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Why is cottage cheese the new diet trend?

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You can dip vegetables in it, top your granola with it, and use it as a pasta sauce base. In fact, there are many things you can do with cottage cheese - and you may just want to, when you learn how nutritious this versatile cheese really is.

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What is cottage cheese?

Cottage cheese is mild and creamy, almost resembling natural yoghurt in thickness, but lumpy and bumpy. It has just a hint of salt and can range from very creamy to slightly tart in taste. This depends on how much fat the cottage cheese contains – less fat means more tartness.

Like goat cheese, mozzarella, and ricotta, it's a fresh cheese. This means it isn't ripened or aged like cheddar and parmesan.

How is cottage cheese made?

Like all dairy foods, cottage cheese begins as milk. It's then fermented, which involves:

1. Adding enzymes or healthy bacteria called probiotics.
2. This turns the lactose in the milk into lactic acid.
3. This separates the milk solids, fats, and proteins (the curds) from the liquid (the whey).
4. The curds then become a solid block of cheese.
5. This is mixed with cream to make cottage cheese.

Is cottage cheese good for you?

Cottage cheese is fast becoming a favourite among people who want to lose excess weight, tone their bodies, and build muscle. Why? It is low in calories and high in protein.

Yet, this isn't where the cottage cheese benefits end, according to Reema Patel, gut health specialist at [Dietitian Fit](#): "Cottage cheese provides a good source of nutrients, including calcium, selenium and vitamins A and B12."

Just how nutritious your cottage cheese is will vary slightly, depending on how much milk fat and salt is used. Half a cup, or 113 g, of 1% fat cottage cheese typically contains¹:

14 g protein – 30% of your daily allowance.

0.63 µg Vitamin B12 – 29% of your daily allowance.

9 µg of selenium – 19% of your daily allowance.

134 mg phosphorus – 13% of your daily allowance.

61 mg of calcium – 5% of your daily allowance.

11 µg Vitamin A – 1.5% of your daily allowance.

1 g fat – 4% of your daily allowance.

406 mg dietary salt – 20% of your daily allowance.

Cottage cheese benefits

There are a range of vitamins and micro nutrients in cottage cheese, and all serve your body in different ways. For example, by providing 29% of your daily **vitamin B12** intake, cottage cheese is good for keeping your blood, brain, and nerves healthy. **Vitamin A** contributes to healthy skin, vision, and immunity from illness.

Here are some of the main ways cottage cheese can keep you healthy and well.

Buils muscle and strength

Containing 30% of your recommended daily protein intake, cottage cheese makes an excellent post-workout snack that will **repair, maintain and build your muscles** through muscle protein synthesis (MPS).

Supports your bones

"As a source of calcium, cottage cheese can help to support bone and tooth mass," says Patel. "This can reduce your risk of **osteoporosis**, a condition where your bones become weak and more prone to fractures and breakage."

Aids healthy digestion

As cottage cheese is a fermented food, it can be a good source of probiotics, the healthy bacteria that helps look after your gut. As a result, it may ease a range of **gut-related problems**, including digestive discomfort, bloating, constipation and diarrhoea.

Be sure to check the label, as not all cottage cheeses are made with probiotic cultures.

Helps protect against cancer

Patel says: "The high selenium content of cottage cheese will contribute to the protection of your DNA and reduce cell damage."

Because if this, it's thought that selenium can help protect you against disease. Its effects on cancer have been observed, but more research is needed. Most of the studies had weaknesses and limitations and results were difficult to reproduce².

Some research shows that eating dairy products like cottage cheese as part of a healthy diet may also help prevent some types of cancer. However, the research is ongoing and generally inconclusive³.

Supports heart health

Dairy products may also protect against **metabolic syndrome**, a name for a group of conditions linked to your heart and blood vessels⁴.

As it is low-calorie and low-fat, cottage cheese is a better dairy option for people looking after their hearts and waistlines than higher fat cheeses like cheddar and cream cheese.

Cottage cheese also has a high selenium content. This mineral has been studied for possible protective effects against high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and heart disease. However, research is conflicting, and there's no strong evidence to support this².

(Yellow box) Is cottage cheese good for weight loss?

Yes, cottage cheese can help support weight loss, says dietitian Patel. "This is because cottage cheese is a rich source of protein, whilst being low in fats and overall calories."

How many calories are in cottage cheese?

Low fat 1% cottage cheese – 72 kcal in 100 g¹.

Full fat 4% cottage cheese – 105 kcal in 100 g⁵.

How much protein in cottage cheese?

12 g in 100 g⁵.

This is 30% of your recommended daily intake.

"Consuming enough protein is important when losing weight, as it ensures any weight loss is mainly fat loss, rather than muscle loss," she says. "A higher protein diet also helps to keep us satisfied from food for longer, as it takes longer to digest. This means we may not need to consume as much food overall, aiding weight loss."

After protein, the calcium content may also play a role. Studies suggest that eating calcium can increase fat loss – when combined with a low-calorie diet⁶.

Then there's an added benefit in the types of cottage cheese that also contain probiotic bacteria: "This can support gut health and digestion, which in itself can help support weight loss," adds Patel.

What is the cottage cheese diet?

The cottage cheese diet has become one of the latest TikTok diet trends. Using the #cottagecheesediet hashtag, influencers are promoting meals such as cottage cheese and mustard dip for vegetables and meat protein.

What we need to remember is that these influencers aren't qualified dietitians – and that the popularity of a TikTok diet trend isn't proof that it's effective and healthy.

So, what do the experts think?

According to Patel, while this trend can be helpful, there are limitations: "Essentially, it can promote the consumption of more vegetables, alongside a low-fat protein source."

Speaking of the approach taken in the video by myhealthydish, the dietitian comments: "The balance is mainly focused on lots of vegetables, some fruit, one sausage, and one egg. This can be balanced as it provides plenty of fibre and protein.

"So, if you enjoy these foods and can tolerate dairy, then cottage cheese can be a great dip choice to have with a range of foods.

"This said, I wouldn't recommend this more than once a day. We need to allow more variety in the meals that we eat, so that we can get a range of nutrients. Variety is key! Cottage cheese, as with any cheese, can also contain higher levels of dietary salt (sodium). It's important we watch and limit our intake, especially for those aiming for a lower salt diet."

How much cottage cheese should I eat a day?

If you're interested in adding cottage cheese to your diet, Patel recommends having between 100–200 g cottage cheese per day. Be aware that adults shouldn't be eating more than 6g (6000 mg) of salt a day – which is around 1 level teaspoon. In 200 g of cottage cheese, there's around 0.7–0.8 g (700–800 mg) of salt^{1,5}.

What to eat with cottage cheese

There are so many ways to enjoy cottage cheese. Even if you don't relish it that much, this dairy product can be hidden in flavourful sauces and smoothies.

Although it's enjoying a resurgence, cottage cheese isn't new. Once popular in the 1970s, its lumpy quality was one of the reasons it fell out of fashion. With modern food processors, it's easy to blend this mild-tasting cheese until smooth.

Patel says: "You may like it as a dip, or in a pasta sauce, or with fruit – it all depends on what else you like to eat it with."

(yellow box)Here are some ideas – breakfast, lunch, dinner:

Granola – top your breakfast granola and add a drizzle of honey.

Scrambled eggs – add it to your egg mix for extra creaminess.

Toast – spread onto toast or bagels instead of cream cheese.

Smoothies – blend it with fruit and milk to make your smoothie extra creamy.

Salads – swap feta for cottage cheese for extra protein.

Lunch dips – dip vegetables and protein into it, with condiments like mustard.

Pasta – swap out sour cream, crème fraîche and ricotta in cheese-based sauces.

Fruit bowls – serve it with a range of colourful fruits for breakfast or dessert.

Who shouldn't eat cottage cheese?

People with **lactose intolerance** should avoid cottage cheese, which as a fresh, unripened cheese contains more lactose than aged cheeses like Cheddar and Parmesan. People with **dairy allergy** also won't be able to enjoy cottage cheese, which contains two types of protein in cow's milk – whey and casein.

Further reading

1. **Food Data Central: Cheese, cottage, lowfat, 1% milkfat.**
2. **National Institutes of Health: Selenium.**
3. **Kongerslev Thorning et al: Milk and dairy products: good or bad for human health? An assessment of the totality of scientific evidence.**
4. **Elwood et al: Milk and dairy consumption, diabetes and the metabolic syndrome: the Caerphilly prospective study.**

- 5. Food Data Central: Cottage cheese, full fat, large or small curd.
- 6. Zhang et al: Anti-obesity effects of dietary calcium: The evidence and possible mechanisms.

Article history

The information on this page is peer reviewed by qualified clinicians.

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