

## Greek Yogurt

Greek yogurt has been rising in popularity as a dietary staple for health-conscious individuals, and it's easy to see why. It's a versatile food that complements many flavors, making it easy to incorporate into every meal of the day. The rich and creamy texture makes eating healthy feel more like an indulgence, but the various health benefits validate Greek yogurt as an excellent dietary choice.

How different is Greek yogurt from any other kind of yogurt? Briefly summarized, Greek yogurt contains much more milk than regular yogurt. It involves a straining process that gives Greek yogurt its distinctive thickness and relatively solid consistency.

Regular and Greek yogurt are cultures or fermented dairy products, like buttermilk, sour cream, and kefir. Fermented dairy products are made by converting lactose, milk's naturally occurring sugar, into lactic acid by using certain bacteria, also called starter cultures.

The first thing to know about Greek yogurt is that it actually doesn't need to have been made in Greece. "Greek yogurt" is called straggisto, which means 'strained yogurt' in the country that bears its name. Greek yogurt goes through a straining process to remove the whey, a liquid containing lactose. Strained Greek yogurt is lower in sugar, creamier, and thicker yogurt with a tart taste.

As a result of the straining involved, thereby reducing the total volume, Greek yogurt production requires much more milk to produce a yield of the same size as regular yogurt. Due to the higher production costs and the extra milk required, Greek yogurt is typically more expensive than regular yogurt. Some companies may use other dry ingredients or thickening agents; the final product, in that case, is referred to as fortified or Greek-style yogurt.

Regular and Greek yogurt have very different nutritional profiles. These differences are a result of the yogurt's straining process. Depending on the brand, Greek yogurt has about 14 percent less lactose, contains twice the protein, and has approximately 15 percent less calcium than regular yogurt. Both yogurts are also excellent sources of magnesium, vitamin B12, and iodine.

Regular and Greek yogurt are versatile. They're used differently in recipes. Full-fat yogurt is best for cooking and baking. Heat yogurt low and slow so it doesn't curdle and separate. Low-fat and no-fat yogurts will work for cold applications.

Besides its tart taste and thick texture, there are many advantages to choosing Greek yogurt! Due to its thickness, Greek yogurt is a common ingredient in dips and sauces like tzatziki, a staple in Greek cuisine. It's great for baking, especially if you want a moist, dense texture. In most recipes, you can use it to replace mayonnaise, sour cream, heavy cream, and buttermilk. While yogurt is almost infinitely swappable, it's important to remember that the amount won't always be a one-to-one exchange for the original ingredients.

Some easy ways to substitute Greek yogurt for similar ingredients: use it for mayonnaise in an egg, tuna, or chicken salad. Take eggs to the next level by adding some yogurt to create the fluffiest, creamiest eggs you've ever tried. Yogurt will add creaminess and brightness to soups.

Instead of sour cream, use it to top a baked potato or tacos. A few herbs, yogurt, and oil are all you need to whip up a mouth-wateringly delicious salad dressing.

For safety purposes, continuously refrigerate Greek yogurt and keep it covered in the original package to avoid other odors. After being opened and/or near its end date, Greek yogurt may separate with a cloudy, watery liquid on top, which can be poured off or stirred back in.

Enjoy Greek yogurt for various health benefits and a delicious addition to your diet!

(Sources: [foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu](http://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu); [www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com); [www.johnson.k-state.edu](http://www.johnson.k-state.edu)  
[www.prevention.com](http://www.prevention.com))