

Hacks to make coffee healthier

Anne Linge, RDN, CD, CDE asked if we have any **hacks to make coffee healthier...** and we were so inspired by her question that we're launching a whole coffee series! Today I want to present the first installment: a coffee creamer comparison chart.

You see, a lot of people don't think much about what they add to their morning coffee, but that choice matters, especially in terms of daily calories, sugar consumption, and saturated fat levels.

Sure, some of the comparisons are a bit obvious -- of course heavy cream has more calories and saturated fat than whole milk -- but others can be surprising. For instance, did you know that coconut milk has almost as much fat as heavy cream? And that fat-free half and half has twice as much sugar as regular half and half? Add flavored creamers, nut milks, and other variations to the mix and things can get downright confusing.

Well, they could... but that's why we're here!

Let's un-complicate things, shall we?

We'll start with a chart. **My team and I compared the 11 most popular liquids that people are adding to their coffee** -- everything from traditional cream to unsweetened almond milk. We explored total calories, fat content, saturated fat content, grams of protein, and levels of sugar, then put all of our findings in a handy chart.

Check it out!



Coffee Creamer Comparison

Make a smart choice for best health!

Creamer	Serving Size	Calories	Fat	Saturated Fat	Protein	Sugars
French Vanilla Creamer	4 oz	280	12 g	0 g	0 g	40 g
Heavy Cream	4 oz	200	20 g	14 g	2.5 g	4 g
Coconut Milk	4 oz	180	18 g	15 g	0 g	1.5 g
Coffee-Mate Original	4 oz	160	8 g	0 g	0 g	0 g
Half and Half	4 oz	80	6 g	4 g	2 g	2 g
Whole Milk	4 oz	75	4 g	2.5 g	4 g	6 g
Silk Original Soy Milk	4 oz	55	2.3 g	0.3 g	4 g	3 g
Fat-Free Half and Half	4 oz	40	0 g	0 g	3.2 g	4 g
Ripple Original Unsweetened Plant-Based Milk	4 oz	37.5	2.5 g	0.3 g	4 g	0 g
Almond Breeze Original Almond Milk	4 oz	15	1.3 g	0 g	0.5 g	0 g

The packages often had different serving sizes listed in their Nutrition Facts, but this chart compares the same amounts of each creamer for the most straightforward evaluation, thanks to a little math.

Which creamer will you choose?

Wow!

Let's look at the winners: almond milk has the fewest calories, while whole milk, pea milk (Ripple) and soy milk tied for best protein content.

Now let's talk about the ones you should watch out for. Many people assume that coconut milk is heart healthy, but it's loaded with saturated fat, not to mention calories! Another one to carefully think about is the French vanilla coffee creamer -- with 40 grams of sugar in a dinky half cup, that creamer could throw off your nutrition plan for the whole day!

And speaking of serving size...

The packages had lots of different serving sizes listed in their Nutrition Facts. Heavy cream called for a tablespoon, as did the vanilla creamer, while others listed their nutrition information by the cup, like whole milk and almond milk. Many other creamers had a serving size of 2 tablespoons. How could we compare such different amounts?

For the most straightforward evaluation, we decided to compare the same amounts of each creamer. So we did a little math and compared a half cup serving of each liquid. If you're only using a splash or a dash of one, its impact will of course be less than if you're pouring a half cup or more.

We pulled manufacturer's data from peapod.com and calorieking.com in order to get the most accurate numbers.

And just between you and me, Ripple is hands-down my favorite. It's a plant-based half and half alternative that's dairy-free and made with pea protein. I'm able to cook with it and I love to use the unsweetened version in soups.

Anyway, that wraps up the first installment, but never fear! More is on the way!

We'll follow up with the most healthful ways to prepare coffee, along with a closer look at the health impact of many popular coffee drinks from restaurants like Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts. We'll also dig into the cost of coffee and address the effects of caffeine.