

A2 milk: a new way to offer a flat white?

Lindsay Neill and Guo Jingsi

Dr Lindsay Neill is a senior lecturer in hospitality management at AUT. Lindsay holds research interests in vernacular culture, food, identity, and popular culture.



Guo Jingsi has recently completed a Master of Gastronomy qualification at AUT University, studying the impact of A2 milk within Aotearoa New Zealand's coffee and café culture. This is her first foray into academic publishing.

This research sought feedback from professional baristas on their views and experiences of A2 milk use in café coffee production. Their views are important because Aotearoa New Zealand prides itself on its unique café and coffee culture. Reflecting that, in the 1940s, it was observed that for American tourists visiting Auckland, the coffee offered at the White Lady pie cart was an almost compulsory experience [1]. Key to that experience was the White Lady's coffee-making Goldie Convection Tripolator. Coffee making technologies and ingredients have changed since those times, including the diversity of milks used in espresso milk-based coffees. Today, four milks dominate café and coffee culture in Aotearoa New Zealand (Table 1).

Table 1. The four most popular milks used in coffee making in Aotearoa [2]

Type of milk	Benefit/description
Full cream milk	Full-cream cow's milk that is comparatively high in fat and calorie content.
Skim milk	Fat-free cow's milk. Popular with consumers who are trying to manage their weight and/or avoid fat in their diets.
Soy milk	Made from soybeans. Soy milk is a popular alternative to animal milk.
Almond milk	Made from almonds. Popular with consumers who wish to avoid the fat found in cow's milk.

Those top four milks are complemented by a further wide range of non-dairy milks (Table 2).

However, Tables 1 and 2 fail to list one milk that is popular in Aotearoa New Zealand: A2 milk. Our interest in A2 milk aligns it with another Kiwi icon, the flat white. We ask, why are baristas not offering A2 milk in our cafés as another signifier of Kiwi innovation, uniqueness, and identity? Within that notion our inquiry is an important consideration for café operators and others serving coffee, to create a unique 'Kiwi' point of difference in what can be otherwise described as a homogenised coffee marketplace.

In 'discovering' A2 milk, Dr Corran McLachlan observed that ordinary cow's milk contained two major casein (or protein) types – A1 and A2 – but that some cows do not produce A1. He then developed a method to identify milk that only contained the A2 protein. From that development, in 2018 the a2 Milk Company partnered with Fonterra, New Zealand's largest dairy co-operative

[4]. Today, A2 milk products have a 11.2% share of the New Zealand milk market [4].

Table 2. Non-dairy milks available in New Zealand [3]

Type of milk	Description
Coconut milk	Made by blending coconut flesh. Full-fat coconut milk is high in calories.
Almond milk	A mixture of finely ground almonds and water.
Soy milk	Made by grinding soybeans. A source of protein and essential fatty acids.
Oat milk	A cereal grain derived milk made by grinding oats.
Rice milk	Milled white or brown rice and water.
Cashew milk	A mixture of cashew nuts or cashew butter and water.
Macadamia milk	A combination of water and about 3% macadamia nuts.
Hemp milk	Ground seeds of the hemp plant, <i>Cannabis sativa</i> , and water.
Quinoa milk	Made from water and quinoa.
Seven-grain milk	A combination of oats, rice, wheat, barley, triticale, spelt, millet and water.

To explore the use of A2 milk, we asked five baristas, with an average career span of 25 years, their views on using A2 milk for making coffee. We were surprised by the results.

Firstly, our participant baristas looked overseas for their inspiration. Exemplifying that was their interest in latte art and nitrogen infused coffees. Interestingly, our participants held a cautious ‘wait and see’ attitude toward using A2 milk, despite their embrace of many of the milk types outlined in Tables 1 and 2. While our participants mentioned that they would provide A2 milk should consumers begin asking for it, none of them realised that by offering A2 milk they could self-create a temporary point of difference in an otherwise homogeneous coffee marketplace. Additionally, our participant baristas were waiting for the a2 Milk Company to take the lead and promote the use of A2 milk in Aotearoa New Zealand’s café/coffee culture.

Consequently, and while our sample size was small, we wonder if cafés are missing an important opportunity for distinction by not offering A2 milk within their milk menu offerings. We suggest that, by using and showcasing A2 milk, Kiwi cafés can enhance the distinctive reputation they already enjoy and in doing so promote the Kiwi cultural attribute of innovation.

Corresponding author

Lindsay Neill can be contacted at: lindsay.neill@aut.ac.nz

References

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