

Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

Yogurt: So many choices, lots to like

There seem to be a lot more kinds of yogurt than there ever used to be. I like it, but is yogurt really that popular?

Yogurt has made big gains over the years. Although it's leveling off, yogurt consumption has more than doubled over the last 15 years, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. During that time, Greek yogurt appeared on the market and quickly gained steam, now accounting for about half of all yogurt sales.

What's the appeal? Yogurt has a lot going for it. It has a good amount of calcium, although the amount can vary. To determine how much calcium is in your favorite yogurt, look for the Percent Daily Value for calcium listed on the Nutrition Facts label, and multiply it by 1,000 mg, which is the Daily Value for calcium. For example, if the label says a serving of your yogurt has 25 percent (0.25) of the Daily Value for calcium, then it has 250 mg. To compare, a cup of milk has about 300 mg.

It's important to note that the recommended daily amount of calcium for people varies, from 1,300 mg for 9- to 18-year-olds, to 1,200 mg for men 71 and older and women 51 and older, to 1,000 mg for those in between. So, you have to do a little mental math to know if you're getting enough. Fortunately, when the new Nutrition Facts labels appear on foods in 2018, they'll list the actual amount of calcium in grams.

Also like milk, yogurt has a good amount of protein. A cup of plain low-fat yogurt has 12 grams of protein, compared with 8 grams in a cup of 2 percent milk. Again, your mileage may vary with the type of yogurt. To verify, check the Nutrition Facts.

Most types of yogurt also contain beneficial bacteria naturally found in the intestinal tract, but which can sometimes use a boost. These live cultures, such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, can



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improve digestive health and strengthen your immune system. Unfortunately, you can't really tell how much of this bacteria is in the yogurt you eat. Even in yogurt with a "Live and Active Cultures" seal, which verifies the yogurt had at least 100 million cultures per gram (or 10 million for frozen yogurt) at the time it was made, the number of good bacteria can fade over time.

Although yogurt is a highly nutritious food, flavored varieties might contain more added sugar than you're comfortable with. Flavored regular yogurt often has about 24-30 grams of carbohydrates, some from added sugars and some naturally from the sugars in the yogurt's milk and fruit. Light varieties, with low- or no-calorie sweeteners, have half as many carbs. When the new Nutrition Facts labels come out, you'll be able to easily see how much of the carbohydrate is from added sugars.

Or, opt for plain yogurt. It won't have any added sugars, and you can add your own flavorings, such as vanilla, or top it with fresh or frozen berries yourself.

Plain whole-milk Greek yogurt is also a good substitute for sour cream. Along with some added tang, it provides fewer calories (190 per cup compared to 480 in sour cream), less fat (9 grams compared to 45), more protein (20 grams compared to 5) and more calcium (250 mg compared to 7). So, it's worth an experiment or two to see how it might work in your recipes.

Oct. 7, 2016

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