

Are dairy products made from animal-free sources vegan? Green adherents grapple with whether they should embrace cheese and other ‘precision fermentation’ foods

We are entering a brand new era of slaughter-free menus and products, which includes everything from [mycelium steak](#) to [cell-cultured seafood](#) to [precision fermentation ice cream](#). But are these foods vegan? Well, it’s complicated.

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During the fermentation process... select microbes produce proteins that are identical to those found in cow’s dairy milk. These proteins are filtered into a pure milk protein isolate, that can be used to create our favourite dairy products- think cheese, yogurt and ice cream, without the use of animals. Even through the resulting products are animal-free and do not contain lactose, they do contain dairy protein.

If we look at vegan lifestyle as an ethical stance of not wanting to consume or use any animal products, the answer would be yes, since no animals are involved in producing animal-free dairy. That being said, consumer motivations for purchasing vegan products have expanded beyond those who do so for ethical reasons, and also include those who are motivated by health, allergies and environmental concerns.

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I would guess that 99% of consumers today would not dive into this level of nuance, and that majority of vegans who are motivated by animal welfare or sustainability would welcome animal-free dairy into their lives.

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