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The essential ingredient for European baking: Quark

By Susie Iventosch



A finished batch of quark Photo Susie Iventosch
and lower in sodium than yogurt.

In January 2013, we featured Andy Scheck's Apple Quark Cake in this column. Andy is the publisher of the Lamorinda Weekly and among his many talents he's an excellent cook! He has a collection of recipes that he learned from his mom, Anneliese, and occasionally, he brings these treats to the weekly editorial meetings for the paper. I hear rave reviews about them and am sorry that I'm not a regular at those meetings. He uses quark as a key ingredient in his baked goods as well as in other dishes like cucumber salad and cheesecake.

Quark is technically a cheese that is used in European baked goods, especially in Andy's native Germany. He says that quark is the primary ingredient that makes German cakes different. It looks kind of like a thick Greek yogurt, but it's made from heated sour milk or buttermilk instead of milk with bacteria added, which is how yogurt is made. Typically, quark is higher in protein

A few weeks ago, I received an email from Andy telling me that the quark he'd been using in the states, while good, was different than what he was used to in Europe. So, he began researching how to make his own quark and after a few tries, he came up with a formula for the perfect quark. He was so excited about it and told his wife, Wendy, that he could hardly wait for cherries to arrive at the farmers' market so he could make a quark cake with these seasonal fruits. As soon as cherries popped up at the market, he made the cake and he sent me that recipe, too, which will be featured in the next issue of the paper. In the meantime, you can try your hand at making quark, so you'll have the perfect quark for his cake recipe in a couple of weeks.

It does require the use of a yogurt maker, and Andy bought the Dash Yogurt Maker, which he found on Amazon for about \$23. I took the idea from him, and purchased my own yogurt maker and have now made my first batch of quark, which was super easy and absolutely delicious! It simply requires heating up 2 quarts of low-fat buttermilk and then pouring it into the yogurt maker for 8 hours. Then, you strain the quark in the sieve provided with the machine for 8-12 hours. Voila! According to Andy, quark will last in the refrigerator for about a week and a half. I used my quark in place of plain yogurt for a horseradish-quark sauce to accompany grilled steak, as well as in a wonderfully delicious goat cheese cheesecake. Quark is also good simply topped with fresh fruit for breakfast or a light dessert.

Quark Recipe

(Makes approximately 2 to 3 cups of quark)

INGREDIENTS

2 quarts 2% low-fat buttermilk

Yogurt Maker

DIRECTIONS

Heat buttermilk in a metal pot just until it begins to separate and is near, but not yet boiling. Pour the buttermilk into the container of the yogurt maker and process for about eight hours. There is an eight-hour setting on the Dash yogurt maker, which makes this step very easy.

After eight hours, your buttermilk will look like soft yogurt. You then pour it into the strainer provided with the yogurt maker, or if yours doesn't have one, then use a metal strainer, to allow the liquid to drip out. Allow the quark to strain for eight to 12 hours on the counter, at room temperature. The quark will look very thick at this point and will make 2-3 cups. Place in a covered container and keep refrigerated until ready to use.



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