

# International connections of Super Yogurt



**Yoghurt** or **Yoghourt** (traditional spelling) or **Yogurt** (modern spelling) is a dairy product produced by bacterial fermentation of milk. Different regions use different types of milk, most commonly Cow as well as Goat, Sheep, Yak, Buffalo, Camel, Horse or even Soya milk.

The word 'Yogurt' probably came from the Turkish's 'yogurut', deriving from the verb 'yogurtmak', which means to blend, referring to how yogurt is made. Between 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Middle East, Central Europe to Bulgaria was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire making Turkish the official language. Earlier, they were part of the Mongol's Empire, of which Genghis Khan despite being Mongolian is believed to be of Turkish origin rather than Chinese. Here, one can see the correlation why yogurt was widely used in the Middle East, Central Asia, India and Eastern Europe in the Old Worlds before spreading worldwide during the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. (*Refer to – Genghis Khan*)

Yogurt is known by different names in different parts of the world. The Greeks refer to it as *Yaourti* and *Oxygala*, the Bulgarians and Yugoslavs as *Kiselo*, *Mleko*. Armenians refer to it as *Madzoon* or *Matsun*; and Aerbaidzhanis and Georgians, *Matsoni*. In Sardinia it is known as *Gioddu*, in Sicily, *Mezzoradu*. The French call it *Yaourt*, and the Dutch, *Yoghei*. In Arabic-speaking countries, it is called *Laban*, in Iran, *Mast*. In India it is commonly known as *Dahi*. Mongolian called it *Kumis*.

Under the *standard of identity* established by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in order for a refrigerated product to be called "yogurt", it must be produced by culturing permitted dairy ingredients with at least the two specified bacterial cultures: *Lactobacillus Bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus Thermophilus*.

The Old World's traditional yogurt was *very sour* and plain unlike today's commercial version, which is creamy, sweetened and flavoured. Then, yogurt could never get through the immigration checkpoint in the United States as whenever the custom officers opened the jar, the sour smell is enough for them to throw the yogurt away until 1960's when one European immigrant manage to get through with a dried culture wrapped in a handkerchief.

The ancient Assyrian's word for yogurt "Lebeny" meant **Life**. Even today's modern word "probiotic" that was popularized by two British scientists, Fuller and Parker in 1974 to describe yogurt came from two Greek's words "pro" and "biotic", which literally translated to **For Life**.

More than 2,500 years ago, Indian Yogis (Yoga Gurus) proclaimed yogurt to be "**The Food of the Gods**". Mahatma Gandhi, concerned about the health of his people, strongly advocated the virtues of yogurt in his book: *Diet Reform*.

French acknowledge yogurt as "**le lait de la vie eternelle**" meaning **The Milk of Eternal Life**. Story had it that Emperor Francis I of France was cured of debilitating illness by yogurt. Swiss style or French style Super Yogurt is so called because of the processing method popularised by the Swiss and the French.

According to the Persian's (Iran) believe, it was said that Abraham Lincoln owed his productivity and longevity to yogurt.

**Saving the world with yogurt.** The 2006 Nobel Peace Prize went to Prof. Dr. Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank that he founded, which pioneered micro credit in Bangladesh that provides uncollateralised small loans to the poorest of the poor. That helps them, mostly women out of poverty yet with almost negligible default in loan repayments. With the world's most prestigious recognition fresh from the oven, he is embarking on the first of its kind 'Social Business Enterprise' which is a joint venture with the French Group Danone - the first company in the world to commercialise yogurt and currently world's biggest or at times, second.

Soccer superstar Zinedine Zidane (famous for his head bolt during the 2006 World Cup's final) inaugurated the operation of the company last Nov 2006. With initial investment of US\$500K, Grameen-Danone Foods will start a yogurt factory in Bangladesh with 50 more planned in future if feasible. That will provides local employments while loans will be given to surrounding villagers to breed cows to sell their milk whilst ensuring steady supplies of milk to the factory to produce yogurt that are then sold back to the surrounding villagers cheaply **to alleviate malnutrition**.

If successful, this new breed of social not-for-profit, self-sustaining business will help to eradicate poverty by providing employments and nutritional foods to the poor. It is a vicious cycle that will revolutionise the economic world fundamentally. International organisations like UNICEF is monitoring closely as a model to be replicated worldwide.

Super Yogurt like Superman “with the special power comes social responsibilities to save the world” as quoted in the movie, may consider this business model. Any takers? Hmmn!

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