

Yogurt Making 101

This recipe makes about 2 quarts of plain yogurt

Ingredients:

½ gallon whole milk

½ cup plain yogurt with live cultures

Supplies:

Measuring cup for liquids

Clean 4 to 6 quart saucepan

Spoon or spatula for stirring

Instant read thermometer or candy thermometer

Pan or bowl for cold water (optional)

*Container to hold yogurt while it incubates (more on this later down below)

Step one: Make sure your equipment is squeaky clean and sterilized, as well as all your work surfaces.

Step two: Measure out 8 cups of milk and pour into saucepan. Turn stovetop burner onto medium-low and stir the milk continuously so it doesn't stick to the bottom of the sauce pan. Stirring will also prevent the milk from boiling over or forming a skin. Use the thermometer to check the temperature of the milk. You want it to reach 180 degrees F.

Step three: Remove the pan of milk from the heat and allow it to cool to 110 – 115 degrees F. You can quicken this by placing the pan in a bigger pan or bowl filled with cold water. Continue to check the temperature so it doesn't get too low. If it does, no biggie, just heat it again to 110 – 115.

Step four: Using the measuring cup, scoop a ½ cup of the milk out of the pan and pour the ½ c of yogurt into it. Stir to combine, then pour the mix back into the pan of 110 – 115 degree milk.

Step five: Pour the yogurt-milk mixture into the container for incubation for 5 to 10 hours. The longer the yogurt sits, the thicker and tangier it gets. I usually make my yogurt at night and it is ready by the next morning for breakfast.

Step six: You can add flavoring like vanilla extract or fruit, or a sweetener like maple syrup to your finished yogurt. Refrigerate your yogurt for 1 or 2 weeks.

Notes: You will notice a thinner liquid in your yogurt that is the whey, which is full of vitamins and minerals. Simply stir the yogurt to reincorporate it, or drain it off and use it for cooking or making smoothies. You can also harvest the whey and simultaneously make a thicker Greek-style yogurt by lining a colander with cheesecloth and setting it over a bowl. Pour the yogurt into the lined colander and cover, then place into the frig overnight. The bowl will be full of vitamin rich whey you can use and the yogurt will be nice and thick. Transfer the yogurt to a covered container and refrigerate.

***The Container for incubation:** If you don't have an official yogurt incubator, don't worry. You can DIY an incubator by using a cooler and filling it with towels. Find plastic or glass containers that have lids and enough room to hold 2 quarts, and make sure they are squeaky clean before you begin the yogurt making process. When you get to step five, pour the yogurt into the containers and place in the cooler among the towels and close it. In 5 to 10 hours you will have yogurt! If you have a 2-quart thermos, simply put the yogurt in it and let it incubate 5 to 10 hours. Be sure it is a quality thermos that really does hold heat well. You can wrap the thermos in towels to be sure it holds the heat better.

Enjoy!