

Expel chocolate milk from school lunches: activist

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Chocolate milk is "soda in drag" and should be booted out of US school cafeterias, a former celebrity chef turned school lunch lady has said.

"If kids choose chocolate milk over white milk for an entire year they are liable to gain 2.5 to 3 pounds (1-1.5 kilograms) and over 10 years that's 25 to 30 pounds," Ann Cooper told AFP late Wednesday as she arrived in Washington for meetings with officials about the quality of food in schools.

"We already have an [obesity](#) crisis in this country," said Cooper, who is currently the director of nutrition services for schools in Boulder, Colorado, where she has had chocolate and other flavored milks expelled from local schools and replaced with cold, plain [organic milk](#). (c) 2009 AFP

Most chocolate milk has 50 percent more calories than white milk, and as much sugar per ounce as soda.

"Chocolate milk is soda in drag," said Cooper.

An eight-fluid-ounce serving (around 240 milliliters) of Nesquik reduced-fat chocolate milk contains 200 calories and 30 grams of sugar -- or more than a 12-ounce (350-milliliter) can of Coca Cola which clocks in at 27 grams of sugar and 140 calories.

Of course, flavored milk contains essential nutrients that are absent from soda, but plain milk contains the same nutrients, plus fewer calories and one third of the sugar as the flavored variety.

At a conference on obesity earlier this year, Thomas Frieden, head of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), noted that about half of the additional 250 calories that the average American consumes today compared to 25 years ago come from sugared [food](#) and [beverages](#).

The dairy industry is fighting back against those who want flavored milk kicked out of school lunch rooms with an online campaign called "Raise your hand for chocolate milk."

"Some schools and activist groups are looking to remove low-fat chocolate milk from cafeterias, but this actually could do more nutritional harm than good," the National Dairy Council says on the pro-flavored-milk website, which features an abundance of chocolate-colored text boxes.

"[Chocolate milk](#) is the most popular milk choice in schools and kids will drink less milk (and get fewer nutrients) if it's taken away," it says.

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