

How to make great labneh

Takes 24-48 hours, serves 2-4 and uses cheesecloth and cooking string

INGREDIENTS

500ml yoghurt (I've tried cow's, goat's and sheep's, all successfully)

DIRECTIONS

Scald your cheesecloth by pouring boiling water all over it before use.

For 500ml yoghurt you will need a square of cheesecloth about 50cm x 50cm. You need to use four layers, so either cut out four squares at 50cm x 50cm and stack them, or take a 100cm x 100cm piece of cheesecloth and fold it down to size.

Lay the cloth over a bowl, or sieve. Pour your yoghurt into the middle of the cloth, then gather the corners up and tie them all together, making a pouch.

Now suspend this over a bowl and store in the fridge. If you used a sieve, you can simply rest the sieve over a bowl.

To make labneh, leave it for 24-48 hours, however, if you just want to thicken the yoghurt, a few hours up to 12 should make a noticeable difference.

Check periodically that the extracted liquid (whey) hasn't reached the bottom of the pouch. You can also give the pouch a little squeeze to tease some more liquid out of it.

As this process involves removing the liquid (whey) from the yoghurt, the final amount of labneh will weigh considerably less than the yoghurt you started with. It's not an exact science and different types of yoghurt will yield different amounts of labneh. It's important to remember this, because if your recipe requires a certain amount of labneh, you need to over compensate to ensure you ultimately have enough. But there's no harm in this, as I've discovered, having spare labneh is no bad thing.

I've experimented with both homemade yoghurt and shop bought yoghurt to see how it varies. The shop bought yoghurt resulted in a larger amount of labneh (as a percentage of starting weight) than the homemade yoghurt. Some of my homemade yoghurt reduced in weight by over 50% when straining, however, both yoghurts produced a similar consistency labneh.

