

Lebanese yogurt, or laban

a recipe from www.maureenabood.com

½ gallon whole milk

½ cup rawbi, or plain whole milk yogurt with live cultures, room temperature

Rinse a heavy 4-quart pot with cold water. Every Lebanese woman I know does this to help prevent scorching; I don't question it. Pour the milk in and gently heat on medium-low until the milk just about comes to a boil, frothing and rising in the pot (210 degrees), 30-45 minutes. Remove from the heat immediately. You'll notice a skin has formed on top. You can either remove and discard this, or stir it in. I stir mine in.

Let the milk cool until you can stir your finger in the milk for 10 seconds (110-115 degrees—but my Sitto never, ever used a thermometer. Her hand was quite accurate). Temper the rawbi by stirring two large spoons of the milk into it, one at a time and stirring thoroughly after each one. Pour the rawbi into the milk and stir gently but thoroughly, without scraping the bottom of the pot.

Cover the pot, transfer to the oven (turned off) or any warm spot, and lay a kitchen towel over it. Let the yogurt incubate, undisturbed, for eight hours or overnight. Then chill it for at least three hours (preferably a whole day) with a clean, thin bread towel (or paper towels that can be used with food) tucked directly against the surface of the yogurt, to absorb some of the liquid (whey) and thicken it up a bit.

Transfer the yogurt to another container, whisking the yogurt until smooth. Cover and refrigerate.