

Oatmilk, by default

Demand for plant-based milks has skyrocketed in recent years, due to consumers' concern for sustainability, racial justice, and animal welfare. Milk is the next frontier for coffee shop innovation, and many businesses are adopting plant-forward practices to meet demand.



Here are two ways you can switch up milk norms in your café:

Option 1: Ditch the Default

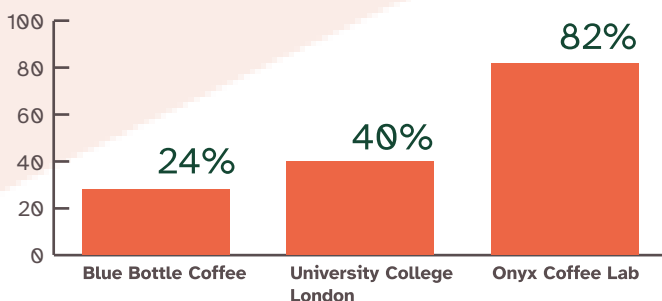
Instead of favoring dairy over plant-based milks, level the playing field by adjusting prices or by adjusting how you take orders.

Follow in the footsteps of **Pret A Manger** and **Tim Horton's**, and remove the fee for substituting plant-based milk. To offset the price, you could increase the cost of all drinks, or you could create an upcharge for dairy like **Clean** did in Hong Kong. **Philz Coffee** chose to cut costs by eliminating low-performing milk options (no longer offering 2% milk), while **Onyx Coffee Lab** saves money on electricity by carrying shelf-stable plantmilks instead of perishable dairy.

Intentional language is another way to disrupt the default. Rather than assuming that customers want cow's milk, baristas at **Guilder Cafe** asked each customer, "Would you like oat, soy, almond, or dairy milk in your drink?" This simple change in dialogue resulted in an 18% increase in sales of plant-based drinks, lowering drinks' carbon footprint by 12%.

For every latte you switch from dairy to oat, you save two showers' worth of water! And for every three lattes, you save the same emissions as driving a mile in a car.

Increase in oatmilk drink sales where plant-based defaults are used



Option 2: Flip the Default

Swapping the dairy default for a plant-based milk makes a powerful impact. The most popular choice is an oatmilk default, where drinks are made with oatmilk unless customers specify otherwise.

Chains like **Stumptown** and **Blue Bottle** started by eliminating the upcharge, then transitioned to an oatmilk default based on customer interest and internal sustainability goals. The idea is simple: customers having to opt out of the plant-based default nudges them toward the sustainable choice.

If the majority of customers normally just roll with the default, flipping to oatmilk can be a gamechanger. If your customer base is under 30, they expect plant-based options. One-third of GenZ buys 5+ beverages every week. Combine that purchasing power with their documented aversion to dairy, and it's easy to see why college campuses are a hotspot for oatmilk defaults! From London to San Diego, universities are responding to student feedback and flipping to oatmilk. As Zoomers come of age, plant-based milks will be a necessary fixture in foodservice.

Serving oatmilk by default allows businesses to:

- harness growing demand for plant-based products, a \$20B industry
- meet carbon- and water-reduction goals
- woo GenZ, who is 5x more likely to order plant-based milks
- sell to the 40 million Americans who are lactose intolerant