Is soy milk really milk?

1 **Read the text below and fill in the gaps with the terms given below.**

also • but • even today • however • in addition • in Europe • initially • since • therefore • traditionally

The soybean (*Glycine max*) is the world's foremost provider of protein and oil.

1. ..... the third century B.C.E., the Chinese have been cultivating soybeans, which were considered essential in their diet for the production of soy milk and tofu. Soybeans started to be used in Japan by the 6th century and in Europe by the 17th century.

Making soy milk was one of the early methods: in fact soy milk is nothing more than a milky liquid that is made by soaking soybeans, grinding them with water, cooking and filtering. **2.** ..... it may have been eaten as bean meal soup. **3.** ..... in China soy milk remains a drink that is processed and consumed in simple ways, though it is often sweetened and occasionally salted.

This traditional method – or modern variations of the same basic process – is still used in Asia and in the rest of the world, as it is also the simplest and least expensive method, which can be done both manually – at home with basic kitchen tools – or by commercial equipment in a modern plant.

4. ....., legislation prohibits soy milk manufacturers to label their products as soy milk; therefore, the denomination "soy drink" is used.

From a dietary point of view, plain soy milk is very nutritive: it is an excellent source of high quality proteins, iron content and B-vitamins, free of the milk sugar (lactose) and a good choice for people who are lactose-intolerant.

5. ....., it is a good alternative to those who are allergic to the proteins of cow's milk.

6. ....., soy milk contains only vegetable proteins, which have the advantage of causing less loss of calcium through the kidneys, while a diet rich in animal (and dairy) proteins may raise the risk for osteoporosis.

The FDA (Food and Drug Administration of US) confirms that soy protein, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may significantly reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and recommends to include 25 grams of soy protein in daily meals.



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7. ..... the most important benefit of soy milk is the presence of isoflavones: these have many health benefits, including reduction of cholesterol, easing of menopause symptoms, prevention of osteoporosis and reduction of prostate and breast cancers, whose incidence is very low in countries with high intake of soy products, including soy milk. Isoflavones are also antioxidants which protect our cells and DNA against oxidation.

There are, **8.** ....., some cons:

- when compared to the more commonly used cow's milk, soy milk contains far less calcium, a vitamin crucial for nourishing bone strength; **9.** ....., it must be fortified with calcium when given to growing children
- soy inhibits enzymes needed for the body to digest proteins, causing serious gastrointestinal distress and a chronic inability to take in amino acids
- over-consumption of soy isoflavones may trigger a thyroid condition or worsen an existing thyroid problem
- **10.** ....., soy milk has a beany taste which is well accepted by the Chinese, but less by the Western palate; to make the product more palatable to the consumer, some producers add thickeners, sugar and salt and highly concentrated flavourings, such as vanilla, carob, chocolate, and almond, thus increasing the number of calories per portion of soy milk.

2 Answer the questions.

1. Which legume is a significant source of protein and oil?
2. For what purpose have the Chinese been harvesting soybeans?
3. When did soybeans become part of the European diet?
4. What are the main steps in soy milk processing?
5. How is soy milk labelled in Europe?
6. Why is soy milk suggested to people allergic to cow's milk?
7. Why is it better to eat soy proteins than animal proteins to prevent the risk for osteoporosis?
8. Why is the incidence of prostate and breast cancers lower in Eastern countries?
9. Is soy milk safe for kids?
10. Is all soy milk low in calories?

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