

## Lactation Cookies: Increasing Milk Supply

By Danelle Frisbie © 2010



Major Milk Makin' Cookies

I am frequently asked to pass along lactation cookie recipes. My own momma has been baking these up since she was a nursing mother and RN, striving to help other new moms with their babies, 35 years ago -- so I've consumed my fair share over the decades. While there are many variations out there, they are all essentially the same and boast three main ingredients commonly believed (in North America) to impact milk supply: oatmeal, brewer's yeast, and flax.

Some home bakers will throw in **fenugreek** as well, and because this is known to increase milk supply (in both humans and cows!), but hard on the stomach, it isn't a bad idea to add it to foods you'll already be eating (you can open a couple capsules of fenugreek and toss them to the cookie batter). Fenugreek is one of the oldest medicinal herbs used for increasing milk supply, but to do so you will need to consume 1500mg of fenugreek, three times each day. (1) This is more than the recommended amount on the bottle, but the dosing printed on fenugreek labels is not intended to be for boosting milk supply. One study found that when enough fenugreek was consumed, milk supply doubled. (2) Note that while **mother's milk teas** (with fenugreek) may be a great supplement, and mood-enhancing to sip, you'd have to drink **a lot** of it to really see an impact. **Capsules** are a better way to go if you are planning to add fenugreek to your regimen.

So why are these three ingredients the core foundation in lactation cookies?



**Oats** (or oatmeal) are key in boosting milk supply because of the iron they contain that nursing moms are frequently in need of. Oats are also filling, dense with healthy calories - and nursing moms need calories! Oats are extremely nutritious and easy to work into the diet in a number of ways: cereals, granola, breads, casseroles, meatloaf, cookies - you can add oats to just about anything. Oats are also a great source of fiber. What does fiber have to do with milk supply? My 97 year old grandmother recently discussed the diets of her father's award winning, fatty-milk producing cows back in the 1920s. And guess what they did to increase milk supply? That's right -- boosted the fiber the cows had access to. Farmers have long known this trick, so I suppose milkin' moms can pick up on it too.



**Brewer's yeast** is an ingredient that has also long been touted to increase milk supply (although contested by some). Brewer's yeast is one of the best natural sources of B vitamins, which are essential to overall health of a nursing mom (and any woman). Even if milk supply were not impacted by brewer's yeast, the boost of energy (and increased sugar metabolism) that comes from brewer's yeast consumption is worth including it in lactation cookies (or other things you bake). Once again, looking back on decades past, women have long passed on the knowledge that sipping a deep, hearty beer (sister to brewer's yeast) has a positive effect on milk supply.

The oil from **flax seed** is considered by many to be a galactagogue (substance that improves lactation). It is also a great form of fiber. And, while it is again debated among those who believe in flax's galactagogue properties or not, one thing is certain: flax is power packed with omega-3 (essential fatty acids) that are absolutely crucial to a nursing mom's diet (as well as baby's diet, and all human health in general). Human milk is super charged with heavy amounts of omega-3 because the brain (rapidly growing in our babies) is dependent on these fatty acids. It is important that a mother not be deficient in



omega-3 (something that many are) and risk her baby not getting enough for optimal health, development, and wellbeing. [Note: artificial forms of omega-3 in manufactured formulas do **not** respond in a baby's body in the same way that natural omega-3 from mother's milk does. Do not buy into the hype that formulas 'fortified with DHA' are good for your baby. Rather, these artificial baby formulas with DHA have been **linked with diarrhea, dehydration, seizures.**] That said, omega-3 from fish and flax *for mom* are wonderful! They not only improve milk quality (and possibly quantity) but also boost brain function, memory, joint lubrication, and help to regulate hormones and decrease postpartum depression. It is unlikely that you could get too much omega-3 today, so when it comes to flax (and low-mercury fish if you like) - eat up!

Before you jump on the lactation cookie making machine and fret about your milk supply, however, know that if you are **exclusively breastfeeding** (i.e. your baby is consuming nothing but your milk) around the clock (day and night), and **your baby is gaining weight** (no matter if s/he is in the 99th percentile for weight, or the 1st percentile compared to other babies) then you have a full milk supply suited perfectly for your little one. (3)

It is, of course, good to eat healthy, whole foods to ensure your baby is getting all s/he needs from your milk (and taking a prenatal vitamin while nursing is a good idea too), but studies have shown that even when mother's diet is not the best, her body will compensate (for the sake of her baby) by putting all nutrients into her milk. (4, 5) Therefore, your baby will not suffer as much as *you* will suffer from poor eating habits. Only in cases of severe malnourishment is milk quality impacted.

That being said, most nursing mothers need to consume a *bare minimum* of 1800 calories per day to maintain a full milk supply for their growing baby (some will need to eat more to not see a drop in milk), and consuming **2500-2700 calories per day** is recommended by most. (6, 7) This is an energy need of 50-125% *more* than women had in their pre-pregnancy days. So no matter what you eat, **do not forget to eat!**

Below are two recipes. The first is a recipe for **Major Milk Makin' galactagogue cookies** ("lactation cookies") that share some similarities with the many generic cookie recipes commonly passed around and posted in a variety of recipe books. This one has just a touch more omega-3, protein, and iron than other "lactation cookies." It was created by Kathleen Major, PNP, RN, in conjunction with a local lactation specialist and **LLL** leader in the Cedar Valley (IA) hospitals in the early 1990s when Major was focusing her practice on pediatric health. She has granted permission for **DrMomma.org** to share her recipe. Please do not reproduce without crediting her and linking back to this page. The second recipe is my own, and while it is not as sweet (no sugar), it is all the more healthy and packed with beneficial ingredients. My cookies are slightly more like granola in cookie form -- you can be sure they are good *for you*, if this is your goal.

While no lactation cookie will miraculously boost your milk supply if there are other hormone related factors weighing on you, (for example, you are going to have to nurse and/or pump - increase *demand* - to increase supply, and be physically close to your baby - holding/**wearing/rocking/sleeping**, as much as possible), they certainly won't hurt -- may help a smidge -- and will ensure you are getting some good, wholesome (much needed!) calories packed with omega-3, nutrients, and goodness along the way.

If you enjoy baking and try out these recipes (or any other you find online or create yourself), please let me know your favorites. I'll admit I rarely stick straight to the recipe. I inherited my parents tendency to throw things into the batch (or leave things out if they aren't in my cupboard at the time). Some sesame seeds here, pumpkin seeds there...a bit of Fenugreek or a handful of sunflower seeds. I often substitute extra milled flax or applesauce for the butter, and toss in extra oats, or a scoop of almond butter if it looks like the batter can handle it. So if you are like me, and have additional special tips that make your homemade lactation cookie creations stand out among the milkin' moms - please, share!

### A few notes on the recipes:

- 1) Flax seed is prepped many ways. The version most useful for baking is the **milled** flax seed that you will find in your local store. It typically comes in a bag or a box (depending on the brand you select). You may have to go to a health food, whole foods store, or large supermarket to find the brewer's yeast which typically comes in a can.
- 2) Whole oats should always be used - **not** 'quick' oats (the type that cook in a few minutes in the microwave). Be sure when you buy your oats ('oatmeal') that you are purchasing whole, natural oats.
- 3) I'd suggest purchasing eggs from a local farm or buying free range "happy chicken" eggs at your grocery store - especially with all the recalls on salmonella tainted eggs lately. And who wants to support the massive hen house operations? Not us. Be informed on [where your food comes from](#), and teach your kids too.

### Major Milk Makin' Cookies

Recipe by Kathleen Major

[Detailed recipe with photos found here](#)

1 1/2 c. whole wheat flour  
1 3/4 c. oats  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
3/4 c. almond butter or peanut butter  
1/2 c. butter, softened  
1 c. flax  
3 T brewer's yeast  
1/3 c. water  
1 tsp cinnamon  
1/2 c. sugar  
1/2 c. brown sugar  
2 tsp vanilla  
2 large eggs  
2 c. (12oz) chocolate chips  
1 c. chopped nuts of your choice

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit

Combine flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt in a bowl.

In a large bowl, beat almond butter, butter, sugar, brown sugar, vanilla, brewer's yeast, flax and water until creamy.

Mix in eggs.

Gradually beat in flour mixture.

Mix in nuts and chocolate chips.

Add oats slowly, mixing along the way.

Place balls of dough onto greased baking sheets or baking stones.  
Press down each ball lightly with a fork.  
Bake 12 minutes.

### **Momma's Milk Cookies** recipe by Danelle Frisbie

2 eggs  
1/2 c. unsweetened applesauce  
1 c. flax  
1 1/2 c. whole wheat flour  
1/2 c. melted butter  
2 c. Agave nectar  
3/4 c. walnuts (crushed)  
2 c. chocolate chips  
3/4 c. raisins  
4 T water  
1 tsp vanilla  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
4 T brewer's yeast  
3 c. oats

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit

I have found greased cookie sheets work best, but you can also use parchment lined sheets or a baking stone.

In a bowl mix flax and water until thoroughly mixed.

In a large bowl mix flour, baking soda, salt and brewer's yeast.

In another bowl mix together butter and ONE cup Agave nectar (the other cup will be used later). Stir well until the butter and nectar are completely mixed.

Add eggs to the nectar mix, stirring well after each one.

Add vanilla, stir.

Add the nectar blend to the flax and mix well. (A hand mixer or mixing bowl works best)

Pour the nectar/flax blend into the large bowl of flour and mix well.

Mix in walnuts, chocolate chips, raisins.

Mix in oats.

After everything is blended together well, add the applesauce and final 1 cup of Agave nectar and stir through well.

Scoop onto sheets, and press down each ball of dough lightly with a fork.

Bake 13-14 minutes.

#### **Vegan options for both recipes:**

In place of eggs - 3 tsp of egg replacer mixed with 4 T water **OR** 4 tsp of milled flax with 4 T water.

In place of butter - butter substitute like Earth Balance **OR** 3/4 the amount worth of Canola oil or Crisco (although Crisco is not a healthy option) **OR** 1/2 c. milled flax and 1/2 c. applesauce



Have the need for special lactation cookies, but no time to cook? You can order:

[Making Mama's Milk & More Cookies here](#)  
(100% dairy free!)

[Milkin' Cookies here](#)

[Milk Makers Cookies here](#)

[Yummy Mummy Lactation Cookies here.](#)

Ordered cookies stay good for 6 months in the freezer (and taste good frozen too)! Several of these cookies have some added bonuses - pumpkin seeds, kelp, hemp seeds, sesame seeds, nettles, clover, peppermint, poppyseeds and Fenugreek. [Making Mama's Milk & More Cookies](#) are specially created by a mom herself, are organic and 100% dairy free. In addition, she recently started making a vegan lactation cookie for special order.

You can always add these extras into YOUR homemade lactation cookies (or muffins!) as well, but these are great shops for cookie purchasing if that's up your alley.