

Simple Solutions for Food Substitutions

As I sit in my office typing this article, I am surrounded by the heat, smoke filled skies, and the looming threat of a virus that has placed us in a state of isolation for the past 6 months! Depressing, right? It could be if we choose to focus on the negative and succumb to the doom and gloom of our current climate. Instead, let's look for the silver linings and explore a positive aspect of the world we live in today, one with advances in the science of food technology and a wide array of food options for those of us that struggle to find nourishment due to ailments or lifestyle choice. The need to eliminate certain foods from our diet can be a daunting task, but there are often some simple solutions for these food substitutions.

I love coffee! It's kind of weird though because as a kid I thought it was the most disgusting thing in the world! Then I discovered two things, white chocolate mochas and my friend Deborah. She revolutionized coffee for me! She started with whole beans, a clean coffee pot or French press, and only brewed a few cups at a time so it was fresh! Frothed milk or cream and a fancy tall coffee cup, and my experience with coffee changed forever. I became a coffee snob overnight! Sadly, as I got older, coffee stopped agreeing with me. It gave me the jitters, and its acidity wreaked havoc on my delicate digestive tract. I went looking for a solution. I must admit, there is really nothing like coffee, but there is a little thing called chicory root. It is naturally caffeine free, and low in acid. Plus, it is high in fiber and good for your gut flora. It usually comes in an instant form and is easy to make. I have tried it in coffee mixes and it is delicious, but I must admit, I have never tried it alone. What I can attest to is another coffee alternative known as Maya nut which offers benefits similar to chicory root but is prepared exactly the same as traditional coffee!

I love my coffee (or alternative) with lots of cream and sugar, but I am always on a quest to find a healthier way to consume my morning cup of Joe.



Nutrition Notes by Natalie

This is how I stumbled upon a couple of good alternatives: coconut and almond milk blended creamer AND more recently, hemp cream! I haven't tried it yet, but the reviews look promising. Not only that, but it just so happens to be dairy free, plant based, low in sugar and fat.

True confession. I love all dairy, but especially milk! However, the majority of us, 65% to be exact, suffer from lactose intolerance preventing us from consuming dairy products on a regular basis. Personally, lactose is not my issue, but I must have a slight intolerance or allergy to dairy because it tends to exacerbate my sinusitis. At any rate, I am always on the lookout for a decent tasting alternate like Oat Milk. It is similar in taste, texture, calories, fat, and carbohydrate content. It may not be as high in protein, but it does have about 2 grams of dietary fiber, is vegan, nut, soy, and lactose free! I have tried a lot of milk options, but this one is by far the most similar to regular milk, in my humble opinion.

I think I should have been born Italian because I could live on pasta! Being a dietitian, I prefer to eat whole wheat versions but they do not seem to agree with my tummy. My solution? Well, two actually. First, and foremost, zoodles! They are long pieces of stringed zucchini that look just like spaghetti. Boil them slightly in hot water and serve with your favorite sauce. They are delicious and they are even offered at places like The Old Spaghetti Factory! If squash is not your scene, there are some plant based pastas like lentil, black bean, chickpea, or even edamame that are pretty good. They also offer a healthy dose of fiber and protein, plus many of them are gluten free.

So, let's change the lens a bit and choose to look ahead with optimism. Sure, we are in a time of challenging events, but this same era of time also offers amazing advancements in food science, allowing us access to food alternatives where once there were none.

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