

Feta cheese and fermented dairy products

Feta Cheese

6-8 litres of cow or goat milk
Rennet (2.5 ml of Cheeselinks rennet)
cheese bacteria- (a pinch)

1. Heat the milk to 32- 34°C .
Add the starter and rennet, making sure to stir the rennet for more than one minute but no more than three. (The amount of rennet is according to the instructions that come with it as there are various strengths.)

Setting time one hour.

2. Cut the curd with a curd cutting knife in both directions into half inch spaces and then take the flat disc ladle to do the horizontal cuts and you will end up with half inch cubes floating in the whey.

Allow the curd to expel some more of the whey by gently stirring for quarter of an hour or so. Sit in the whey for one hour.

3 Take a large strainer and ladle the curd into it. Drain for an hour.

4. Take the curd and break up into smaller pieces and slide it into the mould.
(A light weight maybe placed on top of the cheese but usually not necessary)

5. Turn the cheese over the next day.

Leave in the mould another day then take the cheese out and sprinkle on some salt and place in the fridge.

6. After several days in the fridge when the cheese has firmed up, slice it into neat chunks of about three-quarters of an inch thick.

Have a large glass jar ready to place the feta pieces into it.

Pour some brine (salt and water to suit your taste) over the feta cheese and it will be ready to eat in a few days.

Kefir

Making your own kefir is so simple.

1. Take a clean glass jar and fill with milk.

2. Place the kefir culture in it and place a lid on the jar loosely and stand at room temperature for twelve to thirty-six hours depending on ambient room temperature.

3. Strain or fish out the kefir grain before consuming it.

That's all!

Some tips on successful kefir:

- ✓ A slightly warmer than ambient temperature will speed up the fermentation process.
- ✓ Using more kefir grains in the milk will speed up the fermenting process.

- ✓ Don't leave the ferment out too long before refrigerating it as it will turn too sour.
- ✓ Keep the ferment out of direct sun-light.
- ✓ Glass is a recommended utensil to use.
- ✓ Some kefir milk from one batch to another is OK as this will kick- start the fermenting process.
- ✓ It is not recommended to rinse your kefir grains between batches as active bacteria are present on the surface of the grains that are otherwise lost down the sink.
- ✓ Always use fresh and preferably raw milk but any milk will do.
- ✓ Always have very clean utensils when making kefir to avoid contamination.
- ✓ Use more rather than less kefir grains in the milk to avoid contamination.

How to Use Kefir

kefir milk to ferment cream into sour cream

kefir milk to ferment cream and make butter

kefir milk to make a light curd cheese- similar to quark

kefir milk in smoothies mixed with mangoes, ripe bananas, nuts etc.

Storing the kefir grain

There are times when kefir isn't part of your daily routine and the grains need to be kept viable. Storing kefir is a simple process of placing the grain in a clean jar in fresh milk and placing it immediately in the fridge. This will provide food for the organisms for several weeks. It would be kind to the kefir grains to remember them every now and then and say good day to them with a fresh batch of milk. They will thank you for it. If for some reason the jar works its way to the back of the fridge where it becomes forgotten, it is possible to revive the kefir grains after a couple of months of neglect by culturing and re-culturing them for several batches until the resulting kefir grain becomes healthy again.

Your small amount of kefir grain will convert a jam jar full of milk to the cultured milk drink. It will quickly grow in size with each incubation, and then a larger jar can be used.

Yoghurt

Having milk turn into yoghurt is an excellent way of enhancing the nutrient availability of the milk and also introducing beneficial bacteria into the gut flora. Yoghurt is also an effective way of keeping the milk palatable for longer without refrigeration. The bacteria in yoghurt are different to that of kefir thus they are two different cultured milk products. There are also various types of bacteria that can be turned into yoghurt and these will determine different outcomes of the finished products. Traditional yoghurts may also vary. Bulgarian yoghurt is usually consumed plain and the strains used are *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilis*. This style of yoghurt is often strained by hanging in a cloth for a few hours to

reduce the whey content. The resulting yoghurt is creamier, richer and milder in taste because of the increased fat ratio.

Greek full cream yoghurt is made with milk that is blended with extra cream and is often served with honey, walnuts or fruit preserves.

So you will find many variations with yoghurt styles.

The most important aspect of yoghurt is the contribution it makes to our health. All the bacteria used to make types of yoghurt are

beneficial for good health but most of these bacteria do not survive the digestive tract and are eventually rendered inert as they work their way down the digestive tract. There are however two strains that do survive the digestive process and continue to proliferate down into the intestinal tract and take up residence in the lower bowel. These two strains of bacteria are aBt or acidophilus and bifidus bacteria. These two bacteria strains are of utmost importance as we are born with a good supply of them but tend to lose them with our modern lifestyles. Anti-biotics, stress and faulty diets all contribute to the demise of these very important bacteria. With the regular consumption of this yoghurt we can be assured that we have a healthy bowel flora.

Making Yoghurt

Making your own yoghurt is almost as easy as making kefir. There are two adjustments for the culturing process and these are;

- ✓ Heat the milk to 85 °C then allow to cool to 43°C
- ✓ Incubate the yoghurt at around 43°C overnight

A little yoghurt from a previous batch can be introduced into a new batch to make yoghurt, but...

The best yoghurt to make will be from a yoghurt culture.

The best yoghurt cultures I would recommend are the aBt or aBy strains.

1. Make sure the utensils are all very clean. Glass is highly recommended.
2. Heat about a litre of milk in a stainless steel saucepan to 85°C
3. Allow to cool to 43°C
4. Add two grains of yoghurt the culture
5. Incubate at 43°C overnight
6. If you want a nice smooth yoghurt, you can put it through a strainer then pour the yoghurt in glass jars and place in the fridge. The yoghurt will become a bit more thicker upon cooling.

Commercial yoghurts have fillers added to them to make them a thicker consistency. Adding powdered milk is also common but this is not recommended. Powdered milk has been to hell and back because of the super-heating process it undergoes to become dehydrated.

It is also important to consume yoghurt and kefir whilst they are still fresh.

This has to do with the lactic acid in which the (+) or right-handed form predominates, whereas the older yoghurt the (-) or left-handed form predominates. The form (+) of lactic acid in yoghurt is most beneficial to the human organism while the (-) form may have adverse effects

Cultured Butter

If you can source your cream from an organic cow, you can simply leave the cream out of the fridge for 24- 48 hours. The cream will spontaneously ferment as the lactobacillus bulgaricus bacteria that are naturally found in the cow (bulgaricus meaning bovine) will induce a ferment that pre-digests the fats and milk solids.

The kefir can also be used to ferment the cream. Simply place a couple of tablespoons of the kefir milk into the fresh cream and allow to ferment until the cream has thickened. Kefir cream will last for many months in the fridge and the result is a delicious, heavy and solid cream that can be served with almost anything at all!

Making Butter

- ✓ Place the fermented cream into the food processor
- ✓ Whiz until the cream turns to butter
- ✓ Strain the butter from the buttermilk
- ✓ Wash the butter at least three times in cold water or until the water runs clear
- ✓ Work the excess water out with a wooden spoon or with your hands and place the butter in the containers. Butter freezes very well for several months.

Butter made this way does not need the addition of salt as the lactic bacteria present in the butter will help to preserve it a lot longer than the conventional variety. This gives it the added advantage of being able to keep it outside the fridge even in the summer. The butter is always ready to be spread around.

The resulting buttermilk is also a very healthy and beneficial drink. Until I learnt of the benefits of yoghurt, I consumed only buttermilk as it is a by-product of the butter making process.

Cheeselinks, Mad Millies, Green Living Australia, Home Brew Shops.

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