



Yili launches high-calcium milk with patented technology to improve calcium retention

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The new Yili Bone-Energy High-Calcium Milk combines 400 mg of milk-derived calcium with vitamin D3 and uses lipid-layer encapsulation technology to address consumer concerns around calcium absorption and retention



Inner Mongolia Yili Industrial Group Co., Ltd. (Yili) has launched its new Yili Bone-Energy High-Calcium Milk at the World Dairy Congress held on August 1, 2026. The product is positioned as a technology-led upgrade in the ambient high-calcium milk category, which has been available in the market for nearly three decades and has developed a broad consumer base. However, competition in the segment has traditionally centred on a single measure—calcium content.

That approach has resulted in similar product formulations and encouraged brands to compete largely on numbers and price. Yili's latest launch seeks to shift the basis of competition from how much calcium a product contains to how effectively the body can retain and utilise it. According to Yili, the product uses patented lipid-layer encapsulation technology that increases calcium retention by 18.3 per cent. The technology is intended to address a key consumer concern associated with calcium-fortified products: high intake does not necessarily translate into high retention.

By focusing on calcium retention, Yili is attempting to move the category beyond the "more calcium" proposition. The company is presenting the product as an example of how food science and formulation technology can create greater value in a mature dairy segment. The launch comes as consumption patterns evolve, particularly among Gen Z consumers and China's expanding middle-class population. These consumers are increasingly seeking products supported by science, convenience and clear functional benefits. Rather than viewing high-calcium milk only as a nutritional supplement for specific groups, they are showing greater interest in products that fit into everyday lifestyles.

Yili Bone-Energy High-Calcium Milk combines 400 mg of milk-derived calcium with vitamin D3. The formulation is designed to support a more convenient and lifestyle-oriented approach to calcium intake, rather than relying on the logic of medicinal

supplementation. The company's positioning marks a shift from basic calcium supplementation to what it describes as effective calcium retention. This broadens the product's potential appeal beyond consumers with specific nutritional needs and towards a wider audience looking for a quality daily dairy choice.

The strategy also reflects a wider transformation in the functional food and beverage market. As consumers become more familiar with nutritional claims, brands are under pressure to provide stronger scientific support and more meaningful benefits. Product differentiation is increasingly being built around delivery systems, bioavailability, formulation quality and measurable outcomes. For the ambient high-calcium milk category, this shift could create new opportunities for premiumisation. Instead of competing solely on calcium quantities, brands may increasingly focus on absorption, retention, ingredient combinations and proprietary technologies.

Yili's product strategy also aims to address the limitations of a volume-driven market. When products are differentiated mainly by calcium content, consumers may find it difficult to distinguish between competing formulations. This can intensify price competition and reduce the overall value of the category. By introducing a patented delivery technology and highlighting calcium retention, Yili is seeking to establish a technology-based competitive advantage. The approach could help the company build a differentiated position while encouraging the broader category to compete on value rather than volume.

The launch may also support the development of new consumption occasions. High-calcium milk has traditionally been associated with children, older consumers or people seeking targeted nutritional support. A product framed around daily wellness, convenient nutrition and science-based formulation could appeal to working professionals, younger consumers and health-conscious households. For Yili, the product is therefore more than an addition to its high-calcium milk portfolio. It represents an effort to revitalise a mature category by responding to changing consumer expectations and applying technology to a familiar dairy format.

The long-term performance of the product will depend on consumer acceptance, regulatory compliance, pricing, distribution and the ability of the technology proposition to translate into repeat purchases. If successful, Yili Bone-Energy High-Calcium Milk could help move ambient high-calcium milk from a numbers-led segment towards a more differentiated, premium and science-driven category.