

Dahi. Indian meal is incomplete without curd or yogurt. Lukewarm milk is inoculated with a lactic acid culture, covered and then kept in a warm place to set for 4-6 hours. Curd is added to cooked dishes and also as a base for raitas, snacks like dahi wadas and consumed as lassi (a sweet or salted curd drink) or buttermilk. If added to the cooked dish, curd should always be added at the end of the cooking time and either off the heat or on a low heat or it will curdle.

Curd is obtained by curdling (coagulating) milk with rennet or an edible acidic substance such as lemon juice or vinegar and then draining off the liquid portion (called whey). Milk that has been left to sour (raw milk alone or pasteurized milk with added lactic acid bacteria) will also naturally produce curds, and sour milk cheese is produced this way. The increased acidity causes the milk proteins (casein) to tangle into solid masses, or "curds". Curd products vary by region and include cottage cheese, quark (both curdled by bacteria and sometimes also rennet) and paneer (curdled with lemon juice). The word can also refer to a non-dairy substance of similar appearance or consistency, though in these cases a modifier or the word curdled is generally used (e.g. bean curd, lemon curd, or curdled eggs).

In Asia, curd is essentially a vegetarian preparation using yeast to ferment the milk. In the Indian subcontinent, buffalo milk is used for curd due to its higher fat content making a thicker curd. The quality of curd depends on the starter used. The time taken to curdle also varies with the seasons taking less than 6 hours in hot weather and up to 16 hours in cold weather. However in India, the word 'curd' is used to mean yoghurt. In South India, it is common practice to finish any meal with few cups of 'curd rice', made by mixing rice and yoghurt. It is generally accepted to cool the body in tropical climates and is nutritious.

Cheese curds are popular in some French-speaking regions of Canada such as Quebec and parts of Ontario as well as in the Midwest of the United States. They are freshly made morsels of cheddar cheese before being pressed and aged. In Quebec, they are popularly served with french fries and gravy as poutine. In some parts of the U.S., they are breaded and fried or are eaten straight. There are also many popular varieties besides cheddar, such as white cheeses and flavored cheeses (pepper, garlic, butter, lemon, etc). The cheeses themselves are not flavored but rather lightly coated with a powdered flavor, natural or not, similar to potato chips.

Yogurt is an ancient food, but it remained relatively obscure in the United States until about 20 years ago. Americans ate an average of 4.1 pounds of yogurt per person in 1990, four times as much as in 1970, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Europeans eat even more yogurt than we do, as much as 17 pounds per person annually, according to the National Yogurt Association.

Why the surge for curds? Yogurt carries a reputation--scientifically deserved or not--for being a "health food."

"Certainly it's very clear that yogurt is exceptionally nutritious and a great source of calcium," says Mona Sutnick, Ph.D., a registered dietitian and spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association.

"The other neat thing about yogurt," Sutnick adds, "is that you can substitute it for things that are high in fat." Low-fat or nonfat yogurt can step in for mayonnaise, sour cream, and cream cheese to make recipes healthier, Sutnick says.

http://biology.clc.uc.edu/Fankhauser/Cheese/yogurt_making/YOGURT2000.htm