

Ralph's once secret home made yogurt recipe.

People have asked me to publish my most secret homemade yogurt recipe. As you may know, chocolate milk is not a health food. It is just very convenient for after a workout as it has almost the perfect combo of protein, to complex carbs, to sugar you need after training. If it is not after training, all that sugar is still bad for you (right after training all that sugar is great).

For a much healthier alternative, but more expensive, you can have 1% yogurt. Make sure it is the kind with sugar, and not artificial sweeteners.

I have an even healthier alternative, much cheaper, but more complicated. I make my own yogurt. I usually make 3 gallons at a time.

I put the milk (3 gallons, 1%) in a big pot and mix it with some good quality, 1% plain yogurt. I warm it up slowly, 'cause yogurt bacteria (culture) tends to be very delicate and can die with sudden changes of temperature (in fact this is what pasteurization is all about; I learned this from Dr. Martin Reaney who teaches biology or related subjects at the U of S, and who also teaches the kids judo class at the Saskatoon Y). What I do is I place the pot in the sink with warm water. I scoop some of that water with a cup, and put it in a small pot on the stove, I keep it there about 5 min, and pour this hot water relatively slowly back in the sink, and take some more water from the sink warm it up, and so on until the water is pretty warm. The temperature of the milk should be about 43 degrees Celsius, but it doesn't have to be perfect. It has to feel warm to your finger, but not to the point it burns. There are, if you are interested, thermometers for food, for candy, and specifically for yogurt (I have one but never use it).

After it's warm, you should keep it warm. What I do is a wrap around the pot a large heating pad I have, tie with a judo belt, and wrap a blanket on top. The first few hours go very slowly, but when the milk gets sticky, it goes very, I mean very very quick, some times it seems like minutes. So you have to keep an eye on it.

After about 5 or 6 hours, I have my timer every 30 min. I check it. When it gets sticky, I take my first gallon, and I write number 3 on it. This gallon will last longer without separating (milk from whey). I wait a few minutes (10, 15) and take my other gallon (#2), I repeat the process and I get my final gallon. This is the one I'm going to use right now. The cooling down process should be slow as well to prevent you from murdering the bacteria. The problem is the process continues during the cooling down. You don't want it to separate as this happens when the bacteria runs out of food. If you don't do something right away, the bacteria die of starvation. The yogurt is still good, but it lacks the awesome capacities the bacteria provide. To fix this you have to immediately add some milk (a 4th to a 5th of the yogurt).

THE SYRUP:

Before we get into the syrup, I have to tell you I do this for convenience.

The much healthier alternative, the shake:

I buy frozen mixed berries (lots of antioxidants and many other "goodies"). I put in the blender about a cup of yogurt, I add some frozen berries, a banana (mostly for sweetness, but also for good sugar, carbs, potassium, etc, etc), and I shake it, shake it baby (I mean with the blender silly, you don't need to shake your tush, but you can if you want to). Sometimes I add some whey protein just to load it up some more. If you want it sweeter, you can add some more bananas, some honey, or even some frozen unsweetened orange juice (without adding water). You can't do a shake, however, and take it to the gym because it will turn bad. For after training you need the yogurt/syrup combo.

Now for the syrup:

I buy the biggest bag of frozen strawberries I can find. I let it thaw. I put some in the blender until it is liquefied, then some more, until all of it is liquid. You can strain it to get the seeds out. This is slow as the juice is pretty thick. I rub it with a wooden spoon to speed it up. Then I put in a pot, and always stirring I let come to a boil. As soon as it start boiling I add honey (the same amount as the juice), and continuing stirring I let it melt and come to a boil once again. As soon as it is boiling I take it out. Now that is winter, I cover the pot, and let it cool down outside. I put the syrup in a jar, keep it in the fridge, and use it when I need it. I mix some of the syrup (of course you have to taste it for sweetness) with the yogurt, 1 gallon of yogurt at a time, and drink it when I want. Actually this is what I use instead of chocolate milk after workout.