Shelf Stable Milk FAQs

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PROTECTS WHAT'S GOOD

SMART, SAFE AND SHELF STABLE

- **Can aseptic milk, otherwise known as "shelf stable" milk, be taken in and out of the refrigerator multiple times, without spoilage?** As long as the Tetra Pak® Aseptic package has not been opened, you can move the shelf stable milk carton in and out of the refrigerator without worry of spoilage. However, once the package has been opened, shelf stable milk has the same shelf life as pasteurized milk and must be kept refrigerated.

- **What is the shelf life of shelf stable milk?** Before opening, shelf stable milk has a shelf life of 6-12 months. Once opened, it has the same shelf life as pasteurized milk.

- **Why isn't shelf stable milk common in the U.S.?** The U.S. has a chilled system in place for milk and other staples that has served us for many years. But the market is changing and there are many factors driving the need for longer shelf-life products, such as growing demands on transportation and distribution networks, a focus on sustainability, the need to reduce food waste, and unforeseen circumstances such as COVID-19 and weather events.

- **Is the nutritional value different from chilled dairy milk?** The nutritional value of shelf stable milk, including protein, calcium and Vitamin D, is no different than chilled options and meets all nutritional requirements.

- **What is the preservative used to allow a long shelf life?** No additives or preservatives are needed to prolong the shelf life of shelf stable milk. The ultra-high temperature (UHT) treatment process, paired with the aseptic packaging allows for long shelf life.

- **Are there various options, such as flavored, lactose free and fat free, available in shelf stable milk?** Product availability is based on your milk producer/processor and/or distributor.

- **Besides milk, can other dairy products be made shelf stable?** Yes. Common shelf stable dairy products include cream, coffee creamers, buttermilk, evaporated milk, etc.

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- **Does shelf stable packaging contain Bisphenol-A (BPA)? Tetra Pak® Aseptic packaging is made up of six layers that include polyethylene, paper, and aluminum. These materials do not contain BPA. Polyethelene is a BPA-free plastic that shields the food from the aluminum lining, which helps protect the product from air and light, eliminating the need for preservatives or refrigeration.**

- **Is shelf stable milk more expensive than chilled milk? The pricing decisions for milk products are made by processors and/or distributors. Cost savings and more can be realized with less frequent delivery, room temperature storage, and less milk waste[1].**

- **Any recommendations on when I should refrigerate shelf stable milk prior to consumption? We recommend chilling shelf stable milk the day before consumption simply because most people prefer the temperature of chilled milk over room temperature milk.**

- **Can kids take unopened milk with them for later consumption if they don't drink it during lunch? Shelf stable milk remains safe without refrigeration when unopened. So, kids can take milk packaged in shelf stable cartons with them to consume later (after school programs, activities, sports, grab-and-go meals, weekly boxes being sent home, etc.). Shelf stable milk cartons are also great for backpack programs and meal distribution programs.**

- **Are shelf stable milk packages recyclable? Yes, shelf stable milk cartons are recyclable and can be thrown into the recycle bin. For more information, please contact The Carton Council. https://www.recyclecartons.com/**

- **Does shelf stable milk taste different from chilled milk? Does this impact consumption? There is a slight difference. However, most people will not notice it, especially in flavored milk. We have conducted several studies in school districts across the country that show conversion was not an issue. In fact, students drank more of the milk in shelf stable cartons and sales increased.**

- **Are shelf stable cartons more sustainable than chilled, gable top cartons? All Tetra Pak® cartons are recyclable and are primarily made from renewable resources. Shelf stable milk allows you to transport and store without refrigeration, and its long shelf life reduces milk spoilage and waste, all of which contribute to lower greenhouse gas emissions[2].**

1. Utah School Study 2018/2019
2. Environmental and Economic Effects of Changing to Shelf-Stable Dairy or Soy Milk for the Breakfast in the Classroom Program

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