CLAIMS

1. A production method of yogurt, comprising:

a pH buffering agent addition step for adding a pH buffering agent to a yogurt starting material; and

a fermentation step for fermenting the yogurt starting material to which the pH buffering agent has been added (hereinafter referred to as "pH buffering agent-containing yogurt starting material") by lactic acid bacteria.

2. The production method of yogurt according to claim 1, wherein

the lactic acid bacteria includes at least lactic acid bacteria capable of producing exopolysaccharides.

3. The production method of yogurt according to claim 2, wherein

the lactic acid bacteria capable of producing exopolysaccharides includes at least lactic acid bacteria belonging to *Lactobacillus delbruechii* subsp. *bulgaricus*.

4. The production method of yogurt according to any of claims 1 through 3, wherein:

the pH buffering agent is a phosphate salt.

5. The production method of yogurt according to claim 4, wherein

the phosphate salt is at least one phosphate salt selected from the group consisting of disodium hydrogen phosphate and dipotassium hydrogen phosphate.

6. The production method of yogurt according to any one of

claims 1 through 5, wherein

the yogurt starting material includes solids-not-fat at from 8% by weight to 20% by weight.

7. The production method of yogurt according to any one of claims 1 through 6, wherein

in the fermentation step, the pH buffering agent-containing yogurt starting material is fermented by the lactic acid bacteria at a temperature in the range from 30°C to 40°C.

8. Yogurt obtained by the production method of yogurt according to any one of claims 1 through 7.

9. Yogurt comprising:

lactic acid bacteria; and

a pH buffering agent.

10. The yogurt according to claim 9, wherein the lactic acid bacteria are lactic acid bacteria capable of producing a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product,

the yogurt further comprising a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product at an amount in the range from 40 mg/kg to 100 mg/kg relative to a total amount thereof.

11. A production method of a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product,

the production method comprising:

a pH buffering agent addition step for adding a pH buffering agent to milk as a raw material; and

a fermentation step for fermenting the milk as a raw material, to which the pH buffering agent has been added, by lactic acid

bacteria capable of producing a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product.

12. An agent for enhancing the yield of a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product comprising a pH buffering agent as an active substance.

CLAIMS

1. A production method of yogurt including exopolysaccharides, comprising:

a pH buffering agent addition step for adding a pH buffering agent to a yogurt starting material; and

a fermentation step for fermenting the yogurt starting material to which the pH buffering agent has been added (hereinafter referred to as "pH buffering agent-containing yogurt starting material") by lactic acid bacteria including at least lactic acid bacteria capable of producing exopolysaccharides, thereby causing the amount of the exopolysaccharides increases more than if the pH buffering agent did not add to the yogurt starting material.

2. The production method of yogurt according to claim 1, wherein

the lactic acid bacteria capable of producing exopolysaccharides includes at least lactic acid bacteria belonging to *Lactobacillus delbruechii* subsp. *bulgaricus*.

3. The production method of yogurt according to claim 1 or 2, wherein:

the pH buffering agent is a phosphate salt.

4. The production method of yogurt according to claim 3, wherein

the phosphate salt is at least one phosphate salt selected from the group consisting of disodium hydrogen phosphate and dipotassium hydrogen phosphate.

5. The production method of yogurt according to any one of

claims 1 through 4, wherein

the yogurt starting material includes solids-not-fat at from 8% by weight to 20% by weight.

6. The production method of yogurt according to any one of claims 1 through 5, wherein

in the fermentation step, the pH buffering agent-containing yogurt starting material is fermented by the lactic acid bacteria at a temperature in the range from 30°C to 40°C.

7. Yogurt obtained by the production method of yogurt according to any one of claims 1 through 6.

8. Yogurt comprising:

lactic acid bacteria capable of producing a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product;

a pH buffering agent; and

the lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product at an amount in the range from 40 mg/kg to 100 mg/kg relative to a total amount thereof.

9. A production method of a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product,

the production method comprising:

a pH buffering agent addition step for adding a pH buffering agent to milk as a raw material; and

a fermentation step for fermenting the milk as a raw material, to which the pH buffering agent has been added, by lactic acid

bacteria capable of producing a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product, thereby causing the amount of the lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product increases more than if the pH buffering agent did not add to the yogurt starting material.

10. An agent for enhancing the yield of a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product comprising a pH buffering agent as an active substance.

11. The agent according to claim 10, wherein the pH buffering agent is a phosphate salt.

12. The agent according to claim 11, the phosphate salt is at least one phosphate salt selected from the group consisting of disodium hydrogen phosphate and dipotassium hydrogen phosphate.

13. The agent according to any of claims 10 through 12, the lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product is an exopolysaccharides.

14. The agent according to claim 13, wherein the lactic acid bacteria includes at least lactic acid bacteria belonging to *Lactobacillus delbruechii subsp. bulgaricus*.

15. A method for enhancing the yield of a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product by adding a pH buffering agent to milk as a raw material and fermenting the milk as a raw material by lactic acid bacteria.

16. A method for enhancing the yield of a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product by adding a pH buffering agent to milk as a raw material.

17. A method of adding a pH buffering agent to milk as a raw

material in order to enhance the yield of a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product.

18. Use of a pH buffering agent to milk as a raw material for enhancing the yield of a lactic acid bacteria extracellular functional product.