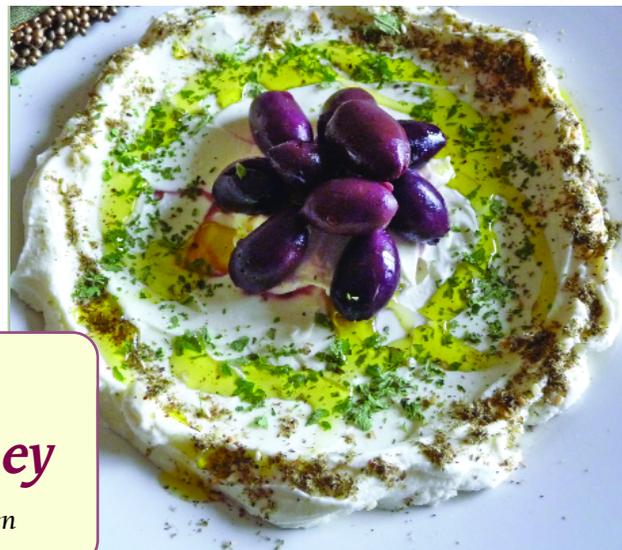


Janice Feuer-Haugen, a resident of Montana for almost 20 years, has been a chef, caterer and teacher since attending London's Cordon Bleu School of Cookery many years ago. She is the author of five cookbooks including *Fruit-Sweet & Sugar Free* and *Chocolate Decadence*.

Check out Janice's new blog:
"Everyday Healthy! Everyday Delicious!"
EverydayHealthyEverydayDelicious.com



Begin the New Year with Homemade Yogurt Cheese & Whey

NATURALLY DELICIOUS RECIPES • Janice Feuer-Haugen

*Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet,
eating her curds and whey;
Along came a spider,
who sat down beside her
and frightened Miss Muffet away.*

—Anonymous

Perhaps you only know of whey as a term in a nursery rhyme and as a protein powder. Me, too, until late last year. Before that, whenever I found the watery liquid floating on top of our yogurt I discarded it. I had no idea what the liquid was or why it had separated out from the yogurt—and it didn't make me happy.

I now know just how precious is this protein-and-mineral-rich liquid called "whey." With a high-quality, organic yogurt made with "live and active cultures" there can be literally billions of probiotics in each spoonful.

It's the probiotics, the live and active cultures, that have been found to increase life span, boost immune response, lower LDL and raise HDL, help prevent and heal arthritis, protect against ulcers, aid digestion and promote gastrointestinal health. Besides all that, yogurt provides enough calcium, protein, vitamin B12, potassium and other nutrients to be considered a superfood. Even many lactose intolerant people can eat it without any problems, again because of the live and active cultures.

Labneh

In the Middle East, yogurt cheese made from straining yogurt goes by the name,

Yogurt Cheese & Whey

Makes about 2 cups of yogurt cheese
and 1 1/2 cups of whey

Serve yogurt cheese or labneh as they do in Lebanon with pita bread and vegetables. Spread the labneh on a plate. Sprinkle it with za'atar, mint and a drizzle of olive oil. Decorate it with a few olives. Yogurt cheese also makes a great light lunch, breakfast and spread for wraps and sandwiches.

- 4 cups organic, plain whole milk yogurt with added live and active cultures
- 1/2 teaspoon fine, mineral-rich salt (i.e., Celtic, Himalayan)
- 1. Line a strainer with four layers of damp, food-grade cheesecloth. Place the strainer over a glass or ceramic bowl or measuring cup.
- 2. Stir the salt into the yogurt. Transfer the yogurt into the cheesecloth-lined strainer.
- 3. Gather together and tie up the ends of the cheesecloth being careful not to squeeze.
- 4. If it is cool in your kitchen, let the yogurt drain for 4–8 hours sitting on a kitchen counter. Otherwise place everything in the refrigerator and let it drain overnight. The consistency will be similar to cream cheese—thick yet spreadable.
- 5. Remove from the cheesecloth and store your yogurt cheese in the fridge about two weeks.
- 6. Store the liquid whey in a clean jar in the fridge. Add the whey to smoothies, bread dough and/or any number of recipes for fermented beverages, vegetables and fruits.

The longer the yogurt drains, the thicker and denser the yogurt cheese becomes. After 24 hours of draining, you can make Labneh Korat—yogurt cheese balls. Make walnut-size balls (I like to use a small scoop) and drop them into a clean glass jar filled with olive oil. Storing them in olive oil preserves the cheese balls for about 6 months.

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“labneh,” which of all things means “strained yogurt.” It is very easy to make at home and very versatile. A healthier substitute for sour cream and cream cheese, yogurt cheese’s thick and creamy consistency makes it a rich and tangy dip for vegetables and a flavorful spread for wraps and sandwiches. Dried mint and za’atar (the ubiquitous Middle Eastern herbal blend said to be for Lebanon what peanut butter is to America) are commonly mixed into labneh or sprinkled on top of it along with a drizzle of good olive oil.

It’s the Whey

The reason I began making yogurt cheese was for the whey. I’ve just begun learning about small-batch fermentation of vegetables and fruits. Homemade whey supplies lactobacilli and other beneficial cultures. Thus it is frequently used as an innoculant in preparing fermented beverages, vegetables and fruits. It speeds up the process of fermentation and ensures consistently satisfactory results. Once made and refrigerated, whey will keep a number of months and yogurt cheese about two weeks.

Fermented Vegetables

Now that I know a tiny bit about lactic acid fermentation, I’ve begun making, eating and

loving crisp, tangy and flavorful ferments such as sauerkraut, giardiniera and kimchi. I look forward to sharing some of my favorite recipes with you in the coming months. n

May you have a most healthy, happy and delicious New Year!
—Janice

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