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## Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 74 Easy Homemade Yogurt – No Equipment Needed

Show Notes are at: [www.LivingHomegrown.com/74](http://www.LivingHomegrown.com/74)

- Theresa Loe: This is the Living Homegrown podcast episode number 74.
- Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown podcast where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, national PBS TV producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.
- Theresa Loe: Hey there everybody. Welcome to the living homegrown podcast. I'm host Theresa Loe and this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without the farm. That can mean preserving, fermenting, small space food growing, and just living a more sustainable lifestyle. All of the different ways that we can live closer to our food even if we have little or no garden space at all. If you'd like to dive deep into any of these topics or learn about my online canning academy, just visit my website [livinghomegrown.com](http://livinghomegrown.com).
- First of all I want to tell you about a brand new training I have coming up next week. If you're at all interested in learning about how to can, it's a free live webinar that I'm doing for people who think they'd like to learn how to can food but maybe they're a complete newbie, they've never canned before. Or maybe they've tried canning a little bit but they're still feeling kind of unsure about it and maybe they're even worried that they might make someone sick or do something wrong, something horrible. If you feel that you are under any of those categories then this free workshop is for you. It's called the six rookie canning mistakes. How to avoid them, stay safe, and still fill your pantry with seasonal flavor.
- I put this together as a totally free workshop because I have a lot of people always asking me how to start canning. In this workshop you're going to learn how water bath canning works so that you're not afraid of it. You're going to learn about minimal equipment that you need if you want to dive into canning and honestly you probably already have everything in your kitchen to start. Which methods go with which foods, how to save money on produce that you buy and how to stop throwing away the produce that you grow. I dive really into the secrets on how to get the very best flavors from the food that you're going to be preserving, because if you're going to do this, if you're going to can up food then you certainly want to end up

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eating it. You don't want it to just sit on your pantry shelf.

This is one of the things that I do in my trainings is I really deep into how to make your preserves taste amazing so that you actually eat the preserves that you make. As you probably know if you're a regular listener, I have extensive training. I have training in food safety at Culinary school. I studied sustainable horticulture, food preservation. I have lots of training in food preservation and I have a degree in engineering. I can explain the science behind all the methods of preserving your food. If you'd like to get in on this free training that I have, it's next week. It's happening on November 3rd, 2016 at 10 am Pacific Standard Time. If you're all interested in it go ahead and sign up. You can go to [livinghomegrown.com/class](http://livinghomegrown.com/class). That's C-L-A-S-S. Go to [livinghomegrown.com/class](http://livinghomegrown.com/class) and you can sign up. It's brand new. I've never taught this particular webinar before so I'm really excited to share it with everybody and it will help you get a little head start on going down that journey of learning how to can. Which is a lot of fun.

The second thing is that this particular episode is in a special encore presentation of an episode that I did back in early 2015. In fact it's one of my first podcasts and it's also one of my most popular podcast episodes. The reason that I'm doing this encore presentation is because I am working on a brand new project for a Living Homegrown. Something that's going to be released the beginning of 2017 and I just needed a couple weeks of really diving deep into it so I put together two encore presentations, last week's And this week's so that I had a little time to get a little head start on this project. I picked this particular episode because it's on making yogurt, but not just any yogurt.

This is an episode teaching you how to make countertop yogurt without any special equipment. Making it at room temperature. There's actually several different ways that you can make yogurt and I go into it in this particular episode. I talk about the traditional way and I talk about the way that I like to make yogurt at room temperature and they're all completely safe and delicious. If you've never made yogurt before this is a great way to start super easy and I give you all the details. Now as you're listening to this episode just remember that you can get everything mentioned in the show notes and you can go to [livinghomegrown.com/seventyfour](http://livinghomegrown.com/seventyfour) and everything mentioned will be there. Without further ado here is the encore episode of making fresh yogurt at home at room temperature, enjoy.

Hi everyone. This is Theresa Loe and today is a Q and A episode all about making yogurt at home I get asked about making yogurt all the time and so I'm going to go over the most common question I get and that is, what is the easiest way to make yogurt? I'm going to go into that and a whole lot more but first I just want to cover why would you even want to make yogurt at home? Well, first of all it tastes fantastic. It's I think better than

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store bought and the second thing is that you have complete control over what's in it. A lot of the store bought yogurts have additives and a lot of sugar and even coloring. When you make it at home you know exactly what's in it and I really like that. You can also save money by making your own yogurt. It tastes like the high dollar version but it is really inexpensive to make. It's also surprisingly easy to make.

When thinking about making yogurt at home people generally have a few areas of concern. They might worry that it's difficult or complicated. They think that you need some special equipment to do it. Or worse they're afraid of doing it at all because they think it might be dangerous if it's not done right. Well these are all legitimate concerns and I'm just hoping that in today's episode I can dispel all of those concerns for you. I'm going to cover how to make yogurt the easy way and this is the way I do it. At room temperature on your countertop. With this method you don't need any special equipment. It's not like traditional yogurt making. This method does not require you to heat the milk in any way. I'm also going to go into how yogurt making works so that you're not afraid of it. I'll even cover where to buy your yogurt starter so you can dive in right away. Let's get started.

First you need to know that yogurt is just a fermented milk product and all that's required to make it is some milk and a yogurt culture. Yogurt culture can be one that you buy in the store or online and you can even in some cases use some of the yogurt from a previous batch to make the next batch of yogurt. That's the way I like to do it because once you start it, it's perpetual and you keep making the yogurt over and over without having to go back to the store to buy a new starter. Being able to make it perpetual or not just depends on which culture you're using and in the world of yogurt there are many different kinds of cultures to choose from.

Just so you know yogurt culture is just a different combination of bacteria. Each culture has its own little special formula or combination of bacteria that it's using to do the ferment. Those different cultures can create different flavors, textures, and even characteristics of the finished yogurt. To me that is the fun part of it. Some yogurts are thick and others are thin. Some are tangy and tart. Some are smooth and rich. It's a whole different world depending upon which culture you start working with. As you play around in the yogurt world you learn that the way you do the ferment can also give you different results. Before I go on I just have to throw out a disclaimer there that it is very possible that if you start making yogurt enough, you will become addicted to it. I just have to say that if you start down this road you may one day find yourself shopping for different yogurt cultures just like you shop for a new pair of shoes. If that happens to you it is not my fault. I just have to throw that out there. Just be warned that it can be a very healthy yet addictive habit to start and it's a whole lot of fun so I hope you do it. I think it's almost like having a pet because it's alive and

you're taking care of it and I just really hope you enjoy it if you try it.

Now let me explain a little bit about how the yogurt making process works and then we can get into the easy part. The milk and the culture are just blended together and set aside and allowed to ferment. In other words the culture grows and multiplies inside the milk. That action is what transforms the milk into yogurt. The culture is alive and it feeds off the lactose or the natural sugar that's inside the milk and in the process the PH level changes and all sorts of interesting things happen chemically. All you really need to understand is that the culture is alive and that it eats and multiplies and makes the yogurt. Our job as yogurt makers is just to baby those little yogurt cultures and keep them happy and give them love in the way of food in a happy environment so that they'll grow. It's like raising kids but a whole lot easier.

Where yogurt making can sometimes get tricky is in those conditions that we need to set up in order to have that ferment happen. In other words it's important that we create that perfect environment or it doesn't work. Some yogurts, in fact most yogurts that you're probably familiar with need warmth to grow and others do not. This is something that I didn't know right away when I first started making yogurt. I only knew about the kind of yogurt that you make where you have to heat up the milk because the yogurt culture needs warmth. That's a more traditional yogurt, like a Greek yogurt or a Bulgarian style yogurt. The traditional method for making yogurt requires that you heat the milk, add the culture, and then keep that milk at exactly one hundred ten degrees for a certain amount of hours. Usually like seven to eight hours until it's done fermenting.

The traditional yogurt needs that warmth and a fancy word for this type of yogurt is thermophilic. Thermal meaning heat. If you don't have the warmth nothing happens. It just sits there. Although this type of yogurt is fairly simple and it is absolutely delicious, I sometimes found that when I was making this type of yogurt I sometimes got hung up on the temperature requirements and I found it to be kind of a pain. If you have a yogurt maker it's a pretty simple process but for me a yogurt maker was just a single use appliance that ended up taking up space on my countertop. It can only be used for making yogurt. It's not expensive but you can buy them in the store and you put the milk and the culture together in one of the little containers, put it inside the yogurt maker and let it sit on the counter and it keeps it at that perfect temperature until it's done fermenting.

If you want to make this type of yogurt you don't have to have a yogurt maker. There's a number of ways that you can maintain that temperature. You can use your oven or a crockpot. You definitely want to have a thermometer to make sure the crockpot doesn't get too hot. You can even

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use one of those large dehydrators like an [X caliper 00:12:45] to maintain the temperature for yogurt making. There's a number of ways to make it work. I certainly don't want to discourage you from trying traditional yogurt making where you have to work with temperature because the cultures and the types of yogurt that you can get are absolutely delicious, but I learned a while back about an alternative way to making yogurt. I just found it to be so much easier and I switched gears and started making all my yogurt this way. I've been doing it for almost a year now. It turns out that you can make a delicious yogurt without heating the milk or [jimmy rigging 00:13:21] anything special to maintain the temperature.

Here's the trick, all you need to do is use an heirloom yogurt culture from the mesophilic class of yogurts. Mesophilic means low temperature. It's just a fancy word for low temperature. An heirloom yogurt culture is usually what you're pulling from that class to do this. This type of yogurt is cultured at room temperature. Where the traditional yogurt needs one hundred and ten degrees, these heirloom cultures will ferment between seventy and seventy eight degrees, basically room temperature. You don't have to heat anything, you don't have to heat the milk, you don't have to keep it warm, just keep it at room temperature and it works like magic.

It's also a culture that you can reuse. In other words you can take a little bit from the last batch and use it to make the next batch and you can keep doing this over and over indefinitely. It has the same health benefits as a heated yogurt and the flavor is fantastic. I think it's just as good as any of the other yogurts that I make I swear. Here's where it gets a little bit different from a Greek yogurt however, and that is in the consistency. They tend to be a little bit thinner. You know how Greek yogurt is really thick and creamy, well, these types of yogurts are just a little bit thinner. I don't mean that they're pourable, but they're definitely a thinner consistency. Although there is certain cultures that you can use if you just want to make like a liquid type of yogurt, like a kefir.

I use an heirloom culture called viili and it just happens to be a flavor that I like and it has a consistency that I like and the fact that it's a little bit thinner doesn't bother me at all because I use it in smoothies. I use it every day in my smoothie but it's certainly thick enough to eat with a spoon and with fruit. It's just not super thick and creamy like a Greek yogurt. There are several different yogurt cultures that fall into this mesophilic category and some of them are thicker than others. In the show notes for this episode, I'll have a full listing of all the different yogurt cultures that I know about or that I've worked with and if you're driving right now you don't have to pull over and try and write them all down. It'll be really easy to reference back to see what you need. Just go to the show notes which are at [livinghomegrown.com/02](http://livinghomegrown.com/02) and I'll have everything right there for you.

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The other thing to remember when you're making yogurt is that no matter what culture you choose, you can get different flavors and consistency based on how long you ferment and which milk you choose. First let me talk about the that link the ferment. Generally the longer you ferment yogurt the thicker it gets and after you're all done fermenting you put it into the refrigerator for several hours and that not only stops the ferment but it will allow it to thicken even further. Also the longer you let a yogurt culture ferment the more tart it will be. Keep in mind that if you let it ferment too long the yogurt will begin to separate into solids in liquid, they call that curds and whey. There's nothing unsafe about that but it's just that the yogurt is losing its thick consistency and it's reached its peak of tartness. It does this because the cultures run out of food. It's much better to stop the ferment before it separates into curds and whey and you want to do that for the best flavor and the best consistency. Just stop before you get to that point.

Let's talk just a minute here about the different kinds of milk. Often people want to know if they have to use a specific special milk. The answer is, not exactly. You can get away with using a lot of different types of milk and you get different characteristics based on the milk you choose to culture in. You can use whole milk or low fat milk. You can use pasteurized milk. I prefer to use organic milk for obvious reasons. The only milk that you really have to avoid is ultra-pasteurized milk. Ultra pasteurized is what's normally common in the grocery stores so you definitely want to check it. Pasteurized is okay, but ultra-pasteurized is so sterile that the cultures tend to have a tough time growing in it. You don't have as good of success if you use ultra-pasteurized. I use whole milk because that's just the flavor that I prefer. I like to have whole milk. You can get away absolutely with using low fat or nonfat milk. It's just the consistency is a little bit thinner.

You can also use homogenized or non-homogenized milk. It's your choice, they both work. For my recipes I use organic pasteurized milk that I buy at the local health food store. You just want to read the label to make sure that it's not ultra-pasteurized. The instructions that I'm going to spell out here for you are using that type of milk but in case you're wondering you absolutely can make homemade yogurt from raw milk, goat's milk, and even though I haven't done it myself you can use nut milks like almond milk. The instructions for these different types of yogurts are a little bit different than what I'm spelling out here but I absolutely promise to have links in the show notes so that you can get instructions for doing those different types of yogurt. It's just a slight variation on the steps I'm going to talk about here.

Are you ready to hear how to do it? All right, it's pretty easy. This is how you make really easy room temperature yogurt. I buy a viili starter. It's an heirloom variety and I buy mine online from Cultures for Health. It's an

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online store that has incredible selection of some of the more unusual cultures that you can use for yogurt and other types of fermentation, but you can certainly find heirloom cultures in many other sources. What you do is you pour your milk into a clean jar. I use a mason jar and I absolutely love using my vintage canning jars, my old, old blue vintage canning jars for this because they look so pretty on my kitchen counter. I take the milk, pour it into the jar, I add my little package of starter and I stir it up. It's okay to use a stainless steel or a wooden spoon. I would avoid aluminum. Aluminum is a little bit reactive and you don't want to have anything reactive when you're working with culture.

After you have the culture pretty evenly distributed into the container, you just add some kind of cover over the top. I use a coffee filter, a paper coffee filter but you could also use like a tea towel. Anything that covers it up. The purpose is just to keep the bugs out of it. You don't want a fly or anything going down into your yogurt and I use of rubber band around the top just to hold it in place. Then you set it on your kitchen counter and you let the mixture set for about twelve to eighteen hours until it sets. This is a lot longer than a traditional ferment. A traditional ferment using the type of culture where you warm up the milk. That usually it takes only like seven or eight hours. This one works a little bit slower when it's at room temperature. If you're doing this in the summer time, it tends to be more like twelve hours. If you're doing it in the winter time, more like eighteen hours.

If it's really cold in your kitchen, then find a warm spot. I happen to have a really warm spot right on top of my DVR player. It's always running because we have satellite and I just set it on there and just that little bit a motor running keeps it just warm enough to keep my jar at a nice room temperature even if it's cold. If you find that you have a cold kitchen in the middle of December see if you have a warm spot like on top of the refrigerator or some other place where it's warm enough that you're reaching between seventy and seventy eight degrees. The very first time that you ever make yogurt when you're using a store bought or a purchased starter, it can take a little bit longer than twelve to eighteen hours. In fact it usually can take up to forty eight hours just for that initial ferment, but after that every time if you take a little bit of this starter and use it to start the next batch, it only takes between twelve and eighteen hours.

You'll know that the yogurt is finished when you tip the jar and the yogurt pull away from the sides or it stays so thick that you tip the jar and it doesn't move at all. At that point you just put the jar into the refrigerator and let it sit for about six hours to set and firm up and it also stops the fermentation process. After that you can just eat it. That's super easy right? What about making the next batch? Remember this is the type of yogurt

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culture that can be used over and over again indefinitely. That means that if you can keep this culture alive, you really never have to buy yogurt again. To keep your culture viable and alive and happy and healthy all you have to do is make your next batch of yogurt within five to seven days. After that time frame the culture start to die off and they just may not be as strong to do a re-culture.

If you get into some sort of a routine with this, it's really not difficult to keep it up. I just always make my yogurt every seven days on the weekend. It's just part of my weekend routine. To make your next batch you just use a little bit of your current yogurt as your starter and the ratio is to take about one tablespoon of your previous yogurt for every one cup of milk. Just add that mixture to a clean mason jar, stir it up, cover it with a cloth or a paper coffee filter and continue on with your ferment just like you did the last time. You may be wondering about sweetening or flavoring your yogurt and you absolutely can. I like to use maple syrup with mine but you can certainly stir in fruit, vanilla, honey, just about anything that you want. Just remember that if you're going to be making a fresh batch of yogurt from your current batch, you should always first pull out some of the unsweetened, unflavored yogurt so that you can use that as your starter for your next batch.

Another thing that I want to address is if this whole fermentation thing sounds a little bit scary to you because ... Listen I understand that it's a little odd to take perfectly good milk and sit on the countertop outside of refrigeration for anywhere from twelve to forty eight hours. I know that may not be something that you've ever done before. If you're a newbie it can feel weird and you may even be worrying about what if something goes wrong. Here's the deal. If it's a healthy yogurt culture it will immediately take over the milk and begin to turn that milk sugar into lactic acid. This acid is a really safe environment and it's completely free from things like botulism. The PH is such that even if botulism were in that mixture, it cannot grow and it cannot create the botulism toxin. That lactic acid environment is a really safe environment.

You may be thinking well what if something goes wrong and my PH level isn't right? Well, you still aren't going to get botulism from this and that's because we're doing the fermentation in an unsealed jar. The top of that jar is open. It just has paper or a piece of fabric over the top. It is not an air tight environment. It's in an anaerobic environment. There's oxygen present and botulism can only happen in an anaerobic or an oxygen free environment. That's a second way that botulism is a non-issue here. Even if something goes horribly wrong when you're making your yogurt and you use a culture that maybe is dead or weak then what happens is the milk that's sitting out on that counter, it will just spoil just like spoiled milk in the refrigerator and you will know it immediately because it will smell horrible.

The rule of thumb is that if you are ever making a yogurt and it smells unpleasant, don't eat it. It's that simple. This is not something where you're going to go, "I'm not sure, does it smell bad?" Oh no, you know if it smells bad. It will immediately smell like rotten milk. If that happens you throw it away and you start over. It's really easy. Just remember you're going to be safe because of the PH level, that there's oxygen present, and that you have a really clear indicator, the smell if something is going horribly wrong. Another question that I get a lot is, okay so if I'm making this yogurt every seven days and I'm making it perpetually over and over, what happens if I go on vacation or I want to take a trip? If it's like a pet and I have to take care of it what happens if I want to go out of town? Well, it's a really good question and trips happen. Here's how you can keep making yogurt even if you're going to go out of town.

One method is just before you head out the door, you make a fresh batch of yogurt and you put it into the refrigerator. It will keep in the refrigerator for about seven days before you start losing the viability of your culture. If you're going away for longer than seven days you can always have a friend keep the yogurt just like you would have them take care of your pet dog or cat and just have them remake a batch for you while you're gone and teach them how to do it. They might even want to keep some for themselves. You might hook them on making yogurt. That's another way, is just to have them care for your starter while you're out of town.

A third way to care for it is to just freeze a little bit of the yogurt in one tablespoon measurements. I have not tried this myself but I know it works. The trick here is that you don't keep it frozen for too long. I would say a few weeks to a month or two is about as long as it should be able to last in a frozen state. Remember that when you thought out to make your next batch, it may take a little bit longer to get started. Instead of being a twelve hour ferment, it may be a forty eight hour ferment. The last way to keep making yogurt if you go out of town for a long period of time is just to start over when you get back. You just have to buy another culture and get started again. The cultures are not expensive, they're just a few dollars and you can get the cultures at health food stores, you can buy them online. If you have a friend who makes yogurt you can get a little bit of their yogurt as a culture to make your batch, so there's a lot of places that you can start over.

I'm hoping that that's enough information to get you started into yogurt making and hopefully I answered some of your questions and took away any fears that you have The whole process is really cool and the flavor is so superior to what you buy in the store. I really hope you'll give it a shot.

I hope you enjoyed that encore presentation on making yogurt. Remember



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that everything that's mentioned in this episode is in the show notes links to where you can get the yogurt cultures and instructions, all of that and you can go to [livinghomegrown.com/74](http://livinghomegrown.com/74). I'll have everything there for you and also remember that if you'd like to participate in my free master class, if you're a beginner canner or if you've never canned before, be sure to sign up. It's next week. Go to [livinghomegrown.com/class](http://livinghomegrown.com/class), C-L-A-S-S and you can sign up for the webinar there. It's taking place on November 3rd at 10 AM Pacific Standard Time so you can sign up. It's going to be a live class. It will be a lot of fun. If you want to do that then be sure to sign up.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. I really appreciate you took the time out of your busy day to listen. In the meantime until next week, just live a little more local, seasonal, and home grown. Take care.

Announcer:

That's all for this episode of the Living Home grown podcast. Visit [livinghomegrown.com](http://livinghomegrown.com) to download Theresa's free canning resource guide and find more tips on how to live farm without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown podcast.