

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### What's in My Creamer?

If you're like the person who called me last week, you too might wonder if there's any 'real food' in that package of non-dairy creamer. The label says "non-dairy", the nutrition facts box says "Sodium - 0 g, Protein - 0 g", and "Not a significant source of saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, dietary fiber, sugars, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron." So what is left? And what are all those big words in the ingredient list? Here is a short list of what might be there and what it does.

**Corn Syrup Solids** - There are lots of types of corn syrup solids, but basically this is corn starch that has been treated to release some of the sugar. How it's treated - enzymes, heat or acid, controls how sweet it gets and how easily it dissolves. If you put plain corn starch in the coffee it would settle to the bottom of your cup in a gooey lump. Corn syrup solids dissolve more like sugar does. It's in your creamer to give it a slightly sweet taste and to make the coffee look milky.

**Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil** - Cream is fat. Oil is fat. There is oil in the creamer to make your coffee feel and look like you put real cream in it. But one of the problems with real cream is that it would make the corn syrup solids lumpy. The fats in real cream are bad for our hearts. Since this is a non-dairy product they're not using real cream. So they used vegetable oil. It has been partially hydrogenated so that it won't get rancid. That keeps it smelling good for a longer time. The way oil is hydrogenated now makes very little trans fat. This product has no trans fat.

Now we get to some of the big names on the label. Sodium Caseinate (a Milk

Derivative) - Casein is one of the proteins in milk. This one has been tied onto sodium, probably so that it will dissolve more evenly. The presence of this protein is why the label must say below the ingredient list "CONTAINS MILK". When it dissolves in the coffee it helps to make it white. It also helps the coffee make and keep a little bit of foam. Protein also adds some feeling in your mouth of a slightly thicker, milky drink.

Dipotassium phosphate - This is used to balance the acid and alkaline between the coffee and the creamer. Coffee is slightly acid. That could curdle the protein or make the oils float on top. Even though there is very little here, potassium is a mineral many of us don't get enough of. We need it to balance our sodium.

Mono- and di-glycerides - These act like egg yolk does, they let the oil and water mix. These are a type of fat, but a kind that can mix with water. When they do, they carry the vegetable oil into the coffee to, so that it all mixes evenly. These are called 'emulsifiers'.

Sodium Silicoaluminate - This is a type of salt. It is there to keep the powdered creamer from turning into one big lump in the bottle or box. It is called an "anti-caking agent". Too much sodium is bad for our blood pressure, but there is so little of this, and we use so little creamer in a cup of coffee, this is not going to have any effect on our health. But keeping the creamer flowing easily might keep our blood pressure down!

Soy Lecithin - Lecithin is related to fats. There is a lot of it in egg yolks, although this kind is extracted from soybeans. It is an emulsifier like the di-glycerides. Its job in the creamer is to make the oil mix into the coffee.

Flavors, Colors - Now that all the ingredients are present to make the coffee look white, feel creamy and mix well, it just takes a tiny bit of flavor and color to make it taste and look more like cream instead of white water.

Now that you've seen what's in your non-dairy creamer, here's a dairy drink for you to try. It's a great way to get your calcium, and sneak a little extra into the grandchildren too. You can let them help you make it, or have it ready the minute they come in the door. Drink up!

### Choco-Nana Milk Mixer

3 ½ cups 1% milk, divided

1 banana, chopped

1 (4 oz) pkg instant chocolate pudding mix

1 Tbsp creamy peanut butter

Combine 2 cups of the milk, the pudding mix, banana and peanut butter in jar or pitcher with a tight fitting lid and shake until combined. Or process in a blender on medium speed for 1 minute. Add the remaining 1 ½ cups of milk and stir to mix. Serve immediately or cover and chill until serving time. If it gets too thick while it's standing, thin with more milk. Serves 4.

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