

THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF YOGURT-MAKING

Yogurt is a very ancient food. The first traces of it have been found between 10 000 and 5 000 BCE in the Neolithic period. It has gone down in the history of human nutrition as a traditional product. It enables milk to be preserved and also has numerous health benefits

TIMELINE

5000 BCE

A discovery by chance?



Rock art of domesticated cattle, dated to between 5000 and 8000 years old, Wadi Imha, Libyan Sahara (Roberto Ceccacci)

2000 BCE

A traditional way to preserve milk



Map of Achaemenid Empire (William Robert Shepherd)

Humans understood that yogurt could be used to **preserve milk**. At this time India and Persia (Iran) already regularly used "yogurt" as an ingredient²

100 BCE

The first written record



Pliny the Elder

The oldest writings mentioning "yogurt" are attributed to **Pliny the Elder**, who remarked that certain nomadic tribes knew how to "thicken the milk into a substance with an agreeable acidity".

However, in the Bible and more precisely in the Book of Job, written between 600 BCE and 400 BCE, the phrase "**Land of Milk and Honey**" is interpreted by some historians as a reference to yogurt³

1072 CE

"Yoğurtmak" and its medicinal uses



Mahmud Kashgari

Yogurt comes from the Turkish word "Yoğurtmak". The Turks were the first to evaluate its **medicinal use** for a variety of illnesses and symptoms – such as diarrhea and sunburned skin – in a comprehensive dictionary, *Diwan Lughat al-Turk*, by Mahmud Kashgari. Yogurt was also used as a **cleaning product** and **beauty lotion**⁴

1208

The legend of Genghis Khan's army



Genghis Khan, Mongolian Emperor, Shutterstock ©

Genghis Khan, the founder of the Mongol Empire, is reputed to have fed his army on yogurt, a staple of the Mongolian diet, based on the belief that it instilled **strength** and **bravery** in his warriors

1542

Yogurt comes to Europe thanks to King Francis I



Francis I, King of France (François Clouet)

Traditionally used in the Balkans and many regions of Asia (Russian Empire and India), yogurt was later brought to Europe by the French King Francis I after yogurt cured him from suffering **severe diarrhea**



Elie Metchnikoff
(The Library of Congress)

Metchnikoff's theory on yogurt's life-extending properties

Elie Metchnikoff* developed a theory that aging is caused by toxic bacteria in the gut and that lactic acid could prolong life. One of his three books, *The Prolongation of Life: Optimistic Studies*, investigates the potential **life-extending properties** of *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, a component of yogurt

* Elie Metchnikoff (1845-1916) was a Ukrainian biologist, zoologist and protozoologist, best known for his pioneering research into the immune system. He received the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1908, shared with Paul Ehrlich, for his work on phagocytosis



2014: Yogurt today

Yogurt is now a product defined by the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). It is also widely recognized as a **healthy food**. European countries, including Russia, consume the largest quantity of traditional yogurts. Research in 15 countries also shows that the biggest consumers of yogurt in the world are the Netherlands, Turkey, France, Spain and Germany. Yogurt is nowadays deeply **rooted in our eating behaviour** and, worldwide, yogurt consumers generally adopt healthier nutrition and lifestyle behaviour.

1905

Lactobacillus bulgaricus, responsible for milk fermentation, is discovered



Stamen Grigorov

At the age of 27, a Bulgarian student called Stamen Grigorov* discovered a certain **strain** of bacillus, **responsible for milk fermentation**, which is the cause of yogurt. The strain is now called *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* by the scientific community and is still used in yogurt cultures

* Stamen Grigorov (1878–1945) was a prominent Bulgarian physician and microbiologist, who was the creator of the anti-tuberculosis vaccine

1919

Yogurt first commercialized through pharmacies



In the center, 7th from the left, Isaac Carasso (Gaudiclub)

Isaac Carasso* was inspired by the work of Elie Metchnikoff, who had **popularized sour milk** as a healthy food. Since yogurt was not well known in Western Europe at the time, he initially sold it as a medicine through pharmacies

* Isaac Carasso (1874–1939) was a member of the prominent Sephardic Jewish Carasso family of Ottoman Salonica (modern Thessaloniki, Greece). After immigrating to Barcelona, he started a yogurt factory which later became Groupe Danone

2014

To see an **interactive timeline** of the history of yogurt, [click here](#)



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Sources:

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