

# Segan Dairy

MAKING MILK, BUTTER & CHEESE FROM NUTS & SEEDS



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# NUTS & SEEDS - A GUIDE

Nuts and seeds are nature's own smart foods. They are jam-packed with minerals, protein, antioxidants and healthy unsaturated fats. Studies have shown that the risk of cardiovascular disease, among other illnesses, may decrease in those who consume nuts regularly in moderate amounts.

In this section, I mention useful techniques to get the most from nuts and seeds when making vegan dairy products. I also detail some of my favourite types of nuts and seeds (and oats!) that I use in the book.

## WHAT IS A NUT?

Botanically speaking, nuts are defined as single-seeded fruits that are hard, dry and encased in a shell. Yet, the word 'nut' also covers edible fruit stones or drupes, as well as pistachios that are actually seeds, and not forgetting peanuts that are legumes. However, what all nuts have in common is that they make delicious vegan dairy products.

## SOAKING

Unpasteurized or raw nuts contain phytic acid, which means that our bodies can't absorb the minerals found in them. While enzyme inhibiting substances also found in nuts can make them difficult to digest. The answer is to soak them before use so they are easier to digest and their minerals are more accessible and can be absorbed by the body. Soaked nuts also have a milder, rounder flavour and are much softer and easier to blend or grind. In most cases, the nuts you buy from shops are pasteurized, but I would still recommend soaking them first just in case. I also suggest soaking seeds for the same reasons.

To soak nuts (and seeds), place them in a jar and cover with water – room temperature, not chilled. Put the lid on and leave to stand in the fridge overnight. The next morning, drain the nuts (and seeds) and rinse them in clean water. Use them to make vegan milk, cheese, cream or yogurt, or you can activate the nuts (see page 22) to make nut butter or flour.



## ACTIVATING

Activated or dried nuts are super delicious made into butter, ground into flour or eaten as a snack with a little sprinkling of sea salt. Activating nuts involves drying them at a low heat after soaking. Drying can take 8–12 hours in a dehydrator, but if you haven't got one, then you can dry them in a standard oven. To do this, preheat the oven to 110°C/225°F/Gas Mark ¼. Place the nuts on a baking tray (sheet) in the oven for 12–24 hours until dry and crisp. It also possible to activate or dry seeds using the same methods.

## NUTRITION AND SOAKING TIMES

Here is a selection of my favourite nuts and seeds (and oats) with approximate soaking times where relevant.

### Cashew nuts

The cashew nut is packed with fibre, protein and antioxidants as well as minerals such as magnesium and zinc. It's one of the most popular nuts for making vegan dairy products since it has a great creamy texture and flavour and is very easy to buy.

Soaking time: 8 hours.

### Hazelnuts

The hazelnut is rich in B vitamins and vitamin E as well as minerals such as phosphorus, calcium and magnesium. Personally, I think they taste best toasted, but they're not too shabby used in chocolate milk either.

Soaking time: 8 hours.

### Peanuts

The peanut is rich in protein and fat and has a high fibre content. Peanut butter is probably the most popular nut butter and it's ridiculously tasty.

Soaking time: 8 hours.

### Coconut

What a super nut – well, it's actually a stone fruit! The flesh of the coconut is packed with fibre and minerals. The coconut is very versatile, the flesh is grated (shredded) into flakes, pressed to produce oil, while coconut sugar is made using the nectar from the coconut palm's flowers.

Soaking time: None.

### Macadamia nuts

My personal favourite nut. I love this fatty, creamy nut, which comes from Australia. The macadamia makes excellent nut butters, cream and milk and is rich in iron, magnesium and omega-3 fats.

Soaking time: 8 hours.

### Almonds

The almond is the most nutritious nut available. It contains high levels of magnesium and vitamins B and E, which are great for supporting the immune system. The almond is also rich in iron, fibre and protein. Use blanched almonds, or if they still have their skins on, rub them off the nuts after soaking.

Soaking time: 8–12 hours.

### Pecan nuts

This beautiful brown nut originates from the southern parts of America and is rich in unsaturated fat and protein. Traditionally, the nut is used in desserts and ice creams, but it works perfectly in vegan milk and butter as well.

Soaking time: 4–6 hours.

### Pistachio nuts

A crunchy nut with high levels of antioxidants that help maintain healthy cholesterol levels in the body. With origins in the Middle East, pistachios are pretty expensive, but are so incredibly delicious. Look for unsalted ones.

Soaking time: 6 hours.

### Walnuts

The walnut is rich in omega-3 fats, vitamin E, magnesium and antioxidants. This combination of nutrients and because it actually looks like a brain are the reasons why I like to call it the 'brain nut' – it contains a whole lot of what our brains actually need!

Soaking time: 8 hours.

### Hemp seeds

Hemp seeds are a favourite. They are so easy to use as they don't need pre-soaking (especially the hulled or shelled variety) and can be added to all kinds of recipes. Hemp seeds are rich in protein, fibre and omega-3 fats.

Soaking time: None.

### **Pumpkin seeds**

Pumpkin seeds are mainly rich in minerals and vitamin E. They are great to use in vegan dairy products and can be added to a variety of dishes.

Soaking time: 8 hours.

### **Sesame seeds**

Sesame seeds are calcium-rich and are traditionally used whole in Asian cooking, but the tiny seeds are also turned into spreads, butters and pastes in Arabic and North African dishes.

Soaking time: 8 hours.

### **Sunflower seeds**

Sunflower seeds are super tasty just as they are or when toasted and can be used in salads, muesli and breads. They're a favourite of mine in vegan dairy products, since the seeds are fairly cheap and easy to use. Sunflower seeds are rich in B vitamins and minerals, particularly magnesium.

Soaking time: 2 hours.

### **Oats**

Although not a nut or a seed, oats are a really good friend of your heart – they contain beta glucans, a type of dietary fibre that can lower cholesterol levels in the body. Beta glucans have a jelly-like consistency when soaked, so when making oat milk it's important to use the right amount or the milk can have a slimy consistency. Oats are also a fantastic source of protein. And best of all? Oats are super cheap. Making oat-based milk, porridge, muesli and energy bars is not just healthy for you, but is good economically too.

Soaking time: None.

