

Interesting and worth knowing

Here you can find the answers to the most frequently asked questions about milk and dairy products, including their effects on our health and their nutritional benefits. You can also learn all about Mila and the dairy industry in South Tyrol.

> How does cheese get its holes?

During the cheese ripening process, particular cultures of bacteria turn lactose into lactic acid. The reaction releases carbon dioxide, which cannot escape through the curd and the rind. The gas collects and creates cavities of various sizes – which become the holes in the cheese.

∨ Can you freeze dairy products?

Butter can be frozen without hesitation: neither the taste nor the texture is adversely affected. Portions of cream can also be frozen; after defrosting, they are best used in cooking. Similarly, you can freeze fresh milk and fresh cheese without sacrificing much quality. Pieces of table cheese can be frozen, it's true – but they have a tendency to become dry and lose flavour. It is thus recommended that cheese be bought fresh and consumed relatively quickly.

∨ What makes milk boil over?

Milk is the only liquid that forms a skin and boils over when it is cooked. Milk proteins are responsible for this anomaly: some curdle when heated to a boiling point and form a thin skin on the surface of the liquid. The water accumulates below this skin, which then rises, and the milk overflows.

Tip: Stir milk as it begins to boil. The milk proteins will trap small air bubbles and will create foam. This helps to stop the milk from boiling over.

∨ What is pasteurization? Does this process affect the quality of the milk?

Pasteurization is a process developed by Louis Pasteur in which milk is heated to a temperature of at least 72°C for a short period of time. This destroys all harmful pathogens that may exist in the milk, but does not adversely affect its nutritional value.

∨ What is meant by "homogenization"?

Homogenization means that the milk is pushed through very small nozzles at a pressure of 150 bar. The small globules of milk fat are broken down through this process and evenly distributed. Homogenization makes it nearly impossible for the milk fat to separate from the liquid and the milk becomes more digestible as well.

∨ What is the difference between sweet cream and cultured butter?

Sweet cream butter is made directly from fresh cream. Cultured butter, on the other hand, is made from cream that has undergone an acidification or souring process. In the olden days, it was not possible to prevent cream from souring naturally on mountain pastures and Alpine farms, due to the lack of proper refrigeration. Today we love the unique and fresh taste of cultured butter, so dairies have developed processes in which selected lactic acid bacteria are added to cream to sour it.

∨ What are the differences – other than taste – between cow's milk and goat's milk?

One important difference is the structure of the milk fats. In goat's milk, they are held together by a fairly weak bond and can be broken down easily. This makes goat's milk easier to digest. Goat's milk is also a fabulous source of amino acids, vitamins and minerals. For those who suffer from lactose intolerance (an allergy to milk), goat's milk and its derivatives offer a viable alternative.

∨ What is so special about Mila milk and other milk products from Mila?

South Tyrol was the first area in Europe to institute a region-wide policy of GMO-free fodder. This means a sweeping ban on genetically modified feed. Antibiotics, hormones and low-quality food additives are also strictly prohibited. Purchased fodder must also be of 100% plant origin and completely free of GMOs and other additives.

∨ Mass farming is increasingly under fire. What are the housing conditions like on Mila's cooperative member farms?

The typical Mila dairy farm has an average of only 12 cows. This has positive ramifications on milk quality and, of course, the animals benefit greatly. It requires extra effort on the part of the farmers, though: most are forced to seek a source of supplementary income.

∨ What are the cows that produce Mila's dairy products fed?

Purchased fodder must also be of 100% plant origin, GMO free, and have no other additives.

∨ Quantity versus quality: how much milk do Mila's dairy farms produce?

Each of Mila's approximately 2,700 member farms produces about 75,000 litres of milk annually. This extremely small output – compared to the rest of Europe – is mainly due to the small size of South Tyrol's peasant farms. Mila's member dairies keep an average of only 12 cows per barn. This small scale brings with it a deep-rooted, very sound philosophy: quality is more important than quantity.

In addition, Mila pays its member farms in a way that is commensurate with the quality of the milk they deliver. This encourages Mila's member farmers to focus on producing high-quality milk rather than large quantities of milk.

∨ Is it true that UHT milk lacks the most valuable nutrients of regular milk?

Elevated temperatures do lower the concentration of heat-sensitive vitamins like B1, B6, B12, C, and folic acid in UHT milk. How much is lost depends on the heat load: pasteurization loses less than 10%, while the UHT process can lose between 0 and 20%. Vitamin content is also reduced over time: how much is lost depends on the type of storage as well as its duration. (Sources: Renner 1982 / Eberhard, Bütikofer & Sieber 2003)

∨ What's the best way to eat Mila Skyr?

Mila fruit Skyr is normally eaten as it comes, for breakfast or as a snack. Plain Skyr tastes best if you add a little fruit, honey, muesli, dried fruit or whatever takes your fancy. Skyr is also a versatile ingredient in the kitchen and can be used in salads, as a dip or as an ingredient for desserts.

