

# Yogurt

The aroma, body and flavor of yogurt and other cultured dairy products can vary depending on the type of culture and milk, amount of milk fat and non-fat milk solids, fermentation process and temperature used. These foods are made by adding specific cultures (i.e. bacteria) to fluid dairy products in order to convert some lactose (milk's sugar) into lactic acid.



## What is Yogurt?

Yogurt is a mixture of milk (whole, reduced-fat, low-fat or non-fat) and cream fermented by a culture of lactic acid-producing bacteria. Sweeteners (e.g. sugar, honey, aspartame, sucralose), flavorings (e.g. vanilla, coffee) and other ingredients (e.g. fruits, preserves, stabilizers such as gelatin) may be added. Yogurt contains at least 3.25% milk fat. The mixture of dairy products and most optional ingredients must be pasteurized or ultrapasteurized. The milk in most yogurts is also homogenized. Some yogurts carry a seal (below) on the label indicating that the yogurt contains a significant level of live, active cultures.

## Varieties



- **Low-fat Yogurt** is similar in composition to yogurt except that it contains either 0.5%, 1%, 1.5% or 2% milk fat.
- **Non-fat Yogurt** is similar in composition to yogurt and low-fat yogurt except that it contains less than 0.5% milk fat.
- **Greek Yogurt** prepared by straining regular yogurt to remove liquid whey. This process gives Greek yogurt a thicker consistency than other types of yogurt.
- **Yogurt Beverages** are available in a variety of flavors and in single-serve and larger containers. There are other ingredients in these products besides yogurt and the actual amount of yogurt in the products can vary.

## Other Cultured Dairy Foods

- **Buttermilk** is made by adding lactic acid-producing bacteria to pasteurized or ultrapasteurized milk (whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, non-fat) with non-fat dry milk solids under controlled conditions. The product is heated until the desired acidity is achieved, then cooled to stop fermentation. Buttermilk flakes or liquid butter may be added to give cold milk the appearance of churned buttermilk. Salt, citric acid or sodium citrate may be added to enhance flavor. Today, depending on the level of milk fat in the product, buttermilk may be called cultured buttermilk, cultured low-fat buttermilk, or cultured skim (non-fat) buttermilk. Originally, buttermilk was the low-fat liquid remaining after churning cream into butter.
- **Acidophilus Milk** is typically low-fat or non-fat milk to which active cultures of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* have been added. The mixture is heated until a curd forms and the desired acidity is reached. The milk is then refrigerated. Adding *Lactobacillus acidophilus* cultures to cold, low-fat or non-fat milk and then refrigerating the product to prevent further growth of the harmless bacteria produces Sweet Acidophilus Milk. Unlike fermented acidophilus milk, which has a slightly tart taste, this product has a sweet taste.

## Nutrition Facts

The nutritional and caloric contents of yogurt, buttermilk and acidophilus milk are similar to those of fluid milks from which they are made. An exception to this is the protein content of Greek yogurt which, due to the straining process, can have up to twice as much protein per volume as milk or regular yogurt. Each of these products is an important source of calcium, riboflavin (vitamin B2) and protein. Check the Nutrition Facts panel on product labels for the nutritional content of specific products.

## Storing and Handling

Yogurt, buttermilk and acidophilus milk should be stored in closed containers in the refrigerator at 40°F to maintain their quality. Yogurt will keep for about a week and buttermilk and acidophilus milk will keep for about 2 weeks in the refrigerator. Freezing is not recommended for any of these cultured dairy foods.

# Commonly Asked Questions about Yogurt and Other Cultured Dairy Products



## Does yogurt have unique health benefits?

The main benefit of yogurt is that, like other dairy foods, it provides protein, calcium, vitamins and other minerals. Numerous health benefits beyond its nutritional value have been associated with consuming yogurt. Scientists have found that intake of yogurt with active cultures may aid digestion, ease diarrhea, boost immunity, fight infection and protect against cancer. These specific health benefits depend on the strain and viability of the culture in yogurt. This is why it is important to choose yogurt with a seal indicating it contains live, active cultures.

## Why is yogurt beneficial for individuals with lactose intolerance?

Many yogurts contain lower amounts of lactose than milk. As yogurt ferments, some of the lactose (milk's sugar) changes to lactic acid. Importantly, starter cultures in yogurt may produce the enzyme lactase, which digests lactose. Yogurt's semi-solid state also contributes to improved tolerance to lactose.

## Is yogurt fortified with vitamin D?

Vitamin D fortification of milk products is optional. If vitamin D is added to yogurt, it will be indicated on the ingredients label and Nutrition Facts panel.

## Is sweet acidophilus milk advantageous for lactose intolerant individuals?

The lactose in sweet acidophilus milk is tolerated about the same as that in regular milk. Sweet acidophilus milk, cultured buttermilk or yogurt without live, active cultures all have about the same amount of lactose as regular milk. Consuming these milk products with meals improves lactose digestion.

A Nutritional Look at Yogurt				
Food: 1 cup (8 oz)	Calories (Kcal)	Fat (g)	Protein (g)	Calcium (mg)
<b>Yogurt</b>				
Whole milk, plain	150	8.0	8.5	296
Low-fat, plain	155	4.0	11	448
Low-fat, vanilla	208	3.0	11	419
Low-fat, fruit	238	3.0	11	384
Non-fat, plain	137	0.4	14	488
<b>Greek Yogurt</b>				
Low-fat, plain	170	4.8	23	266
Non-fat, plain	136	0.9	23	253
<b>Buttermilk</b>				
Low-fat	98	2.0	8	285

Source: USDA Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, 2013.



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