

## Yogurt

*What exactly is yogurt?*

Yogurt is the product of beneficial bacteria fermenting milk and turning it into a thickened, acidic food that will stay fresh longer than milk itself, and that contains millions of bacteria that are welcomed by the human gut.

<http://www.culturesforhealth.com/what-is-yogurt-history>

*Benefits of making your yogurt at home:*

- \* Cheap! You can make a half gallon of yogurt with one 1/2 cup of yogurt. Splurge and buy a nice, quality yogurt and you can get 8 batches out of a 32 oz. container. More, if you use leftovers from your own batches here and there.
- \* Freshly made yogurt is filled with countless numbers of beneficial bacteria that help digestion and kill harmful viruses. Once yogurt is refrigerated, it begins to lose its good bacteria. Yogurt from the store has been sitting too long to maintain all the good bacteria fresh, homemade would have.
- \* 1 cup of yogurt has about 13 grams of protein, as well as B complex, calcium, potassium, phosphorus, and folic acid.
- \* Fresh yogurt is digested in about one hour as compared to the three hours it can take to digest milk. People who can't drink milk can often eat yogurt.
- \* Yogurt aids in digestion and healthy flora in your gut.
- \* Other health benefits from fresh yogurt include decreased bloating, relief of both constipation and diarrhea and other stomach disorders.

See more at : <http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/food-tips/health-benefits-of-fresh-made-yogurt.html>

*How to make:*

2 quarts whole milk (organic or raw would be ideal)  
1/2 c. yogurt (from previous batch or from quality whole fat yogurt)

1. **Pour yogurt into clean 4 or 5 qt. crockpot. Set on low.**
2. **Set timer for 2 hours and 45 minutes.** This should get your milk to the correct temperature to kill any bacteria that would not allow the yogurt culture to grow. However, if this is the first time using your particular crockpot and are unsure of its heating accuracy, test the temperature after the time period. It needs to reach 185 degrees. Too much hotter and you could have burnt milk which will affect the taste of your yogurt.
3. **When timer rings, turn crockpot off and set timer for 3 hours.** This should allow the necessary amount of time for your milk to cool before adding the starter yogurt. Again, test with a thermometer the first time to make sure - it needs to be pretty close to 110. Any hotter will kill the starter, too cool and it will not incubate properly to create the yogurt.
4. **When timer rings, gently scoop out a few cups of warm milk into a glass bowl, pitcher, etc. Stir in 1/2 yogurt with a plastic spoon/spatula. Pour gently back into crockpot.** Don't worry about lumps, just a few gentle swirls is all you need. Some recipes say to whisk but I have found that the less touching and disturbing, the better.

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- 5. Cover and wrap crockpot in 3-4 large bath towels or other thick, warm something to insulate your yogurt.**
- 6. Allow to sit for at least 8 hours.** The longer your yogurt sits, the tangier it will be. Also, the longer it sits, the more bacteria it creates.
- 7. After at least 12 hours, unwrap, and refrigerate until cold. DO NOT DISTURB UNTIL COLD!** I have found that if I touch it before it cools completely, it does not create a smoothy, creamy texture. Optional step: You can stick it in the freezer for 1 hour to cool quickly (set a timer!). This seems to make it a consistently nice texture.

Recipe from: <http://www.nourishingdays.com/2009/02/make-yogurt-in-your-crock-pot/>

### Notes:

If you want to buy a good quality yogurt to use as a starter, freeze 1/2 cup portions in ziplocs. This way your nice yogurt won't go bad before you use it all!

You can use leftover yogurt from your own yogurt to start a new batch. However, I have noticed that after a few batches like this, the end product can get lumpy or snotty or just not as thick and nice.

### **For Greek Yogurt:**

After the yogurt cools completely (8 hours in the fridge), pour into a large cheesecloth or thin, linen-type dishcloth. Tie up with a rubber band. Tricky part: Find a place to hang it over a bowl. This will allow the whey to drip from the yogurt, creating a much thicker end product.

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### **Milk Kefir**

*What exactly is Milk Kefir (pronounced keh'-feer)?*

kefir is a cultured probiotic food that is packed with living bacteria, phosphorous, folic acid, lactic acid, biotin, vitamins K, and vitamin B, among others.

*Kefir vs. Yogurt*

\*Yogurt contains two types of bacteria: *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*

\*While yogurt has two bacterial strains, kefir has 30-40! You can check them out here: <http://www.culturesforhealth.com/milk-kefir-grains-composition-bacteria-yeast>.) These friendly bacteria are found to contain enzymes, yeasts, phosphorous, folic acid, lactic acid, biotin, vitamins K, vitamin B, and other helpful vitamins and minerals. Kefir also has different strains of yeast.

\*Yogurt contains transient bacteria and will not repopulate the digestive tract, but the active, growing, living cultures in kefir will.

\*A cup of yogurt contains up to 1 trillion bacteria, but a cup of kefir can contain up to 5 trillion.

Info from: <http://www.yourkefirsource.com/kefir/>

*How to make:*

1. On your very first batch, rinse your grains with some fresh milk through a strainer. Use a wooden spoon to stir and press the excess milk through the strainer - don't be timid, you can't break up the true grains. (Chlorine can damage grains so never rinse with water).
2. Put the grains into a clean glass jar - at least a pint size to start. They tend to do a bit better in a wider jar.
3. Add one cup of milk of your choice (1 cup of milk per 1 T of grains). Make sure the milk isn't ultra-pasteurized or 'lactose-free'. Raw milk is best, but if you don't have access to raw, whole milk works well. Hold off on experimenting with other milks such as soy or coconut until the grains have balanced in their new home for a few weeks.
4. Cover the jar with a cloth, paper towel or coffee filter. Secure with a band. The grains need to be able to breathe.
5. Find a place for your kefir out of direct sunlight.
6. The milk should be ready in about 24 hours. You can tell when it's ready if when you slightly tilt the jar you see it is more like gel (no longer watery milk), and also if you see any separation of the whey (pockets of clear liquid). The first time it may still be quite milky, but that's ok, they're still adjusting to their new home. It should smell yeasty like bread, and a little sharp or sour like yogurt. How long you ferment is truly a matter of personal preference. It gets more acidic and tart the longer you let it ferment. Keep in mind it can stress the grains when over-fermented continually. Temperature will also greatly affect the speed of fermentation (it can take half as much time during the summer). Add more milk or take out some grains if it's too fast. If it's too slow, decrease the milk, and find a warmer spot in

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your house. Experiment and see what tastes right (and digests right) for you. There is no right or wrong to this, it is simply a matter of preference!

7. When the kefir is ready, you need to separate the kefir from the kefir grains. Give your kefir a quick stir and pour and stir through a plastic or stainless steel strainer over a bowl. (Some metal (like aluminum) may harm the kefir grains. Stainless steel is considered safe (non reactive) and is perfectly suitable for brief contact like straining or stirring.)
  - a. Some people will discard the clear whey that can sometimes pour through the strainer first (before stirring) so they can have a thicker, milder kefir. However it contains many nutritious minerals and proteins from the milk, and is best left in if you want the full nutritional benefits.
8. Put the grains back into the jar. It's not necessary to rinse the grains or the jar; they are usually much better off without a rinse. You can re-use the same jar or start with a clean one. If you clean it, make sure to wipe all soap residue out (to avoid harming the grains with any harsh chemicals or antibacterials).
9. Once strained, stir the kefir to smooth out any chunks. You can drink the finished kefir right away or you can put it in a jar in the fridge to cool, round out the flavor and thicken a bit more. B-vitamins also increase slightly when stored for 6-12 hours before consuming. If you want your kefir fizzy and carbonated, put a tight lid on the finished product for a day or two, burping it once a day (opening and closing the lid - to prevent explosion). Keeping it outside the fridge will help this process, but keep in mind, it will get increasingly sour.

**Important Note Before Drinking Kefir:** Kefir contains very large amounts of good bacteria and yeast as well as being acidic. For a few people's bodies it can be a little bit of a shock. Everybody reacts to it differently, so you may want to start out slow to see how your body takes to it. The majority of people do not have any adverse reaction, but if you do, usually it's just a matter of starting out slow and slowly increasing over time. Start out with a tablespoon and go from there. Your body can ultimately benefit more from it too, when introduced to it gradually. Sometimes drinking in the morning with breakfast is best as many report that they do much better with Kefir in the morning.

Notes:

\*The grains *may* require much more than 1 cup of milk, especially in warmer weather. If you're in a warm environment, we recommend starting with 1 cup and then adjusting with more for each batch thereafter if necessary. If your first batch is over-done, simply add 1/2 cup more milk for the next batch

\*Occasionally, a first batch will have an off odor. And it may be a bit weak still as it adjusts from transit and acclimates to a new environment and milk source. Although generally safe, you may want to discard this batch. It may take a few batches for the grains to acclimatize to your home and milk source. At this point, it will be more balanced and tasty for you to consume.

\*Some metal (like aluminum) may harm the kefir grains. Stainless steel is considered safe (non reactive) and is perfectly suitable for brief contact like straining or stirring.

Detailed instructions from:

<http://www.yemoos.com/milkkefirguide.html>

Info on storing extra grains:

<http://www.yemoos.com/milkkefirguide.html>

Where we ordered both our water and kefir grains:

<http://www.yemoos.com>

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### **Smoothies!**

#### Pineapple/Mango

1 qt. Kefir  
1 banana  
2 c. pineapple (fresh is best)  
1 ripe mango  
honey to taste (optional)

Whirl in blender and consume :)

#### Chocolate/Peanut Butter/Banana

1 qt. Kefir  
2 bananas  
1/4 c. pb  
1/8 c. cocoa  
honey to taste

Whirl in blender.

More Kefir recipes:

<http://www.yummly.com/recipes/kefir-fruit-smoothie>

<http://www.culturesforhealth.com/five-ways-to-use-kefir>

Water vs. Milk kefir:

<http://www.yourkefirsource.com/water-or-milk-kefir-time-to-choose-but-with-nothing-to-lose/>

The Curative Grain:

<http://www.yourkefirsource.com/kefir-the-curative-grain-infographic/>

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### **Soaked Granola**

The night before:

10 cups rolled regular or thick cut oats  
2/3 cup wheat flour (spelt or kamut for gluten intolerance)  
1/3 cup yogurt, kefir or whey  
2 cups filtered water

Mix together oats and flour well. Combine water and yogurt and pour over oats. Mix well with hands or spoon, try to break up any large clumps of oats. Cover with cloth and let sit on counter overnight.

Following day: Divide mixture between 2 cookie sheets. Bake in oven at 250 until oats are almost dry. Not toasted and brown, but not damp and soft. Attempt to get them to look like they did before you soaked them, bringing them back to their original state. Next add:

1 T salt  
1 - 1 1/2 cups coconut, optional  
1 - 1 1/2 cups nuts, optional(your choice - I usually do walnuts or almonds)

Mix well and then add:

1/2 cup melted coconut oil  
1 cup honey

Return to oven and bake again at 250 until lightly browned, mixing occasionally. Allow to cool on pan and stir a few times as it cools to keep it from sticking to the pan. Once completely cool, put in air-tight container. Eat with homemade yogurt, dried or fresh fruit, etc. So yummy!

Why Soak Grains?

#### The Basic Science Behind Soaking Grains

- Grains are seeds. (*All this information therefore, pertains to legumes, nuts and seeds as well.*)
- Seeds are meant to pass through the system relatively undigested so they can be planted elsewhere (think in nature).
- To make it possible for seeds to pass through undigested, there are some anti-nutrients built in to make them difficult to digest.
- Seeds also need to be preserved until the time is right for sprouting, so they have certain compounds that stop the active enzyme activity of germination.
- These compounds also serve to hinder active enzyme activity in your digestive system.
- Beginning the sprouting process makes seeds more digestible and help your system obtain all the nutrients in the food.
- "Soaking" grains is one way to mimic the sprouting process.

Read more at <http://www.kitchenstewardship.com/2009/11/30/soaking-whole-grains-why-do-it/#oiRzFJMmt31xzSUx.99>

More info at:

<http://www.kitchenstewardship.com/seriescarnivals/soaking-grains-an-exploration/>  
<http://wellnessmama.com/3807/are-sprouted-soaked-and-fermented-grains-healthy/>  
<http://www.westonaprice.org/faq/faq-grains-seeds-nuts-beans>

What exactly is phytic acid?

<http://www.phyticacid.org>