



MEDIA RELEASE

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Dairy-inspired winter warmers to sustain your energy on cold days

The mid-winter chill brings a sense of contraction, and it's natural to feel like curling up under a blanket rather than stepping out. But no matter the weather, our busy lives go on and we have little choice but to wrap up as best we can and get through these colder days. What helps is to focus on nourishing meals and snacks that give us comfort, sustained energy and the nutrition we need to support the immune system and maintain overall health.

While cold milk, smoothies and yoghurt bowls might be less appealing at the moment, versatile dairy remains a key ingredient in a wide range of winter warming dishes. This ensures that everyone in the family is still getting their three servings of dairy a day. From wholesome soups and hearty stews to warm snacks and family favourite bakes, dairy adds richness, flavour, and essential nutrients.

Aiming for two servings of dairy a day, paired with vegetables or meat, will help you to achieve sustained energy over these winter months.



According to Maretha Vermaak, Registered Dietitian at Rediscover Dairy, milk, maas, yoghurt and cheese provide sustained energy that may help us to shake off the sluggishness of winter, and support peak performance at work, studies and school. She says, "This is because dairy has a unique combination of high-quality protein and carbohydrates with a low GI (Glycaemic Index). Digestion and the absorption of dairy products is timed perfectly to prevent energy crashes, helping us feel full for longer and giving us the vigour we need to get through our demanding days."

For inspiration, Rediscover Dairy has curated eight winter-ready recipes to warm you from the inside out.

Comfort and nourishment

Warm dairy-based meals are cheering, but also nutrient-dense and satisfying. We find both the emotional and physical warmth that dairy brings to the table in winter favourites like cheesy bakes, hearty soups, and creamy pastas. Dairy not only adds flavour, indulgent texture and deep satisfaction, but packs a nutritional punch. Adding milk, cheese or yoghurt to your mid-week meals will make a substantial contribution to your recommended daily allowance for bone-building calcium. Try:



Chicken Alfredo Pasta

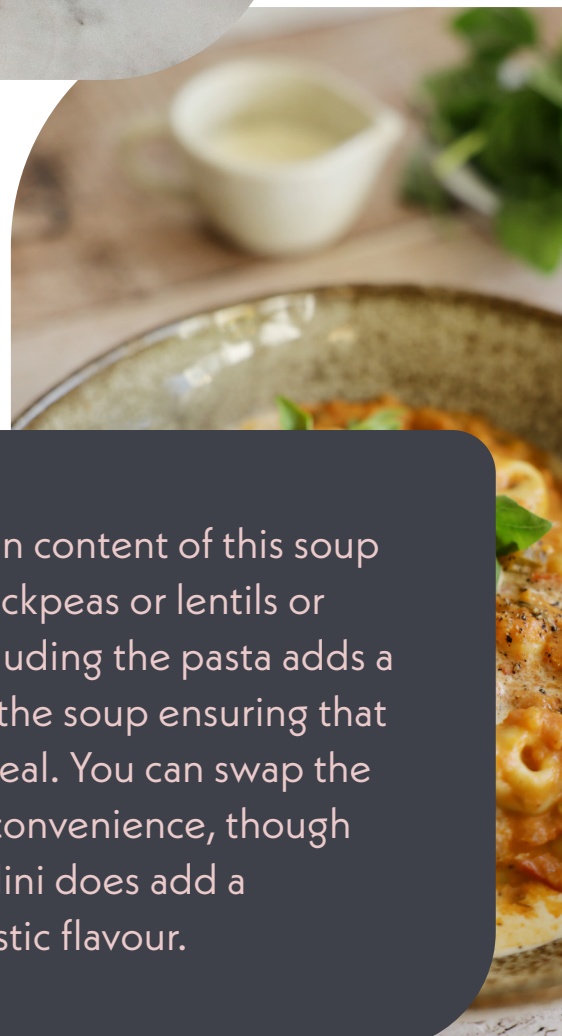
By swapping out cream for yoghurt, this is a wholesome chicken and mushroom take on a classic favourite, perfect for a quick and easy mid-week family supper.

Tip: In winter we spend less time in the sunny outdoors and levels of vitamin D can drop. Mushrooms are a great source of dietary vitamin D. Prepare ahead by slicing the mushrooms and leaving them to 'suntan' in direct sunlight for 15 or more minutes. This boosts the mushrooms vitamin D content.



Creamy Tomato Soup with spinach & ricotta tortellini

Winter soups don't have to cook for hours. This is a quick take on a nourishing and tasty soup that is easy to put together on a busy weeknight.



Tip: You will boost the protein content of this soup by adding a tin of drained chickpeas or lentils or shredded chicken breast. Including the pasta adds a delicious heft and texture to the soup ensuring that it is a completely satisfying meal. You can swap the tortellini with orzo for more convenience, though the spinach and ricotta tortellini does add a welcome extra veg and fantastic flavour.

Dairy as a versatile ingredient in hearty winter cooking

If you usually notch up your daily dairy servings by eating cereal with milk, a glass of cold maas, a yoghurt as a snack or a smoothie, you may need to look out for different ways to include dairy in your winter-warming meals. Luckily, this is not hard, because milk, maas, cheese, yoghurt and buttermilk will enhance just about everything. These delicious mains are a treat on any day, as well as inspired choices for winter entertaining:

Pork Schnitzel stuffed with mozzarella, ham and spinach

This take on a classic Cordon Bleu recipe combines the outer crunch of panko crumbs with a melting, succulent centre.

Tip: Make sure the spinach is well-drained before folding in the other ingredients as you don't want a watery stuffing. This dish pairs well with green beans and dairy-enhanced mashed potatoes – you can add milk, butter and even, cheese.





Buttermilk butter chicken with potato paratha and pickled carrots


There's nothing quite like a sensational curry dish, fragrant with warming spices, to bring special comfort on a cold winter's night.

Tip: Buttermilk is the subtle hero ingredient in this recipe. It's the base of the spicy chicken marinade, bringing tenderness, creaminess and a unique spectrum of nutrients. Plan ahead so that the chicken pieces can marinate for at least a few hours, or even overnight.

Immunity support in winter

Dairy contains essential nutrients like vitamin A, zinc, and selenium which support immune function. Keep your focus on staying well during cold and flu season, especially for families with young children or older adults. When it feels too cold for chilled salads, focus instead on the wide variety of in-season vegetables that can be grilled, baked and roasted. These dishes are elevated with dairy as a hero ingredient:






Roasted Baby Carrots with whipped feta and ricotta dip

This dish of bright orange carrots served on a silky, cheesy bed is a wonderful side with roasts and stews or as a starter at your next winter braai.

Tip: To save time, make the dip ahead and refrigerate until it's time to serve. Pairing carrots with this two-cheese dip boosts both your daily vitamin A and protein intake. It's so delicious, it can also be enjoyed as a micro meal or snack.

Whole baked cauliflower with cheese sauce

Preparing cauliflower with a luscious cheese sauce not only gets the whole family happily eating this fibre-rich veg but combines dairy's high-quality protein with cauliflower's exceptional nutritional profile.



Tip: Milk, cheese and cauliflower are excellent sources of choline, an under-appreciated nutrient that plays an important role in brain health and cognitive function. Together, this pairing is also rich in an array of essential vitamins and minerals.



Warm dairy-based snacks and small meals

Hot milk drinks, cheese toasties, savoury muffins with cheese, or baked oats with warm milk are cosy and nutritious options for in-between meals. If you are often experiencing energy slumps, you might want to try five micro meals a day instead of traditional breakfast, lunch and supper. In either regime, be conscious of portion-size, especially when it comes to sweet treats. These micro meal ideas are super-satisfying and tick the box for nutritional value too:

Potato fritters with smoked salmon, whipped feta cream cheese & pickled red onions


Fluffy potato fritters are a favourite comfort food, and this recipe pairs them with omega-3-rich smoked salmon and a flavour bomb of whipped lemon and feta cream cheese.

Tip: Dry out the grated potato well before combining with other ingredients for the best results. You can also cook the potatoes, allowing them to cool and dry before you use them as this improves the GI load of the fritters.



Melkkos

This cinnamon-infused, traditional South African dish is the ultimate in comfort food. It's an excellent way to use up surplus milk and can be enjoyed as a dessert or nourishing micro meal. This nostalgic recipe of dough crumbs simmered in full cream milk gives a classic, and satisfying, textured result.



Tip: Full cream milk isn't just a tasty base for traditional favourites like melkkos — it's also packed with important nutrients like calcium, protein and vitamin B12.

Maretha concludes, "Aiming for two servings of dairy a day, paired with vegetables or meat, will help you to achieve sustained energy over these winter months. Even though it's natural to feel a bit like hibernating, stay active as much as possible – take the stairs at work, put on your jacket and take a brisk walk to help you to regulate your energy and maintain muscle tone. Focus on smart, balanced eating that includes protein from dairy, eggs, legumes and lean meats; fibre-rich, slow-release carbohydrates and healthy fats. Be aware of how the winter cold may be affecting your lifestyle and eating habits. That will empower you to make some small adjustments if necessary to steady your energy, enhance the quality of your nutrition and enhance your well-being."



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