

# Milk Substitutes, Nutritional Supplements, and Infant Formulas



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## Milk Substitutes

There are many people who choose to not use cow's milk due to allergies, sensitivities, or other reasons. For most of the year, these people have a plethora of choices which are certified kosher, but there are almost none which are kosher for Pesach. This article will explore the reasons why so few of these items are available for Pesach, as well as present suitable options.

### Concerns

The milk substitute which is most obviously not suitable for Pesach is **oat milk**, as it is a *chametz* mixture of oats and water.

*Chametz* might also be present in one of these types of beverages as an enzyme, which is to say that one way to convert bland-tasting rice into a sweet-tasting **rice milk** is by using an enzyme produced from barley in a process known as saccharification. There is a minimal amount of barley in the rice milk, but it cannot be *batel b'shishim* because it has such a pronounced effect on the rice (*davar hama'amid*). (Other rice milk is produced without this enzyme and can be *chametz*-free.)

A related issue is that the lactase enzyme used to create lactose-free cow's milk is itself produced in a process called "Koji fermentation" which uses *chametz* components. (For this reason one may not add lactase drops to milk on Pesach, although one may swallow lactase tablets which are not chewable.) However, in this case, the enzyme's role is not considered a *davar hama'amid*; therefore, one may use lactose-free cow's milk purchased before Pesach because the enzyme was already *batel b'shishim* before *Yom Tov*.

Other possible *chametz* concerns in all milk substitutes are the vitamins and flavors. These items tend to be *kitnios* rather than *chametz*, but they are made of so many components that even those who oversee *hashgachah* at these companies must expend considerable effort to determine the status of each specific one. For example, one vanilla flavor which cRc certifies contains 9 ingredients plus 2 sub-formulas, and the sub-formulas contain 15 of their own ingredients. These 24 ingredients are produced by companies all over the world, under a wide assortment of *hashgachos*.

In addition to the possibility of *chametz* in each beverage, the primary ingredient in **soy milk** and **rice milk**, is, by definition, *kitnios*. Additionally, most milk substitutes contain other *kitnios* ingredients, such as vegetable oil or thickeners.

A final concern is the equipment on which these beverages are processed. Every milk substitute must be pasteurized at hot temperatures. This means that even if the product itself is free of *chametz* and *kitnios*, it may not be suitable for Pesach use if it was processed on the same equipment as *chametz*. This issue has become more significant in recent years, as the market for oat milk has expanded.

### Options

Due to all the concerns noted above, very few companies are willing to go to the lengths required to produce a milk substitute which is certified as kosher for Pesach. This year, there are some non-*kitnios* milk substitutes available with *hashgachah* for Pesach, and those are surely a first choice. Another alternative is to search the internet where one can find myriad simple recipes and instructions for producing milk-substitutes at home. Individuals can, thereby, create their own milk substitutes using kosher for Pesach ingredients.

Recognizing that these options are not for everyone, each year the OU investigates different milk substitutes that they certify to determine which, if any, can be recommended for consumers for Pesach. (The OU graciously allows us to make that information available in this Guide, at [www.crckosher.org/consumer](http://www.crckosher.org/consumer), [www.ASKcRc.org](http://www.ASKcRc.org), and on our apps.) These items do not meet the OU or cRc criteria to be certified as kosher for Pesach, but rather are just “recommended” for those with specific medical needs. For example, some, such as **soy milk** and **rice milk**, are obviously *kitnios* and are, therefore, only permitted for those who are ill or have some other special reason why they must consume a given product. Any consumers who are considering using these beverages should consult with their Rabbi before doing so. Similarly, some of the recommended beverages may contain other *kitnios* ingredients, or ingredients which are not suitable for Pesach, but are *batel* in the finished product. Thus, for some consumers, these are acceptable to use on Pesach, but they cannot be certified for Pesach and are not “recommended” for the general public. (Consumers who use these items should consult with their Rabbi as to whether they may be used and washed with Pesach dishes.)

### Nutritional Supplements and Infant Formulas

Two related questions are the use of nutritional supplements for those who cannot obtain the required nutrition through a regular diet, and infant formulas for babies. These share many of the same issues as the milk substitutes, in that they generally contain *kitnios* and contain vitamins and other components whose *chametz/kitnios* status is very difficult to determine. Once again, these items cannot be certified as kosher for Pesach, and the OU provides a list of products which it recommends.

There are, however, a few significant differences between these products (nutritional supplements and infant formula) and milk substitutes. Firstly, by their very nature, supplements and formulas are used by people who are invariably permitted to consume *kitnios* (i.e., the infirm and infants). Similarly, these people do not have reasonable alternatives, and, therefore, it is perfectly acceptable for them to use items which rely on *bitul* or other *halachic* considerations that do not apply to those who wish to use milk substitutes. Lastly, there is little concern of these items being produced on the same equipment as *chametz* beverages, such as oat milk. (That said, some supplements contain oats or other *chametz*, and those are not recommended for Pesach.) Accordingly, the list of approved supplements and formulas tends to be much more extensive than the list of approved milk substitutes.

