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Mock moo

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"Vegan" is hot right now in Australia. There's been a boom in the number of vegan food launches over the past few years, according to market research group Mintel. Vegan options are increasingly being offered on cafe and restaurant menus. And the vegan range in major supermarkets continues to expand, vegan cheese being a more recent addition for Coles and Woolworths.

"Vegan cheese is one of our biggest growth categories of vegan food products in both range and volume," says Jess Bailey, director of The Cruelty Free Shop, a vegan retailer with outlets in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane.

You can now buy vegan cheddar and feta, vegan mozzarella and parmesan. There's even an Australian-produced blue vein cheese made from cashews that's a dead ringer for the real thing (at least in appearance).

But which vegan cheeses taste best?

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How we tested

- Nine CHOICE staffers – three vegans, two vegetarians and four omnivores – participated in a blind tasting of 15 vegan cheese products.
- We focused on mozzarella-style and cheddar-style cheeses, as these appear to be the most widely available styles (and to keep the sample size manageable).
- Our tasters sampled them in a random order and commented on their attributes before giving each cheese an overall thumbs up or down.
- Both styles were served as sold (packaging removed), but we also served the mozzarella-style samples melted on plain white bread.

Tastebud ticklers

The most popular mozzarella style product (getting a thumbs up from eight of our nine tasters) was **Bio Cheese Pizza Shred**. Tasters described it as having a soft, sticky consistency when melted, but with an appealing 'cheesy' appearance and pleasant, mild flavour.

"I'm surprised how good this tastes," said one of our omnivores. "Melts really well and tastes delicious," said a vegetarian. "I'd consider buying this one because it's flavoursome without reminding me of dairy products," said one of our vegans.

The most popular cheddar style product (thumbs up from six tasters) was **Bio Cheese Cheddar Flavour**, described as having a smooth, buttery appearance and texture.

"Cuts smoothly, smooth texture, appealing taste, close to mainstream dairy 'feel'," said one omnivore. "Pleasant, like processed cheddar," said another. One of our vegans commented, "I wouldn't buy it as I don't like the distinctly dairy-like cheese flavour, but it's an excellent 'cheese'. If I liked cheese I'd buy this one."

Nutrition notes

Many vegan cheeses (including both Bio Cheese products in our tasting) are based on coconut oil, either on its own or in combination with soy. Much like **dairy cheese**, they tend to be high in saturated fat and sodium. But unlike dairy-based cheese, they're low in protein and contain negligible – if any – calcium.

From a culinary and taste perspective these products can offer a great alternative to dairy. But nut-based vegan cheeses are a more nutritious option, providing protein, calcium and heart-healthy monounsaturated fats.

Price and provenance

Vegan cheeses tend to be more expensive than their dairy counterparts – due in part to economies of scale, as well as the food miles many of them have travelled. Those we tasted ranged in price from \$2.60 per 100g (Green Vie with Mozzarella Flavour) up to \$6.98 per 100g (Daiya Mozzarella Style Shreds) – all more than what you pay for leading brand Perfect Italiano's shredded mozzarella (\$1.92 per 100g) or leading brand Mainland's vintage cheddar (\$2.40 per 100g).

In terms of provenance, just three of the products we bought identified themselves as 'made in Australia', the rest coming from Greece, Canada, USA, Scotland and elsewhere in the UK.

"Until more recently all the vegan cheeses we stocked were from overseas," says Bailey. "But options are increasing, and vegan cheese makers are now popping up all over Australia."

See our [product table](#) for ingredient, nutrition, price and country of origin details for the 15 products we tasted.

Product table

The vegan cheeses we tasted are listed below in alphabetical order. To order by another criteria, simply click on the column headings.

Style (format)	Country of origin statement	Pack size (g)	Price paid (\$)	Price/100g (\$)	Ingredients	Energy (kJ/100g)	Protein (g/100g)	Total fat (g/100g)	Sat fat (g/100g)	Sodium (mg/100g)
Cheddar (Block)	Product of Greece	200	7.50	3.75	Water, coconut oil (non-hydrogenated) 23%, modified starch (E1404, E1450), starch, sea salt, cheddar vegan flavours, olive extract, colour (B-carotene)	1190	0	23	21	920
Mozzarella (Shredded)	Product of Greece	200	8.00	4.00	Water, coconut oil (non-hydrogenated) 21%, starch, modified starch (E1404, E1450), sea salt, anti-caking agent (tapioca starch), vegan mozzarella flavour, olive extract, colour (B-carotene)	1130	0	20.8	18.8	673
Cheddar (Block)	Manufactured in the UK	250	8.99	3.60	Water, coconut oil, potato starch, soya protein, thickeners (carrageenan, locust bean gum, xanthan gum), yeast extract, salt, natural flavouring, calcium phosphate, natural colour (carotene)	291	3.5	22.4	19.37	549
Style (format)	Country of origin statement	Pack size (g)	Price paid (\$)	Price/100g (\$)	Ingredients	Energy (kJ/100g)	Protein (g/100g)	Total fat (g/100g)	Sat fat (g/100g)	Sodium (mg/100g)

Mozzarella (Block)	Manufactured in the UK	250	8.50	3.40	Water, coconut oil, tofu, soya protein, potato starch, thickeners (carrageenan, xanthan gum, locust bean gum), salt, natural flavouring, dried yeast, calcium phosphate, sugar, yeast extract	307	5.3	28.5	24.3	641
Mozzarella (Slices)	Made in Australia from at least 68% Australian ingredients	200	8.50	4.25	Water, soy milk (filtered water, organic whole soya beans, organic sunflower oil, sea salt), canola oil, tapioca starch, thickener (agar agar), vegan flavours, sea salt, yeast flakes, emulsifier (soy lecithin), preservative (sorbic acid), antioxidant (citric acid)	993	1.7	21.6	3	767
Mozzarella (Shredded)	Product of Canada	200	13.95	6.98	Filtered water, tapioca starch, coconut oil, non-GMO expeller pressed canola and/or safflower oil, potato protein isolate, vegan natural flavours, sea salt, tricalcium phosphate, lactic acid (vegan), whole algal flour, konjac gum, xanthan gum, yeast extract	1195	3.6	17.9	8.9	786
Cheddar (Block)	Made in Australia with local and imported ingredients	250	12.75	5.10	Soy milk, coconut oil, modified starch (E1404), tapioca starch, miso, nutritional yeast, sea salt, apple cider vinegar, lemon juice, annatto (colour)	1330	2.4	29.9	25.5	102
Mozzarella (Block)	Made in Australia with local and imported ingredients	250	12.75	5.10	Soy milk, coconut oil, tapioca flour, carrageenan, sea salt, white wine vinegar, lemon juice, natural preservative E235	1110	3.5	26.6	22.2	100
Mozzarella (Shredded)	Made in USA	227	10.15	4.47	Filtered water, organic palm fruit oil 22%, modified corn and potato starches, natural flavourings, bamboo fibre, emulsifiers (organic vegetable glycerin, sunflower lecithin), anticaking agent (cellulose), acidity regulators (calcium phosphate, calcium sulphate, citric acid, disodium phosphate, rice flour, sea salt, pea fibre, pea starch, stabilisers (carrageenan, xanthan gum), preservative (sodium citrate)	1215	<1	22.9	12.8	999
Cheddar (Slices)	Manufactured in Greece	180	5.80	3.22	Water, coconut oil 24%, modified starch (E1422), sea salt, vegan flavourings, coconut sugar, colour (natural B-carotene and paprika extract), preservative (sorbic acid E200)	1265	0.3	23.5	21.3	480
Mozzarella (Block)	Manufactured in Greece	250	6.50	2.60	Water, coconut oil 24%, modified starch (E1422), sea salt, vegan flavourings, colour (natural B-carotene), preservative (sorbic acid E200), vitamin B12	1265	0.3	23.5	21.3	480
Mozzarella (Block)	Australia's Own	240	7.99	3.33	Water, organic non-GM soybeans, refined coconut oil (non-hydrogenated), agar agar, guar gum, xanthan gum, sea salt, citric acid, E171, safflower yellow, invert sugar	977	2	25.1	21.2	771
Cheddar (Block)	Product of Greece	200	8.99	4.50	Water, refined coconut oil 22.5%, modified potato starch, modified tapioca starch, starch, sea salt, vegan flavour, trisodium citrate (emulsifier), potassium sorbate (preservative), citric acid (acidity regulator), annatto extract (colour)	1200	0	22.5	19.7	880
Cheddar (Block)	Made in Scotland	200	6.00	3.00	Water, coconut oil 21%, modified potato starch, maize starch, oat fibre, modified maize starch, thickeners (carrageenan, guar gum), salt, natural flavourings, yeast extract, acidity regulators (lactic acid, sodium lactate), colour (mixed carotenes)	1260	0.7	22.9	19	720
Mozzarella (Shredded)	Made in Scotland	200	8.00	4.00	Water, coconut oil 25%, modified potato starch, oat fibre, maize starch, salt, natural flavourings, modified maize starch, calcium citrate, thickeners (carrageenan, guar gum), acidity regulators (lactic acid, sodium lactate), colour (mixed carotenes)	1293	<0.1	25.9	21.6	640

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