CLAIMS

[Claim 1]

A method for producing a culture for obtaining a culture by culturing a lactic acid bacterium and/or a bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* in a milk peptide-containing medium

which is characterized in that a culture temperature is lower than an optimum culture temperature of the lactic acid bacterium and/or the bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* by 5°C or more,

wherein the acidity of the culture before storage at 10°C for 21 days is 4 to 12, and

wherein the change between the acidity of the culture before storage and the acidity of the culture after storage at 10°C for 21 days is smaller than a change between the acidity of a culture obtained by culturing the lactic acid bacterium and/or the bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* at the optimum culture temperature of the lactic acid bacterium and/or the bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* before and after storage at 10°C for 21 days.

[Claim 2]

The method for producing a culture according to claim 1, wherein the culture further contains one or more food materials selected from sweeteners, sugars, thickeners, emulsifiers, vitamins, and flavors.

[Claim 3]

The method for producing a culture according to claim 1, wherein the change between the acidity of the culture before storage and the acidity of the culture after storage at 10°C for 21 days is smaller than 1.45.

[Claim 4]

The method for producing a culture according to claim 1, wherein the medium further contains one or more kinds of

auxiliary culture agent selected from the group consisting of a Chinese sweet tea extract, an oolong tea extract, a green tea extract, a black tea extract, a jasmine tea extract and oleic acid.

[Claim 5]

The method for producing a culture according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is one or more kinds selected from the group consisting of a bacterium belonging to the genus *Lactobacillus*, a bacterium belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* and a bacterium belonging to the genus *Streptococcus*.

[Claim 6]

The method for producing a culture according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the lactic acid bacterium and/or the bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* is one or more kinds selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus casei*, *Lactococcus lactis*, *Streptococcus thermophilus* and *Bifidobacterium breve*.

[Claim 7]

The method for producing a culture according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the lactic acid bacterium and/or the bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* is one or more kinds selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus casei* YIT9029 (FERM BP-1366), *Lactococcus lactis* YIT2027 (FERM BP-6224), *Streptococcus thermophilus* YIT2021 (FERM BP-7537) and *Bifidobacterium breve* YIT12272 (FERM BP-11320).

[Claim 8]

The method for producing a culture according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the culture temperature is lower than the optimum culture temperature of the lactic acid bacterium and/or the bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* by 5°C to 15°C.

[Claim 9]

The method for producing a culture according to any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the milk peptide is obtained from casein or whey through hydrolysis.

[Claim 10]

The method for producing a culture according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the milk peptide content of the medium is from 0.025 to 0.25 mass%.

[Claim 11]

The method for producing a culture according to any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the viable cell count of the culture before storage is 1.2×10^9 cfu/ml or more and is 110% or more of the viable cell count of a culture obtained by culturing the lactic acid bacterium and/or the bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* at the optimum culture temperature of the lactic acid bacterium and/or the bacterium belonging to the genus *Bifidobacterium* after storage at 10°C for 21 days.

[Claim 12]

A culture produced by the method for producing a culture according to any one of claims 1 to 10

which is characterized in that the viable cell count of the culture before storage is 1.2×10^9 cfu/ml or more and that the viability after storage at 10°C for 21 days is 80% or more.

[Claim 13]

A fermented food or drink characterized by containing a culture produced by the production method according to any one of claims 1 to 11.

[Claim 14]

A fermented food or drink characterized by containing the culture according to claim 12.