

Natural Health News

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EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS
ELY, MN

FERMENTED FOODS TO THE RESCUE

Sonja Jewell
NTS, CMT, CCWFN

Evergreen Cottage
146 E. Chapman

Ely, MN 55731

Phone: 218-365-2288

Retail Store Hours

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In some of my past newsletters I have been discussing just how interconnected we are with the microbes in our environment. There has been some amazing research in the process. A recent Japanese report reveals how important and strange this microbial world really is. While most people are now aware that antibiotic resistance has become a world-wide public health concern, it is not well known that, within the agricultural community, pesticide resistance is also becoming a huge problem. Insecticide resistance has always been thought to be a genetic issue, much like certain microbes become resistant to antibiotics. For example, when you expose a large group of insects to an insecticide, there may be few that will survive. Presumably, the survivors weren't affected because physiologically they were genetically different. Just like with microbes, once they reproduced and passed this protective trait onto their offspring, a new super-strain of insecticide-resistant insects was created. New research indicates there is more to the story. Researchers at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology discovered that certain microbes in the soil are able to break down various pesticides to the point they are no longer effective. It just so happens that these microbes tend to thrive inside the digestive tracts of certain insects. A single insect can support hundreds of millions of these microbes within its gut. And, in return for providing an ideal living space, these microbes neutralize the pesticides ingested by the insects. This finding answers several questions that long puzzled scientists. It explains why forms of insecticide resistance has been developing quite rapidly instead of slowly, as it would when genetic changes spread from one generation to the next. It also explains why the effectiveness of insecticides can vary from one application to the next. And much like antibiotic-resistant microbes hitch a ride and quickly travel around the world spreading diseases like the flu, insects flying from one location to another can quickly spread their little protective intestinal bugs. The importance of the gut micro-flora in insects is similar in many ways to our own situation. Probiotics and fermented foods are not passing fads. They are two of the most important tools available to help restore and preserve our health. I hope you have already included both in your diet. Probiotics are defined as live microorganisms that, when taken in adequate amounts, can be of tremendous benefit to your health. Yogurt is the most commonly eaten probiotic food that contributes to the balance of microorganisms in our system. It provides a range of health benefits that include live active cultures, protein, calcium, and B vitamins, which work together in such a way that the sum is greater than the parts. Yogurt plays a primary role by encouraging the growth of "good" bacteria and limiting the proliferation of "bad" ones. Yogurt has multiple immune stimulating activities both inside and outside the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. An interesting study has shown that if you eat yogurt with live active cultures, you decrease the amount of a common pathogenic bacterium in the nasal passages. This is a clear sign that yogurt is stimulating the immune system, and there is a beneficial communication between the immune system lining in the GI tract and the immune system lining the upper airway passages. Our GI tract is home to over 500 species of bacteria—some helpful and some harmful to our health.

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We rely on these beneficial microbial “partners” for a number of important functions, including carbohydrate metabolism, amino acid synthesis, vitamin K synthesis, and processing of various nutrients. Yogurt and other cultured and fermented foods is a source of beneficial bacteria, and the positive results that are ascribed to introducing this bacteria to our system are not relegated to the digestive tract. While a host of beneficial health effects are linked to yogurt, those that have attracted the most attention include its anticancer properties, its ability to lower cholesterol, and its ability to inhibit unfriendly bacteria. One of the great benefits of the probiotics in yogurt is its ability to strengthen the immune system and thereby help the body to prevent infection. In an era of antibiotic-resistant pathogens and seemingly new infectious threats like SARS and West Nile virus, the value of boosting one’s immune system becomes immeasurable. In order to be effectively health-promoting, the yogurt you buy must contain *live active cultures*. Yogurt is, quite simply, milk that has been curdled. To make yogurt, pasteurized milk is inoculated with bacteria cultures and kept warm in an incubator where the lactose or milk sugar turns into lactic acid. This thickens the yogurt and gives it its characteristic tart, tangy flavor. The process is very similar to that used when making beer, wine, cheese, and sauerkraut, in that beneficial organisms ferment and transform the basic food. This is the basic process for producing yogurt, but there is a wide range of techniques adopted by manufacturers of different brands. For example, the label will indicate “heat treated after culturing.” This process kills all the friendly bacteria and, while it may taste good, its health benefits will not extend to those provided by live active cultures. You might be surprised to learn that some frozen yogurts have live active cultures. Make sure to check the labels. One of the most common yogurts is the FOB, or “fruit on the bottom” product. Some FOB yogurts have live active cultures, but they also have a lot of added sugar. Some fruit-flavored yogurts have up to 7 teaspoons of sugar per cup! Ideally, the best yogurt to buy is plain whole-milk yogurt that is clearly labeled as containing “live active cultures.” The label should also specify which cultures are in the product. In general, the more beneficial cultures listed, the better. If you like fruit in your yogurt, add your own fresh fruit to taste. I usually sprinkle mine with ground flaxseed or chia seeds, and berries for added taste and nutrition. Some people cannot tolerate milk because they lack the enzyme to break down milk sugar (lactose). In fact, only about a quarter of the world’s adults can digest milk. Probiotics in yogurt digest the lactose for you, therefore helping to relieve this condition. Yogurt is also a calcium-and vitamin-rich food that is readily digestible by those who suffer from lactose intolerance and is therefore an excellent addition to their diets.....as is Kefir. Make sure to take advantage of the many health benefits by adding these foods to your diet.

AUGUST SPECIALS

Good Health—Avocado-Sea Salt Chips, 5 oz.	25% OFF
Ines Rosales—Sweet Olive Oil Tortas, 5 oz.	25% OFF
Mediterranean Organics—Assorted Preserves 13 oz.	25% OFF
San Pellegrino—Sparkling Aranciata, assorted 6-pack	25% OFF
Woodstock—Organic Peanut Butter & Almond Butter	30% OFF
Earthbound Farm—Organic Berries (frozen) 10 oz.	25% OFF
Kozy Shack—Chocolate or Tapioca Pudding 4/4oz. Pk	30% OFF-
Seven Stars—Organic Maple Yogurt 32 oz.	30% OFF
L & A Juice—Pineapple Coconut Juice 32 oz.	30% OFF
Cleanwell—Hand Sanitizer Spray To Go, 1 oz,	30% OFF
Tasty Brand—Fruit Snacks and Gummy Snacks, asstd.	30% OFF
Preserve—Food Storage Containers 2-pack	30% OFF

AND MANY MORE ITEMS!

YOGURT FRUIT PIE

In a medium bowl combine 1 cup plain yogurt or sour cream, 2/3 cup sugar, 1 egg, 2 TBSP. flour, 1 TBSP. lemon juice or 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract, and 1/4 tsp. salt. Mix well and set aside. Meanwhile wash 2 1/2 cups berries or fruits of choice and pour fruit in a 9-inch unbaked pastry shell. Sprinkle with ground cinnamon. Bake in preheated oven at 400F for 25 minutes. Meanwhile prepare topping by combining 1/3 cup brown sugar, 1/3 cup flour and 2 TBSP. unsalted butter. Remove pie from oven and cover evenly with topping. Return to oven and bake at 375F for another 25—30 minutes. Let cool and enjoy with whipped cream.

INDIAN YOGURT SALAD (RAITA)

Peel, seed and finely chop 2 cucumbers and place in a colander. Sprinkle with sea salt and let stand for an hour or so. Meanwhile chop 1 red or green pepper and 1 small red onion. Pat cucumbers dry and mix with peppers and onions. Add 2 cups plain whole yogurt and 1/2 teaspoon cumin seed (toast seeds in the oven prior to adding). This is traditionally served with curries and spicy foods but is delicious as a side dish or by itself.

“Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.”

~ Marcel Proust

