

# Skillman Farm makes yogurt

## 'better than it has to be'

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SKILLMAN, NJ — Yogurt—just another dairy product? Not in New Jersey. The New Jersey Correctional Institute is grossing \$60 per hundredweight of Jersey milk by producing yogurt.

In addition, this is an extremely high-quality yogurt with a unique taste and texture. And, it is being produced with only a \$5,000 equipment investment.

This sounds like a fairytale, unbelievable. But, it is true...right down to the fresh fruit in the yogurt, and it is beginning to catch on across the United States.

Ed Crotty, manager of the farm operations for the New Jersey Correctional Institute, is the mastermind behind this outstanding endeavor. He established Skillman Farm only two years ago as the home for a Jersey herd which he then assembled from across the United States.

Next, Ed set about building a yogurt plant on the farm. By utilizing existing facilities and adapting old equipment, the plant was set up with only a \$5,000 investment.

Equipment currently in the farm systems was utilized and additional used equipment was purchased. Much of the stainless steel had been left for junk at some of the facilities. A wing (actually two rooms and a walk-in cooler) of the existing buildings was adapted for yogurt production to complete the existing plant.

From this point, Ed began working with civilian staff and

inmates to perfect the process involved in yogurt making to achieve the high quality he was looking for.

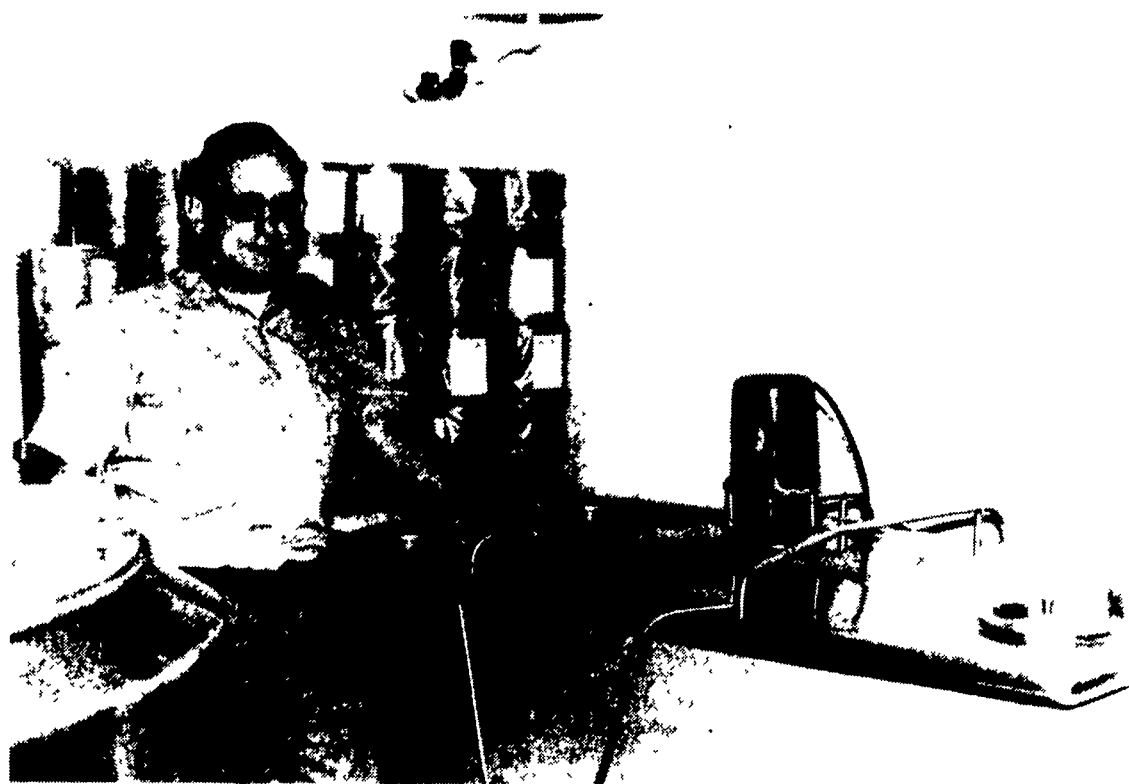
"Personally, I felt that the quality of yogurt had decreased over the years. Many yogurts have stabilizers and use jam instead of fresh fruit," comments Crotty. This coupled with his desire "to do something unique" and the Human Services department's requests for yogurt led him to the decision to give it a try.

The end result is now a yogurt which has a distinct taste and texture all its own. It is not like anything available on the supermarket shelf. There is a richness and smoothness that is unique. Many people who "do not like yogurt" have tested Crotty's product and decided they do like yogurt.

The all-Jersey milk is heated to 185°F. Powders and sugars are added and mixed for 30 minutes. The temperature is decreased to 180°F. at which time the mixture is inoculated with culture. The pH of the mixture is maintained at 4.3. The yogurt is then pumped to a bulk tank where real fruit is added and mixed. It is then packaged in four-ounce cups and five- or 10-quart containers.

Skillman Farm Yogurt contains no stabilizers, no preservatives, and only real fruit, yet it still has a shelf life of over 30 days. This too make it unique from products available in the supermarket.

Besides the excellent taste, yogurt is a very nutritious food. Skillman Farm Yogurt contains 23



A bulk tank is used to mix the yogurt with the desired fruit before packaging. Here, Ed Crotty, the man behind the yogurt, shows how it works.

percent total solids with less than 2 percent fat content. One eight-ounce serving supplies 30 percent of the Recommended Daily Allowance for calcium, 25 percent for phosphorous and 20 percent for protein.

In addition, yogurt is something of a "miracle food." In yogurt the lactose is already partially digested. This allows many people who can not tolerate any other milk product to eat yogurt. Also, with the increased concern for high fiber diets, yogurt can meet these needs by increasing the fiber through the type of fruit added.

Dairy products continue to be a very important source of calcium. The highly publicized calcium tablets sold today as an alternate for dairy products are not easily digested. In actuality one might get more benefit from an equal amount of calcium in an easily digestible dairy product such as yogurt.

When compared with one cup of several dairy products, only the solid cheeses contain more calcium per cup than yogurt. Another strong point is its low cost. Skillman Farm is able to sell yogurt for 30 cents per eight-ounce container or about half what it would cost commercially.

As more research is done on the calcium needs of people, it is predicted that yogurt will become an increasingly important milk product. Ed Crotty believes that someday we may find that an older person did not "fall and break their hip but they broke their hip and fell."

All of these factors have made yogurt a very important part of the products produced by the farm system of the New Jersey



Bulk containers await future packaging of Skillman Farm yogurt.

Correctional Institute. Calcium needs are very important in the nutritional planning for residents of institutions. Yogurt is currently being offered on salad bars and as snacks.

Skillman markets the yogurt only within the Correctional Institute. In the future it may be utilized in state geriatric facilities and possibly expanded to Meals on Wheels programs.

Currently all of the milk the Jersey herd produces is going into yogurt with over 400 gallons marketed per week.

Ed Crotty believes that yogurt is a product for the future. "It is the most profitable thing they can do with milk today, given the right market," says Ed.

Ed notes that a farmer with 15 to 20 cows could gross \$150,000 to \$200,000 by producing yogurt. He estimates that a \$20,000 investment would be needed to set up a yogurt

plant if the farmer already had a suitable building.

He is presently involved in helping Jersey breeders in Virginia and Pennsylvania establish All-Jersey yogurt production. He notes that the operation in Virginia has contracts for as much yogurt as they can produce, even before the plant is in operation. "There is no waiting to establish a market as long as your quality is high," notes Ed.

Ed continuously notes the importance of high quality. The inmates who work in the actual production of the yogurt are very conscientious about sanitation and attention to detail in the production process.

They continually strive with Ed to produce a product that is "Better Than It Has To Be." This motto actually underestimates the unique richness and flavor they have achieved.



This farm sign which greets visitors to Skillman Farm was painted by one of the inmates at the correctional facility.



This is part of the Jersey herd established to produce Jersey milk for Skillman Farm yogurt.

## New York dairy princesses

### gather for seminar

CORTLAND — From June 25-27, New York State's 40 County dairy princesses will assemble for their annual training seminar. This year, they will receive their instructions at the State University of New York at Cortland.

Professionals from the local agricultural industry and retail food industry have been called upon to share their talent with the princesses through seminar workshops. The girls will be trained in areas such as working with school children; taping radio announcements; writing news releases; making public appearances, and public speaking.

These are the types of skills needed in order to complete the responsibilities of a one year reign as dairy princess. In addition, the girls will be given an overview of the dairy industry and an explanation of their role in dairy promotion.

The New York State Dairy Princess program is now in its 23rd year. It was designed to get local county groups actively involved in the promotion of dairy products. It also provides princesses with training and experience in the dairy industry.

A pageant will be held Aug. 2 in Cortland to select the 1985-86 New York State Dairy Princess. The training seminar is one of the stepping stones involved in winning the title.

