

1996 Presented Rough Year For Dairy Producers

GEORGE F.W. HAENLEIN
Cooperative Extension
Dairy Specialist
University of Delaware

NEWARK, Del. — I think we should give ourselves a bit of cheer for the New Year.

For many of us, 1996 has been a rough year. Yet it also offered some sunshine in between all the snowstorms, ice, rain and floods.

Statistics bear out that this past year was the wettest on record since 1883. Prices for grain feed were high, and good milk prices fleeting — going up promisingly and then slumping again.

There were also the worries about the influence of the cheese auction in Wisconsin and the uncertainties about the reorganization of milk marketing orders. Still we are thankful once again for health and happiness in both our two-legged and four-legged families, and hope for more in 1997!

I want to add to this good cheer some thoughts about why we should continue to feel good about being in the milk business. Although we are "milking fools," working with our dairy animals — dairy cows, dairy goats and dairy sheep — twice or three times a

day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, mostly with no vacation. Then there is the feeding and breeding our animals to ever higher performance just to stay in business and ahead of the creditors.

And we work with animals that are themselves "milking fools," with their yields exceeding 100 pounds per day for cows or 15 pounds per day for the little goats, or 20,000 pounds per 10-month cow lactation or 5,000 pounds per goat lactation — levels that were unheard of just a few years ago. With an average short life span of only 4 to 5 years (which defies the economics of longevity), we are producing from the mother of all food animals the best food in the world — milk — a food that excels all foods in its natural quality and its contribution to human nutrient requirements.

So, at the turn to the New Year, my thoughts are full of thanks for all the two-legged and four-legged milking fools that, despite all the hardships and economic questions, make sure people have a wonderful milk supply. There is no other food like milk — a food that offers complete nutrition (proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals) and refreshment, all packaged in one.

And because of its complete balance of nutrients, milk is the

only food that never spoils. If you put a piece of hamburger and some apples and a glass of milk on a table, leave them for four weeks, when you return you will find that the hamburger and the apples have spoiled and putrefied. Not true for the milk. The only thing that will have happened to the milk is that it turned sour, became like yogurt and, more likely than not, already is in the state of a cheese. This just-fermented cheese, surrounded by edible whey, which is only the change of milk in appearance and structure. It is perfectly fine to eat, and for some people, even more delicious than the original milk. This fermentation is a natural process accomplished without the addition of any preservative!

Thus, milk is not only a perfectly balanced food between its proteins, carbohydrates and fats, but it is unique in its composition too. In last month's *Cowtale*, I discussed some of the distinctive values of short-chain and medium-chain length fatty acids that make up butter and milk fat to such a significant degree, giving us fatty acids, which are not fattening but provide direct energy and cholesterol protection instead. I told you that feeding cows differently can increase or decrease these beneficial fatty acids in butter.

Another most significant con-

Following is a table of the best sources.

	CONTENT	FOR 800 MILLIGRAM
Skim milk	302 per 8 ounce cup	2 6 cups needed
Whole milk	288 " " " "	2 8 " "
Chocolate milk	280 " " " "	2 9 " "
Plain yoghurt	415 " " " "	1 9 " "
Fruit yoghurt	314 " " " "	2 5 " "
Ice cream	330 " " " "	2 4 " "
Cottage cheese	310 " " " "	2 5 " "
Ricotta, part skim	674 " " " "	1 2 " "
American cheese	174 per 1 ounce	4 6 ounces needed
Roquefort	188 " " " "	4 2 " "
Cheddar	204 " " " "	3 9 " "
Monterey Jack	212 " " " "	3 8 " "
Swiss	272 " " " "	2 9 " "
Parmesan	390 " " " "	2 0 " "
Dry milk	120 " " " "	6.6 " "
Sardines + bones	101 " " " "	7 9 " "
Salmon + bones	81 " " " "	9.9 " "
Mustard greens	46 " " " "	17 4 " "
Collard greens	38 " " " "	21 0 " "
Tofu	37 " " " "	21 6 " "
Turnip greens	34 " " " "	23 5 " "
Broccoli	25 " " " "	32 0 " "

As you can see from this table that milk, yogurt and cheese are by far the best sources of the vital mineral calcium for us, at least in those amounts of food that humans could reasonably be expected to eat every day. This list gives only the best foods in terms of calcium. That is why I feel good about being part of the "milking fools," both the two-legged and four-legged kind, and thank them this season for their hard work. I hope you do too

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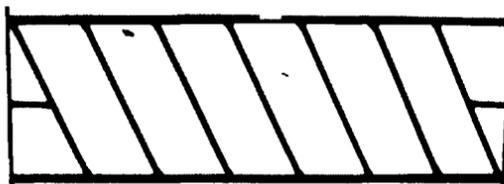
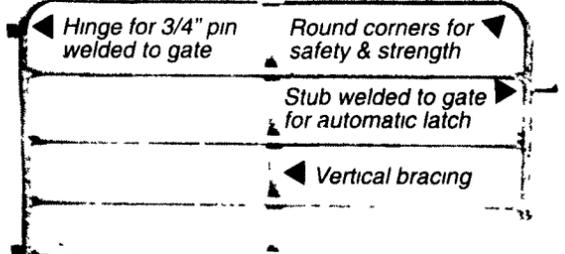
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