

Got milk questions? Your commissary's got answers!

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There is one product offered by European commissaries that generates more questions than almost any other – milk! “Plenty of moms devote plenty of worry to the quality of the milk they feed their children, which is perfectly understandable,” said DeCA Europe Director Tom Milks. “For every patron who actually poses a question to commissary staff, we figure there are at least ten more who are wondering the same thing,” he continued. “So, here are answers to the most common milk questions we hear.”

Where does the fresh milk come from and how is it produced? DeCA currently has contracts with European dairies located in Denmark, Holland and the United Kingdom to produce the fresh milk sold in European commissaries. The milk is produced according to American specifications, including safety and sanitation standards, and is fortified with vitamins A and D. Fresh milk purchased on the economy is not vitamin fortified.

Does the milk come from dairy herds which are treated with growth hormones or antibiotics? Fresh milk sold in European commissaries can be considered both hormone-free and antibiotic-free. Recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST), the hormone sometimes given to cows to increase their milk production, has been banned from use by dairy producers in the European Union since January 2000, and was under moratorium for nearly ten years prior to the outright ban.

Antibiotics are used only on the rare occasions when determined necessary for the health of the dairy cow. In such cases, the cow exits the herd before treatment

begins and does not return until her milk tests free of any antibiotic residue. Additionally, milk samples are routinely collected both at the point of origin and at the point of production to ensure that products destined for sale in the commissary meet Grade A dairy quality standards.

Why does my commissary sell milk that “expires” in only a day or two? The date stamped on the fresh milk carton is not an expiration date – it is a “best sell by” date. This is the last day the commissary will offer the product for sale.

How long will fresh milk last at home? Fresh milk can last up to 5 days past the “best sell by” date if cared for properly.

Refrigerate milk at 40° F or less as soon as possible after purchasing. Do not store milk in the refrigerator door. It is one of the warmest areas in the refrigerator, and the milk will be subjected to temperature fluctuations each time the door is opened. Keep the carton closed to prevent absorption of refrigerator odors or flavors of other foods stored nearby. Return milk to the refrigerator immediately after pouring the amount needed, and never return

any unused portion of milk to the original container.

Is organic milk safer and more nutritious than regular fresh milk? According to experts at the USDA and at the National Dairy Council, there is no difference between the two in terms of quality, safety and nutrition. Both contain the same combination of nine essential nutrients which make dairy foods an important part of a healthy diet. “Organic milk is just one more choice of quality dairy products we are happy to offer European commissary shoppers,” Milks said.

DeCA Europe carries about 30 different types of milk; from whole to skim, soy, vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and more. Whatever your taste, there is something for everyone.

