

Taste Test Low-Fat Strawberry Yogurt

What's the key to great strawberry yogurt? Surprise—strawberries! BY SCOTT KATHAN

LOW-FAT YOGURT far outsells full-fat and nonfat versions in American supermarkets. In the last year, more strawberry yogurts have been introduced to the market than any other flavor, according to the market research firm Mintel. To see which low-fat strawberry yogurt was best, we rounded up eight national brands and called our tasters to the table.

Many in the test kitchen had high hopes for the popular (and relatively expensive) Greek-style yogurt Fage Total 2%. Greek-style yogurt is strained to remove the whey, making it thicker and tangier than American-style yogurts. (The whey contains a lot of lactose, the natural sugar in dairy products.) Our tasters either loved Fage's denser texture and stronger flavor or hated them.

Our winning low-fat strawberry yogurt comes from an industry giant,

Dannon. While it didn't elicit the high scores of the Fage, it didn't receive any low scores either, and it scored at or near the top for tang, texture, and, notably, its "solid" and "real" strawberry flavor. This was the key to our tasting, as our tasters' preferences tracked closely to berry flavor (ahead of tang or texture). Along with our two other recommended yogurts, Dannon puts strawberries second (after milk) on its ingredient list; by law, ingredients are listed on labels in order of amounts. By comparison, the yogurts that list sugar second (ahead of berries) had lackluster berry flavor. And our lowest-rated brand contains no strawberries at all—just artificial strawberry flavor.

Every brand we tested, save one, contains at least two of the following stabilizers: cornstarch, pectin, tapioca, kosher gelatin, xanthan gum, or bean

gums. While the type of stabilizers used didn't fully correlate with our textural preferences, none of our three recommended brands contains kosher gelatin; Yoplait, Breyers, and Colombo do. Stonyfield was the only brand to use just a single stabilizer (pectin). Stonyfield Farm does list strawberries second on the ingredient list; nonetheless, it finished second to last in our rankings in part because tasters disliked its "loose," "watery" texture.

IN SUM: When shopping for strawberry yogurt, look for brands that list strawberries ahead of sugar—the more strawberries, the more strawberry flavor. If you like its strong tang and thick texture, Greek-style Fage 2% is an excellent choice; otherwise we recommend the yogurts from Dannon and Wallaby.

RECOMMENDED

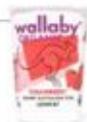
DANNON Fruit on the Bottom Strawberry Yogurt
Price: \$.75 for 6 ounces
Milk Fat Content: 1%



TASTERS' NOTES

Comments: This brand scored either first or second in all three criteria we rated: tang, texture, and strawberry flavor. Tasters liked that it "wasn't too sweet," and had "good strawberry flavor" and a "creamy" texture. The tang and berry flavor were "balanced." "Actually tastes like it has strawberries in it," one pleased taster said.

WALLABY Organic Creamy Australian Style Lowfat Strawberry Yogurt
Price: \$1.19 for 6 ounces
Milk Fat Content: 1%



Comments: This "sweet and milky" yogurt has a "strong, fresh dairy flavor." Tasters liked the flavor more than the texture, however, noting, "a bit thin, but tastes nice and bright." "Good-sized strawberry bits" contributed to its "bright berry flavor."

FAGE 2% All Natural Greek Strained Yogurt with Strawberry
Price: \$1.99 for 5.3 ounces
Milk Fat Content: 2%



Comments: Tasters compared this polarizing sample to "sour cream," "brie," "mascarpone," and "crème fraîche." The pros: "What yogurt should taste like"; "creamy and super thick"; "The mother ship has arrived!" The cons: "chalky," "too thick," and "funky." Everybody agreed that this was "not your average yogurt."

RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS

YOPLAIT Original Strawberry Lowfat Yogurt
Price: \$.75 for 6 ounces
Milk Fat Content: 1%



TASTERS' NOTES

Comments: Several panelists faulted Yoplait's "very sweet," "generic berry flavor" as "fake-tasting." One compared it (unfavorably, of course) to Pop Rocks candy.

BREYERS Fruit on the Bottom Smart Strawberry Lowfat Yogurt
Price: \$.79 for 6 ounces
Milk Fat Content: 1%



Comments: Tasters found this "very sweet" yogurt "artificial," "plasticky," and "not memorable." "Not really any yogurt or strawberry flavor," an unimpressed taster said.

BROWN COW Strawberry Low Fat Yogurt
Price: \$.99 for 6 ounces
Milk Fat Content: 1%



Comments: The "thick, smooth" texture was fine; the flavor was not. "Strange perfume taste," one taster said. "Very strong floral-fruity flavor," another seconded. "Why," asked a third, "does this taste like banana?"

STONYFIELD FARM Organic Lowfat Strawberry Yogurt
Price: \$.99 for 6 ounces
Milk Fat Content: 1%



Comments: Tasters disliked Stonyfield's "loose," "watery" texture. "Why is it separated?" asked one. The yogurt won points for its "milky," "natural-tasting" tang, but lost them for "bland," "too mild" strawberry flavor.

NOT RECOMMENDED

COLOMBO Lowfat Strawberry Flavored Yogurt
Price: \$1.69 for 32 ounces
Milk Fat Content: 1/2%



TASTERS' NOTES

Comments: This "overly sweet," "fake-tasting" yogurt (which does not contain strawberries) ranked last in every category—tang, strawberry flavor, and texture. Tasters compared it to "Jell-O mixed with cornstarch," "strawberry Quik," and "strawberry shampoo."

All About Packaged Broths

Broth is a key ingredient in soups, stews, sauces, and braises. Brands vary considerably; inferior ones can be saccharine, gummy, or have chemical off-flavors. The packages we keep in the test kitchen are listed below with notes on how we use them.

CHICKEN BROTH

Chicken broth's neutral flavor makes it a choice for many recipes—even those using beef and pork. Use low-sodium chicken broth; regular varieties can make dishes salty when the broth is reduced. Look for onions, carrots, and celery on the ingredient list; our tests show that their presence improves the broth.

*TASTE TEST WINNER

SWANSON Certified Organic Free Range Low-Sodium Chicken Broth

BEEF BROTH

Beef broth isn't nearly as versatile as chicken broth (you wouldn't use it in a vegetable dish), but it remains the best choice for lamb stews, assertive braises, pan sauce gravies. Since commercial beef broth may contain as little as 1 part beef per 135 parts water, most packaged broths are weak. Our tastings have shown that the beefiest tasting beef broths contain yeast extract high up in the ingredient list; the extract amplifies beef flavor.

*TASTE TEST WINNER

RACHAEL RAY Stock-in-a-Box All-Natural Flavored Stock (made by Colavita)

VEGETABLE BROTH

Many vegetable soups, risottos, and stir-fries call for vegetable broth as a way to enhance, not overshadow, their delicate flavors. Many chefs use vegetable broth to add savor to cooking. In a recent taste test, we were pleased to discover that many packaged vegetable broths comprise mostly dehydrated vegetables, which, if not well prepared, can taste worse. Our winning broth lists vegetable juices as its first ingredient; it also uses a host of chemical flavor enhancers—and a lot of sodium—to boost its flavor.

*TASTE TEST WINNER

SWANSON Vegetarian Vegetable Broth

CLAM JUICE

While some specialty markets carry packaged clam broth, most supermarkets do not; bottled clam juice is a good alternative. Clam juice is left over from steaming fresh clams in spiced water; it adds a light, briny flavor to seafood soups, sauces, and braises. Because clam juice can be saltier than other broths, we often mitigate its impact by combining it with wine or water. Many of the test kitchen's recipes for shrimp use clam juice.

*TASTE TEST WINNER

BAR HARBOR Clam Juice