



CHEAT SHEET

Homemade Yogurt

The conflict rages on about the positive benefits versus negative consequences of consuming dairy products, but nearly everyone agrees that clean, fermented dairy is the most digestible form. In yogurt and kefir, the live cultures also help to repopulate the human gut with beneficial probiotics, a positive for everyone who wants a smooth-running digestive system.

To make great yogurt you have to start with the best milk. The optimal choice is ultra-fresh, raw milk from organic cows raised on pasture. The next best option is fresh, lightly pasteurized whole milk from organic cows raised on pasture. The only other ingredient you need is a culture starter. You can buy yogurt starters, but it works just as well to use a bit of fresh, young, high quality yogurt. Again, choose yogurt made from organic cows raised on pasture. It should also be whole milk yogurt, plain with no additives, and contain live cultures (usually clearly marked right on the packaging). Check the expiration date and get the freshest carton you can find. The cultures age and die, so younger yogurt is more potent.

To make the yogurt you need just a few key tools. You can buy a fancy yogurt heater if you really get into it, but it's not necessary. All you need is an insulated cooler and a couple of hot water bottles (or any container that holds hot water, even other jars can work). If you have a dehydrator, that's ideal. You'll also need a medium saucepan, a sterile, quart-sized mason jar and a food thermometer.

The basic process is to heat the milk to help it thicken (not a strictly necessary step), then combine it with the starter culture and keep it just above human body temp for 10-24 hours to sour and thicken. Once made it will keep in the refrigerator for about 2 weeks.

INGREDIENTS

1 quart organic, pastured, fresh, whole milk (raw, if you can get it)

3 tablespoons organic, pastured, fresh, whole milk yogurt, plain, no additives

INSTRUCTIONS

Before getting started, warm an insulated cooler by filling it with hot water, hot water bottles or jars filled with hot water. You want the environment to be warm when the hot milk goes in to ferment.

Heat the milk in a large saucepan over medium to 180°F, stirring frequently. Avoid a full boil. 180° is about the temp when a low simmer begins.

While the milk is warming, add the yogurt to a sterile 1 quart mason jar and set aside.

When the milk hits 180° remove it from the heat and let it cool to just above 110°F.

Then pour the milk gently into the mason jar with the yogurt and mix them together well with a sterile utensil.

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Yogurt, cont'd.

Seal the jar with the lid and transfer it into the preheated cooler or a dehydrator set to 110°. You want the jar to stay at close to 110° for 10-12 hours, so you will probably need to pack the jar with hot water bottles or jars of hot tap water and top with a towel before closing the cooler.

Place the cooler in a warm area of your house and don't move it.

After 10 hours, check the flavor and texture. If it has thickened up and is pleasantly sour, you can transfer it to the fridge and start eating it whenever you like. If you would like it to be thicker or more sour, you can rewarm the cooler and replace the jar for up to 12 more hours before refrigerating. Just make sure the mixture stays above body temp and is undisturbed.

Yield: 1 quart yogurt

SERVING SUGGESTIONS:

For different flavor twists, stir in to finished yogurt:

- Chopped cucumbers, minced garlic and lemon juice – makes a cooling savory sauce for spicy dishes
- Chopped fruit and cinnamon
- Cocoa powder and stevia
- Canned pumpkin (1 part yogurt to 1 part pumpkin), minced fresh ginger and a drizzle of raw honey

TIPS

You can also make yogurt from milks from other animals such as buffalo, goat or sheep. Vegan milks, such as those made from soaked nuts, are more effective bases for kefir than yogurt because they ferment slightly differently and don't tend to get as thick. Kefir requires starter grains and a slightly different process than yogurt making. The basic steps for making yogurt with the milk from different animals are the same, but you may need to adjust the temperatures and fermenting times a bit to suit their individual chemistries.

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