

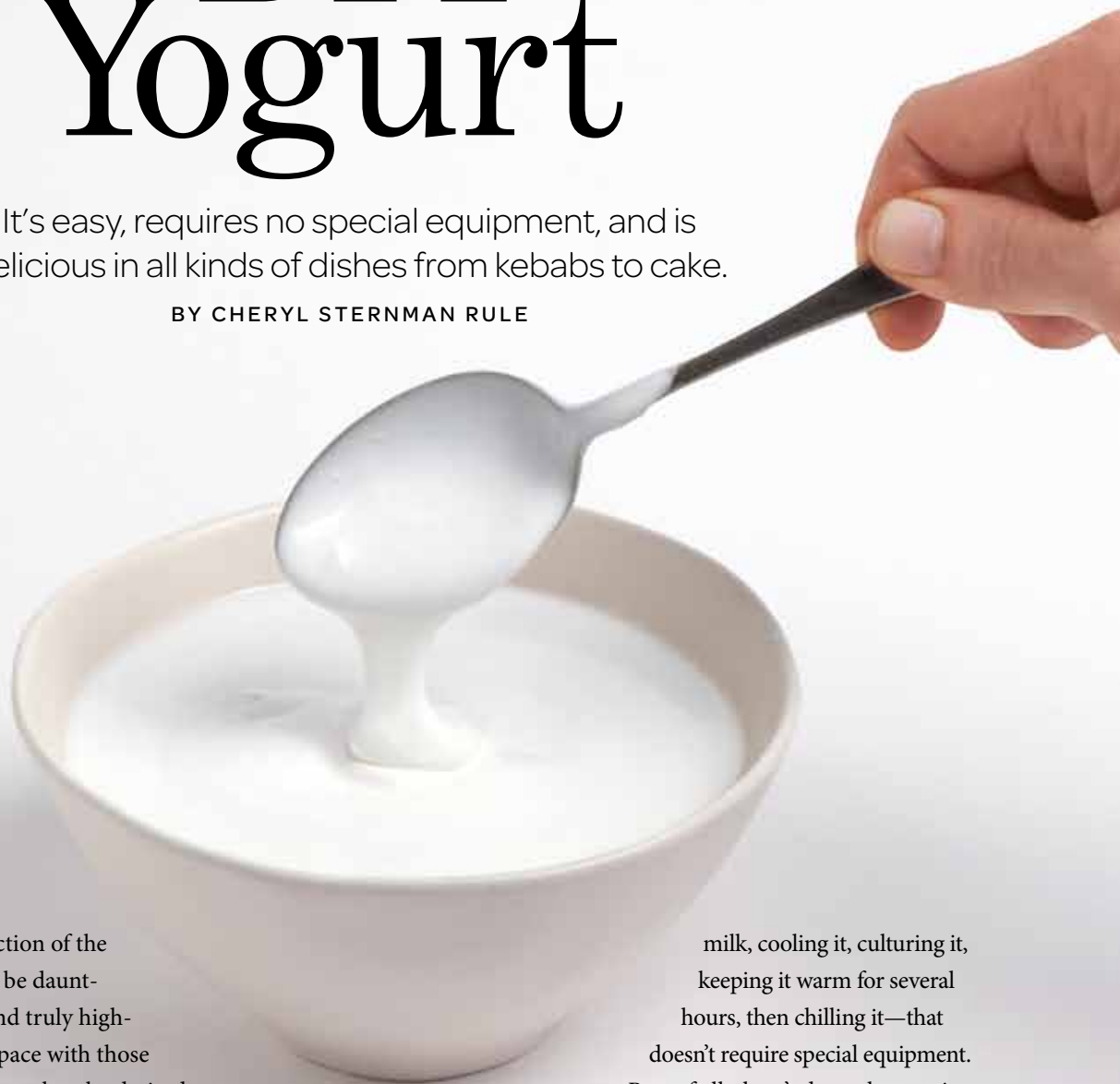


Yogurt-Marinated Pork
Kebabs with Cucumber-
Lemon Labneh, *recipe p. 72*

DIY Yogurt

It's easy, requires no special equipment, and is delicious in all kinds of dishes from kebabs to cake.

BY CHERYL STERNMAN RULE



The ever-growing yogurt section of the grocery store dairy case can be daunting. The selection is huge, and truly high-quality yogurts share shelf space with those whose ingredient lists leave much to be desired. The sheer variety means you can taste around and find something that you love.

Or you can create your ideal yogurt by making it from scratch. This way, you can control not just what goes into it (and what doesn't), but you can also customize the flavor, degree of tartness, and even thickness to suit your palate.

In addition to tasting incredible, homemade yogurt is cost-effective: A gallon of milk (about \$4) yields 14 cups of yogurt (about \$14, if you were to buy it by the quart). And making yogurt is a straightforward, largely hands-off process—heating

milk, cooling it, culturing it, keeping it warm for several hours, then chilling it—that doesn't require special equipment.

Best of all, there's deep pleasure in

that magical moment when you lift the lid off your pot to reveal milk that has thickened into silky, delicate, clean-tasting, ivory yogurt. Once it's cold, you can eat your yogurt as is, strain it to make it thicker still, like Greek yogurt or Middle Eastern labneh, or cook with it. There's an expansive world of sweet and savory, hot and cold yogurt recipes to enjoy—you'll find four favorites on the next few pages.

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How to make YOGURT

1.

Keeping the milk at 180°F (or within 5°F of it) for 5 minutes results in thicker yogurt. Use an instant-read or probe thermometer affixed to the side of the pot (with a binder clip, if necessary) to monitor the temperature.



2.

Use a spoon to remove any skin that forms on the surface. This is a normal occurrence when you heat milk, but you don't want that skin in your yogurt.



3.

Cool the milk to 115°F before adding the yogurt starter so that the active cultures don't die. Occasional stirring can help speed this process and will remind you to keep an eye on the temperature.



4.

Temper the yogurt culture with warm milk before adding it to the pot so that they're about the same temperature.



5.

After eight hours in the oven, start checking the yogurt for firmness and tartness. Take a spoonful from the edge of the pot to disturb it as little as possible, and then quickly cover it and close the oven door if it's not done. Bear in mind that the yogurt will get a little thicker and more tart when it cools.

6.

Whisk after chilling, just before serving, to break up any curds. If there are still small lumps, briefly whisk with an ice cube, and then remove it so it doesn't melt and dilute the yogurt.

How to make GREEK YOGURT and Middle Eastern LABNEH

If you need Greek yogurt for the mousse on p. 74 or labneh for the pork on p. 72, simply strain your yogurt (see recipes for more details).

1.

A double thickness of cheesecloth is really important so that you don't lose any yogurt through it. You'll see the whey start dripping immediately.

2.

The longer you strain your yogurt, the thicker it will get—up to a point. Eventually, all the whey will run out, and that's when it's labneh, which has the texture of spreadable cheese.

homemade yogurt

The time range for incubating yogurt is quite wide, from 8 to 16 hours, depending in part on how active the cultures in the starter yogurt are, and in part on preference. The longer it sits, the thicker and tarter it will be. Makes 7¼ cups

- ½ gallon milk, preferably not ultra-pasteurized
- 2 Tbs. homemade or store-bought plain yogurt with active cultures, at room temperature

Affix a probe or instant-read thermometer to the side of a heavy-duty 6- to 7-quart pot. Pour in the milk, and heat over medium-high heat, without stirring, to 180°F **1**. Adjust the heat to maintain that temperature for 5 minutes. Turn off the heat, and use a spoon to lift off and discard any skin that has formed on its surface **2**.

Allow the milk to cool to 115°F, frequently stirring gently and checking the temperature, 25 to 30 minutes **3**. If the milk drops below 115°F, rewarm it.

Put the yogurt in a medium bowl and whisk in 1 cup of the milk to temper it **4**. Gently stir the mixture back into the pot, remove the thermometer, and cover with the lid.

Transfer to the oven and drape a kitchen towel over the pot. Turn on the oven light and let sit, undisturbed, until thick with a slight wobble when you jiggle the pot, 8 to 16 hours. A layer of cloudy whey on top is perfectly normal. After 8 hours, taste a spoonful of the yogurt for consistency and tanginess, being very careful not to agitate the rest **5**. If you want the yogurt thicker and tangier, cover the pot and close the oven for longer incubation, checking periodically, for up to 16 hours.

Set aside ¼ cup of the yogurt to culture future batches, if you like; cover and refrigerate for up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 3 months (thaw in the refrigerator before using).

Transfer the rest of the yogurt to a large container or divide among small containers, cover, and refrigerate until cool and set. Whisk to break up any curds before serving. If small lumps remain, add an ice cube and gently whisk for 20 to 30 seconds more **6**, then discard the ice cube. The yogurt can be refrigerated for 7 to 10 days.

What you need

MILK

You can use any animal milk—goat, cow, sheep; whole, reduced fat, or nonfat; organic, grass-fed, conventional. Lower-fat milks, as well as goat's milk (which has smaller fat particles), will make thinner yogurt. Just know milk that has been ultra-pasteurized (often labeled "UHT," for "ultra-high temperature") can give yogurt a different flavor.

YOGURT

That's right, you need yogurt with active live cultures to make more yogurt. You can start with store-bought, and then set aside a bit of each homemade batch to make the next.

A POT

You'll need a medium-large pot with a lid for heating the milk and incubating the yogurt. Choose one that's heavy duty, because it will retain heat to better maintain a steady temperature.

A THERMOMETER

The first step is to heat the milk, and the second is to cool it, both to specific temperatures. It's important to be accurate here, or you risk killing the yogurt cultures.

AN OVEN WITH A LIGHT

Yogurt cultures are commonly thermophilic, meaning they love heat, specifically temperatures between 100°F and 110°F. Starting with warm milk in a covered heavy-duty pot, draping a towel over it for extra insulation, and leaving it in an oven with just the light on is a reliable method of maintaining the temperature.

yogurt–marinated pork kebabs with cucumber–lemon labneh, *photo on p. 68*

This flavorful dish pairs juicy Middle Eastern-spiced pork with a lemony spread made by straining yogurt to make labneh, an ultra-thick salted yogurt cheese. The pork and labneh both need an overnight rest in the fridge, so plan ahead. Sumac is a brick-red spice with a lemony flavor. It's a pretty touch, but if you don't have it, simply leave it out. Serves 6

FOR THE PORK

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain yogurt
- $3\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. fresh lemon juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. ground coriander
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground cardamom
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground cinnamon
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 lb. pork tenderloin, cut into 1-inch pieces
- Olive oil spray

FOR THE LABNEH

- 4 cups plain yogurt
- Kosher salt
- 2 tsp. packed finely grated lemon zest
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
- Pinch white pepper
- Kosher salt

FOR SERVING

- 1 English cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into small dice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. sumac (optional)
- Extra-virgin olive oil, for finishing

MARINATE THE PORK

In a large bowl, whisk the yogurt, lemon juice, coriander, cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, $1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. pepper. Add the pork and turn to coat. Cover with plastic, pressing it against the top of the mixture, or scrape into a 1-gallon zip-top bag. Press out the air and seal the bag. Massage the bag to distribute the marinade evenly. Refrigerate 12 to 24 hours.

MAKE THE LABNEH

Set a strainer over a bowl and line with two layers of damp cheesecloth or paper towels, allowing a few inches of overhang. Spoon in the yogurt, and gently stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt. Cover with the cheesecloth overhang or another paper towel. Top with a plate slightly smaller than the strainer and weigh down the plate with a can or jar. Cover loosely with plastic. Refrigerate until very thick, at least 12 hours and up to 24. Discard the whey or reserve for another use.

Stir the lemon zest, lemon juice, and white pepper into the labneh. Season to taste with salt.

COOK THE PORK

Transfer the pork to a colander in the sink. Let drain until most of the marinade has dripped away and the pork is at room temperature, about 30 minutes. Divide among six 12-inch metal skewers or wooden skewers that have been soaked in water for 30 minutes. Spray the pork with olive oil and season lightly with salt.

Meanwhile, prepare a medium-high (400°F to 475°F) grill fire, or heat a grill pan over medium-high heat.

Grill, turning once, until the meat is just barely pink in the center and dark grill marks appear, 5 to 6 minutes.

SERVE

Distribute the labneh among 6 dinner plates, smoothing with the back of a spoon. Scatter the cucumber on top. Divide the skewers among the plates. Sprinkle the sumac, if using, over the pork and cucumbers, finish with a drizzle of olive oil, and serve.



Pair With: PINOT GRIGIO The tangy labneh and lemon beg for light, crisp, bright white wines with floral notes that complement those in the cucumber.

All the whey

When you add yogurt cultures to milk, it separates into thick, creamy curds and whey, the liquid that sits on top. For regular yogurt, you just stir the whey in with the curds, but if you are straining the curds to make Greek yogurt or labneh, save that whey! It makes an ideal substitute for buttermilk in pancakes or waffles and works beautifully as the liquid in your favorite smoothie. It's calcium-rich and filled with probiotics. You can also flavor it (with honey, ginger, lime juice, or maple, for example) and top it off with some sparkling water for a unique thirst quencher.

In a hurry?

You can use store-bought yogurt for any of these recipes. For the Honey-Vanilla Yogurt Mousse on p. 74, substitute 1 cup Greek yogurt, and for the Pork Kebabs at left, use $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups labneh to skip the straining step.

tomato-basil tart with yogurt custard

Using yogurt in a custard instead of milk or cream adds a nice tang. This one tops a puttanesca-inspired filling of tomatoes, olives, capers, anchovy, and basil. Omit the anchovy paste for a vegetarian version. **Serves 6**

FOR THE CRUST

- 4½ oz. (1 cup) unbleached all-purpose flour; more as needed
- ¾ oz. finely grated Asiago cheese (¼ cup)
- 1 tsp. finely chopped fresh basil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 oz. (6 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes

FOR THE FILLING

- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 medium cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ½ tsp. anchovy paste (optional)
- ½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 2½ cups grape tomatoes
- ½ cup pitted Kalamata olives, rinsed, patted dry, and coarsely chopped
- 1 Tbs. capers, rinsed and patted dry
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1¼ cups plain yogurt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1¼ oz. finely grated Asiago cheese (½ cup)
- Thinly sliced basil, for garnish

MAKE THE CRUST

Combine the flour, Asiago, basil, ¾ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper in a food processor. Pulse a few times just to combine. Scatter in the butter and pulse until pea-size clumps form. With the food processor running, slowly add 2 Tbs. of the ice water through the feed tube. Start dribbling in the third table-spoon bit by bit, stopping once the dough forms a ball.

Turn the dough onto a floured surface and press into a 6-inch disk. Wrap in plastic and chill for at least 30 minutes and up to 1 day.

MAKE THE FILLING

In a 4-quart saucepan, warm the oil over low heat. Add the garlic, anchovy paste (if using), and red pepper flakes and cook, stirring, until fragrant and sizzling, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, olives, and capers. Cover and continue cooking over low heat, stirring occasionally, until most of the tomatoes have burst and the liquid has mostly evaporated, about 15 minutes. Uncover and continue to cook, stirring constantly and breaking any tomatoes that have not burst, about 1 minute. Spread on a large dinner plate or tray and cool to room temperature, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, whisk the eggs in a medium bowl. Add the yogurt and ¼ tsp. pepper, and whisk until smooth. Set aside.

ASSEMBLE AND BAKE THE TART


Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F.

On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough into a 12-inch round. Press into a 9-inch fluted tart pan with a removable bottom, folding in any

overhang to create double-thick sides. Set the tart pan on a foil-lined baking sheet.

Sprinkle ¼ cup of the Asiago over the bottom of the tart. Spread the tomato mixture on top of the cheese. Slowly pour in the egg mixture.

Bake for 20 minutes. Sprinkle the remaining 2 Tbs. Asiago on top of the tart and return to the oven until golden, puffed, and set, 15 to 20 minutes longer. Transfer the tart to a wire rack (without the baking sheet), and cool 10 minutes before removing the outer ring of the tart pan. If transferring from the metal base onto a serving plate, cool 5 to 10 minutes longer before sliding a long spatula underneath the tart to ease it off the base. Garnish with the basil. Serve warm or at room temperature.

 **Pair With:** BARBERA These medium-bodied Italian reds are fruity enough for the tomatoes, yet have enough body for the briny olives and anchovy.





honey-vanilla greek yogurt mousse with sticky balsamic berries

A quick balsamic and black pepper glaze underpins the season's most colorful fruits in this cool dessert. You'll need a few hours to strain the yogurt and a few more to chill the mousse, but make the balsamic berries just before serving. If made ahead, the glaze will liquefy. Serves 4

FOR THE MOUSSE

- 2 cups plain yogurt
- ¼ cup honey
- Kosher salt
- ½ vanilla bean
- ¾ cup cold heavy cream

FOR THE BERRIES

- ¼ cup aged balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbs. honey
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups mixed fresh berries (blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries), rinsed and patted dry
- 4 amaretti cookies, crushed

MAKE THE MOUSSE

Set a strainer over a bowl and line with two layers of damp cheesecloth or paper towels, allowing a few inches of overhang. Spoon in the yogurt, cover with the cheesecloth overhang or another paper towel, and refrigerate until thick, creamy, and reduced by half, 3 to 4 hours.

In a small skillet, combine the honey, 2 Tbs. water, and ⅛ tsp. salt. With the tip of a paring knife, split the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape the seeds into the skillet. Add the bean, too. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly until the honey melts. Boil vigorously for one minute, swirling the skillet, then remove from the heat. Cool to room temperature, about 15 minutes. Remove the vanilla bean.

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment or using a

hand mixer, whip the cream to soft peaks. Add the yogurt and continue whipping on medium high until very thick, about 1 minute. With the mixer running, slowly pour the cooled syrup down the side of the bowl. Whip for 2 minutes longer to incorporate plenty of air. The mousse will be very fluffy, but will not hold a firm peak.

Divide among 4 dessert glasses or small bowls. Cover and chill until very cold, 2 to 4 hours.


MAKE THE BALSAMIC BERRIES

In a small saucepan, combine the balsamic vinegar, honey, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Set over medium heat. Bring to a boil, stirring for the first minute to dissolve the honey. Continue boiling, swirling the pan, until the syrup is reduced to 1 to 2 Tbs., 3 to 4 minutes. It will be quite thick and

sticky. Scrape over the berries, and stir gently to coat.

ASSEMBLE

Divide the balsamic berries among the mousse glasses. Garnish each serving with a crumbled amaretti cookie.

 **Pair With:** MOSCATO KIR ROYALE Balsamic berries point to cassis, the black currant liqueur blended with sparkling wine in these cocktails. Making them with floral Moscato d'Asti will mimic the mousse and be sweet enough for dessert.



key lime coconut yogurt cake

A Key lime syrup brushed over this incredibly tender pound cake makes for a delectably moist loaf, while coconut adds subtle flavor and texture without hogging the spotlight. If you can't find fresh Key limes or bottled Key lime juice, use standard limes. **Serves 8 to 10**

- 5½ oz. (11 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
- 9 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup (about 3 oz.) unsweetened shredded coconut
- 1 Tbs. packed finely grated lime zest, preferably from Key limes
- 1¼ cups granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 3 Tbs. fresh or bottled Key lime juice
- 1 cup plain yogurt

Line a 10x5-inch metal loaf pan with aluminum foil, allowing plenty of overhang on the long sides. Use 1 Tbs. of the butter to grease the inside of the pan, paying special attention to the short (unlined) sides.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

Sift the flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda into a large bowl. Using a fork, stir in the coconut and zest, evenly distributing any clumps.


In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, or using a hand mixer, whisk the remaining 10 Tbs. butter and 1 cup of the sugar on medium speed until pale, scraping down the bowl occasionally with a silicone spatula, about 5 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and whisk in the eggs one at a time. Whisk in 1 Tbs. of the Key lime juice. (The batter may appear slightly curdled.) Add half of the flour mixture and mix briefly on low speed until incorporated. Add the yogurt and mix briefly on low speed until incorporated. Add the remaining flour mixture and mix on medium speed until the batter is smooth, about 1 minute.

Scrape into the prepared pan and bake until a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean, 55 to 65 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the remaining ¼ cup sugar with ¼ cup water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves.

Boil one minute. Remove from the heat and add the remaining 2 Tbs. Key lime juice. Cool until needed.

Place the cake pan on a rack. Poke all over with a cake tester or toothpick. Brush liberally with all of the lime syrup, pausing occasionally to let it soak in. Let cool for 15 minutes. Lift out by the foil and finish cooling completely before removing from the foil and slicing.

 **Pair With:** LATE-HARVEST RIESLING Almost any dessert-style white would work here, but Rieslings tend toward tropical notes that will mirror those in the cake.