic indulgences to enjoy during the holidays and beyond ... in moderation of course ...

### Wine

As written by Alisa Fleming in *Go Dairy Free: The Guide and Cookbook*, "... milk protein is sometimes used in the fining process of wine, which could trigger an allergic response. I have been told that vegan and kosher wines are a good place to start when seeking milk-free wines. Kosher certification looks at the process in addition to the ingredients, so kosher certified wines are typically produced without milk, but they may contain eggs. For a good directory of vegan wine and other alcoholic beverages, visit [Barnivore](#), an online vegan drink directory, or [Vegans are from Mars](#) to view their vegan wine guide."

For those who do not have heightened sensitivities to milk or whose primary concern is lactose (milk sugar), the use of milk protein in the fining process may not be a concern. Be sure to take any precautions that may be necessary for you and your diet.

### Beer

Unlike wine, lactose rather than casein is typically the milk nemesis in beer. Last year we posted a brief article about milk in stout beers, which still holds true. Keep an eye out for Sweet Stout, Cream Stout, and Milk Stout, all of which may contain lactose for sweetness and body. Those with severe casein allergies or who follow a dairy-free diet for health or social reasons, may also want to use caution when considering stout beers by these names.

Beyond stouts, Karen Blue of [Avoiding Milk Protein](#) alerted us to some possible up-and-comers in the milk beer market. In Japan, a creative brewer came out with "Bilk" last year, a low-malt beer made to help use up surplus milk. Also, a former dairy farmer from France invented a beer made from fermented milk a few years ago, that was met with positive reviews. These products have yet to hit it big, and the companies (to the best of our knowledge) have only sold/marketed the milk beers in their own respective countries, but keep an eye out, as it may only be a matter of time before milk beer arrives at a pub near you.

### Egg Nog

This truly seasonal delight has been seriously off limits for dairy-free and vegan dieters in the past, but with the invention of new alternatives and recipes, lower fat, dairy-free options have emerged. For store bought soy-based options, seek out Silk Soy Nog or VitaSoy's Holy Nog. Out of the corner of my eye, while at a local natural food store (okay, Whole Foods) last week, I could swear I spotted Rice Nog from Rice Dream. Since I didn't break stride to read the label, and couldn't find information on the Rice Dream website, I can't confirm that it is soy-free, but it is likely soy protein-free.

The above listed store bought options are only available during the holiday season, and may not always fit into your grocery budget. So should you crave an off-season delight, or if you prefer homemade, try the Soy Dream Nog recipe from the makers of Soy Dream, or for a richer dairy-free and soy-free option, try the Coco-Nog recipe in the cookbook *Go Dairy Free*.

### Mixed Drinks

Many mixed drinks, such as White Russians and Irish Mints, may sound wonderfully warming when Jack Frost decides to ice over your nose, but their creamy draw is derived from milk. Beyond the obvious beverages, use great caution when ordering mixed drinks in bars and restaurants and be sure to relay your no milk desires to the bartender. Some may add a splash of milk, cream, or a creamy spirit to a typically dairy-free blend for added luxury. If they aren't aware of your free-from needs, then you may unfortunately discover milk hidden within.