



HEALTH TIP: Bitter melon helps to maintain a healthy kidney and bladder and prevents kidney stones



Apricots contain the calcium, phosphorus, manganese, iron and copper, all of which are necessary for bone growth

Dairy-free curds? There's a whey!

From peanuts to coconut and soybean, there are plenty of plant-based yoghurt alternatives for vegans and those with lactose intolerance

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When Susmitha Subbaraju, owner of vegan restaurant Carrots in Koramangala, turned vegan 14 years ago, one of her main concerns was finding a substitute for curd that was a part of her daily diet. After sampling soy curd, the most popular vegan substitute, Subbaraju found a relatively fail-proof recipe for making it at home. Five years later, she stumbled upon a peanut curd recipe

and since then she has experimented with various other plant-based milk and curd substitutes such as rice, coconut and even, flax seeds. "People think that once you turn vegan, your options are limited. But the fact is that it opens you out to many more varieties," Subbaraju says. Having said that, she admits that there are limited vegan curd options readily available at supermarkets. "Since plant-based curd can be made at home, most vegans who like to have curd on a regular basis either make it themselves or then source it from specialty stores." Here's a look at some varieties of vegan curd available in the city, and how you can make them at home.



Soya curd buttermilk

"We use soy curd to make buttermilk and curd rice, as well as our smoothies. Most people who have our buttermilk are surprised as they don't see a difference between the soya buttermilk and the dairy version. Once you add onions or ginger and chillies to the buttermilk, you don't get any other taste," says Subbaraju. Well-fermented soya curd is also quite sour, making it perfect for a host of South Indian dishes such as majjige huli (Mangalorean style curd-based vegetable dish), aviyal (Kerala style vegetable stew), kadhi, raita, etc. However, Subbaraju warns against using tetrapak soya milk, as they have additives that stop the milk from curdling.

"I use soybean powder (made out of non-GMO soybeans) sourced from Madhya Pradesh. We use that powder to make a milk and then curd with it." While an older culture will give you better results in the form of tastier and creamier curd, there are other vegan starter alternatives such as chilli crowns and the water used to soak dal. "A lot of people soak dal at home for making idlis; that water gets a little sour and makes for a good starter." Another vegan starter is rejuvelac (fermented grain water).

Make it at home: Soak soybean overnight. Wash it well and get out as much of the skin as you can. For 100gm of soybean, add up to one-and-a-half litres of water and grind it well. Bring it to boil and then cook it for 15 to 20 minutes on a low flame till the raw smell is gone. Stir it once in a while. Strain this mixture, allow it to cool until lukewarm, then add a starter (either some vegan curd or 15 chilli crowns). Cover and let it sit in a warm place for 12-24 hours. Because of the rich protein content, this curd sets very well.

Coconut yoghurt

The coconut yoghurt (GoYo) bar at Foodhall, is a welcome sight for most vegans or those with lactose intolerance. The yoghurt has a distinct coconut flavour and is naturally sweet, making it perfect for no-cook desserts such as parfaits or even to be had on its own. Talking about the health benefits of the yoghurt, Swasti Aggarwal, food strategist, Foodhall, says, "Coconut yoghurt has all the qualities of coconut milk - it's anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory. It also has probiotics." GoYo is made by mixing coconut milk with coconut powder and a thickener such as cornflour. To set the yoghurt, probiotic supplements are added. and



kept aside till the yoghurt forms. At her restaurant, Subbaraju also makes a coconut milk but it's more runny and sour in taste. "I use the thick extract of coconut milk but without any thickeners and hence, it's not a set curd."

Make it at home: If you are using canned coconut milk or cream, use the full fat version. For fresh coconut milk, use the thick extract if you want a thicker curd. Empty it into a bowl; if the milk has separated whisk until it's smooth. Empty two vegan-friendly probiotic capsules into the milk (about 400ml) and mix well. Cover with a thin cheese cloth and secure it with a rubber band. Let it set in a warm corner of your kitchen for 24 hours. From one coconut, you can get about half a litre of creamy curd.



With pinkish tinge (because of the skin), peanut curd is a popular choice among vegans. At Subbaraju's dairy alternatives workshops, participants are often surprised by the nutty yet tasty curd. "Peanuts have a lot of natural oil and this helps make the curd thick and creamy. And because of the nutty taste, it gives a nice flavour to most savoury dishes that use curd," she adds. Both peanut curd and soya curd are rich in protein and have zero cholesterol. Apart from Carrots which makes peanut curd on order, there are food delivery start-ups such as Veganarke that will deliver peanut curd to your doorstep.

Make it at home: Even if you use 100gm of peanut it will make 1kgkg of curd. To make the curd, you can either soak the peanuts overnight or roast it and then grind it with a litre of water. You have to boil this mix till the raw smell goes away. Then, if you want, you can strain this

Peanut curd



mixture or you can leave it as it is; then add the starter (either some vegan curd or 15 chilli crowns) and leave it to set. If you don't strain the mixture, the curd will have a slightly grainy texture but it won't be hard because it softens after fermentation. The peanut skin will give it a slight pinkish tint.

Apart from these vegan curd options, many people also experiment with different varieties of plant-based milks to make yoghurt. "We are currently trying out recipes to make flaxseed yoghurt which is more nutritious.

I know of someone who has made curd out of melon seeds as well as cashews. And I have myself tried a rice milk and peanut milk curd combination," Subbaraju adds. Perhaps, the best part is the fact that these vegan curds have all the benefits associated with the main ingredient (proteins from soybean or peanut; antioxidants from coconut) apart from probiotic qualities.

