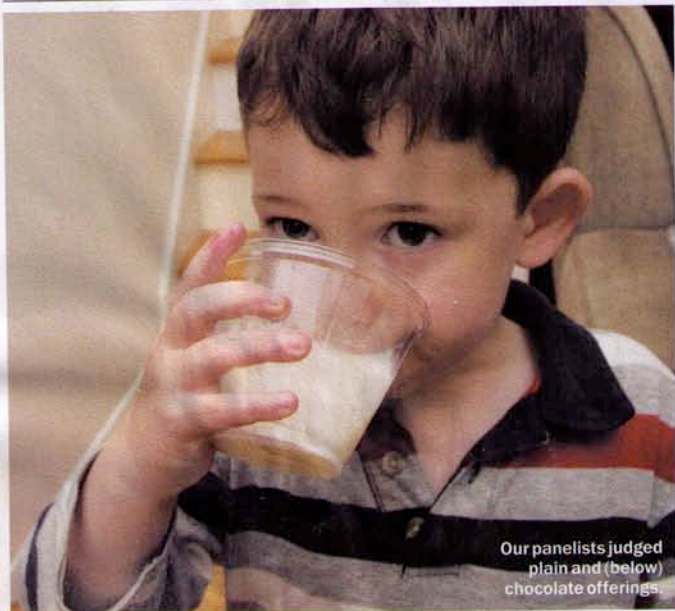


# All You Can Eat



## The milkman cometh back



Our panelists judged plain and (below) chocolate offerings.

For these bottled-milk purveyors, the glass is definitely half full.

By **Nancy Davidson**

A 1950s icon—the uniformed man who left glass bottles of cold milk at our doors—disappeared sometime in the 1970s. Of course, it's not as though anyone ever saw much of him. He was almost like Santa Claus, delivering a present in the wee hours of the morning. But after his departure, devotees of his product never stopped missing him. Now he's back, with a 21st-century twist: You place your order online.

Frank Acosta, co-owner and creative director of Manhattan Milk ([manhattanmilk.com](http://manhattanmilk.com)), promises not just organic milk from pasture-raised cows free of growth hormones but also personalized service of a kind not known around these parts for the past couple of decades. He and his partner, operations manager Matthew Marone, will even come right into your kitchen and put your order in the refrigerator—plus, they'll pick up the empties and reuse them. And despite the name, the duo expect to

add Brooklyn to their delivery route in the near future.

Manhattan Milk's bottles aren't the only ones on the market. The ubiquitous Ronnybrook Farm ([ronnybrook.com](http://ronnybrook.com)), of course, brought back the glass bottle in the 1990s. But now the company has some Greenmarket competition: a new brand called Milk Thistle ([milkthistlefarm.com](http://milkthistlefarm.com)), which comes from a family-owned dairy in upstate New York.

By law, all milk has to be pasteurized—treated with heat to kill off disease-causing bacteria. But none of these dairies ultrapasteurize, as some brands do to extend shelf life even longer than standard pasteurization. And none of these bottled milks are homogenized, which means that the cream or milk fat is not force-mixed together with the milk, but rises naturally to the top. You can skim it off or shake it up; either way, even low-fat non-homogenized milks tend to have a richer flavor.

To suss out the various merits of these brands, we assembled a team of local experts ages four to five for a blind taste test of plain and chocolate whole milk from Ronnybrook Farm, Manhattan Milk and Milk Thistle.

### Ronnybrook Farm

**From** Pasture-raised Holsteins reared on a family farm in Ancramdale, New York. The cows' diet is augmented with hay and corn.

**Available** At Greenmarkets throughout Manhattan and Brooklyn; at Chelsea Market; and at specialty grocers and many supermarkets around the city.

**What it is** Not certified organic, but milk contains no hormones, antibiotics or pesticides.

**The verdict** Henry, 4  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and Quentin, 5, liked it, though Henry was put off by its yellowish tinge. Matan, 4  $\frac{1}{2}$ , thought the chocolate milk tasted like ice cream.

**Our assessment** This milk tastes a little flatter than the others. Sarah Shey, Henry's mom, grew up on an Iowa dairy farm and thought that the Ronnybrook whole milk tasted like a fermented hay field. "The milk should not taste like the alfalfa the cow is eating," she said. The chocolate milk is rich, thick and satisfying, but leaves a sticky-mouth feeling that may derive from additives like carrageenan and guar gum.

### Manhattan Milk

**From** A dairy that collects milk from the cows owned by 51 Amish families in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

**Available** By delivery; \$15 minimum order with \$5 delivery charge. Type in your zip code on the company's website to see if it delivers to your area. You can also pick up a bottle at Batch, pastry chef Pichet Ong's bakery

(150B W 10th St at Waverly Pl, 212-929-0250).

**What it is** Organic, with no antibiotics, hormone-free. Manhattan Milk also plans to deliver fresh-baked cookies from Batch, as well as a limited selection of groceries.

**The verdict** Matan liked the whole milk and thought it tasted like what he has at home. Henry thought it was "too sour," and Quentin was unsure. Matan loved the chocolate milk and, once again, said it tasted like ice cream.

**Our assessment** Manhattan Milk is robust, with a full and creamy texture. The chocolate milk tastes almost like chocolate pudding.

### Milk Thistle

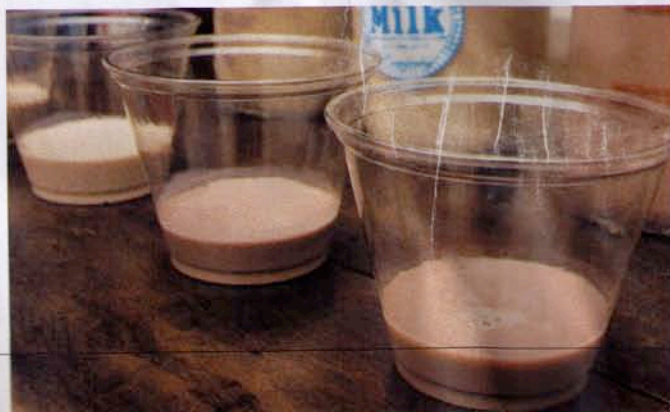
**From** The grass-fed Jersey cows on Dante Hess's small family farm in Ghent, New York

**Available** At Union Square, Columbia, Inwood and Grand Army Plaza Greenmarkets

**What it is** Organic, with no antibiotics, hormone-free

**The verdict** All three kid panelists loved the whole white milk. Henry said it "smells like banana bread." Of the chocolate milk, Quentin said he "would have it on a hot day," and Matan said, "Really yummy!"

**Our assessment** Milk Thistle has a full, rich flavor but is slightly sweeter and lighter in texture than the other milks (it comes from a different breed of cow). The chocolate milk is refreshing, well balanced and has no aftertaste; it's flavored only with cocoa and evaporated cane juice.



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