

History of the Bulgarian Yoghurt

In the beginning of the 20th century the famous Russian scientist, winner of the Nobel Prize, Ilya Mechnikov (1845-1916), working at Pasteur Institute – Paris, began research on the causes of human ageing.

At the time of the biological research of Ilya Mechnikov, the Bulgarian doctor, Mr. Stamen Grigorov, a student of medicine in his fourth academic year at the Geneva University, undertook a research on the Bulgarian yoghurt and found that the cause of fermentation is due to one rod-line and one spherical bacteria. Notice of his discovery was published in *Revue Médicale De La Suisse Romande* issue 10 dated 20.10.1905, Genève.

Professor Ilya Mechnikov confirmed the discovery of Dr. Stamen Grigorov three years later. His assistants Koendi and Mikelson (1907) named the microorganism discovered by Grigorov – *Bacillus bulgaricus* (Grigorov), currently known as *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp.*bulgaricus*.

Promotion of the Bulgarian yoghurt in other European countries began after the recovery of the French King Francis 1 (1515 – 1547) who had suffered a stomach disease. A Jewish doctor was called from Constantinople, who came to Paris with a flock of about 40 sheep. He was fermenting the sheep milk and the produced yoghurt was served as a food that cured the King. For a short time the King was fully healed. This is the first noticeable evidence of the healing properties of the Bulgarian yoghurt.

The beginning of extensive research on the role of the Bulgarian yoghurt, as a product having unique nutritional, dietary and medicinal properties was made with the discovery of Dr. Stamen Grigorov and the theory of Ilya Mechnikov on the relationship between the increased life expectancy of the Bulgarians and the consumption of yoghurt. The conducted subsequent hundreds of studies confirmed the health benefits of yoghurt consumption. It was found that *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* possesses strong antimicrobial effects. Other developments have been devoted to the effects of the yoghurt's microflora on cholesterol. It was ascertained that eating yoghurt reduces the amount of cholesterol.

In 1952 Dr. I. Bogdanov and his collaborators found that the strain *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* described under number 51, isolated from the Bulgarian yoghurt has antitumor activity. Several studies of other researchers confirmed that the Bulgarian yoghurt has antagonistic action of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, shows antagonistic effect against *Salmonella* sp. *Pseudomonas*, *Escherichia* and others. Studies show that the uniqueness of the Bulgarian yoghurt lies in its microflora (Starter Culture) and depends on the strain type of *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp.*bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*, which are included in the content of the starter culture, rather than the milk type (sheep, goat, buffalo, cow or mixed).

The qualities of this ancient lactic acid product – Bulgarian yoghurt, created over the centuries by our ancestors are still to be revealed.