

HISTORY OF MILK – SCRIPT

Picture 01 – Preamble - Milk's Humble Beginnings -



Dairy got its start in what is now Turkey in about 8,000 BCE, and for reasons of food safety in the days before refrigeration, the first milk from animals was turned into yogurt, cheese, and butter.

It took the domestication of cattle, following on the heels of sheep and goats, to put the ancient dairy industry into motion and a quirk of genetics to move it along.

As people and cattle migrated, they took with them a genetic mutation that mysteriously began to appear shortly after dairy products were developed—lactose tolerance.

Picture 02 – Humans and Lactose



Humans, like all mammals, weren't built to digest lactose, milk's natural sugar, beyond childhood.

But around 6,000 BCE, the ability for some adult humans to tolerate lactose kicked in and was passed down through people in Europe as well as in parts of Africa and the Middle East.

From around 8000 BC to 63BC, Neolithic farmers in Britain and Northern Europe may have been among the first to begin milking cattle for human consumption.

Picture 03 - 8000 BC - Origins of the Domestic Cow



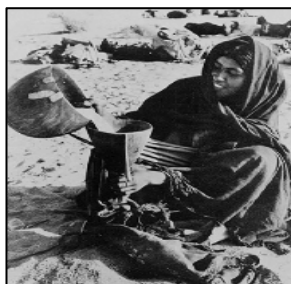
Aurochs were first domesticated 8,000 to 10,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent area of the Near East and evolved into two types of domestic cattle, the humped Zebu (*Bos indicus*) and the humpless European Highland cattle (*Bos taurus*).

Some scientists believe that domesticated cattle from the Fertile Crescent spread throughout Eurasia, while others believe that a separate domestication event took place in the area of India and Pakistan.

The dairying activities of these European farmers may have begun as early as 6,000 years ago.

According to scientists, the ability to digest milk was slowly gained some time between 5000-4000 B.C.E. by the spread of a genetic mutation called lactase persistence that allowed post-weaned humans to continue to digest milk.

Picture 04 – Northwest Turkey.



Research has identified Northwest Turkey as a key region for the development of dairying in the seventh millennium BCE, yet little is known about how this practice began or evolved there.

This research studies Barcın Höyük, a site located in Bursa's Yenişehir Valley, which ranges chronologically from 6600 BCE, when the first evidence of settled life appears in the Marmara Region, to 6000 BCE, when Neolithic habitation at the site ceases.

The discovery of abundant milk residues even among the earliest ceramics indicates that the pioneer farmers arrived in the region already with the knowhow of dairying and milk processing.

In fact, these skills and the reliance on secondary products may have given them one of the necessary tools to successfully venture into the unfarmed lands of Northwest Anatolia in the first place.

Picture 05 – Neolithic Britain.



Then by 4000 BC there is early evidence of Milking Cattle in Neolithic Britain.

Scientists have discovered that Neolithic farmers in Britain and Northern Europe may have been among the first to begin milking cattle for human consumption.

It's possible adult humans already drank other mammals' milk because illness was better than death during famine, and infants always needed milk if a mother or wet nurse wasn't available.

That foundation stayed in place for quite some time. Not much changed with milk in the ensuing millennia except more people came to value it for nutrition and flavour, including some of the first American colonists who brought cows across the Atlantic.

Picture 06 - The women of the Kazakh nomad community In Western Mongolia



Their tongues click and arms wave as they chase their herds of goats and sheep into a pen. Hundreds of hooves dart this way and that, swirling and spinning, trying to avoid what's coming next.

On the whole, a Kazakh's diet consists of meat and dairy products. There's no agriculture to speak of. As nomads, they live hundreds of miles from the nearest town or grocery store.

Picture 07 - Why So Much Milking?



From start to finish this daily Kazakh tradition takes nearly two hours. Afterward, the herds are released and they run off into the hills to graze. In a matter of hours, it will happen all over again.

They slaughter their own livestock and practically everything else they make is derived from milk. They make their own bread, butter, and yogurt, plus a variety of hard cheeses they produce by the truckload and store for the winter

Picture 08 - Sumerian Civilization



Although there is evidence of cattle domestication in Mesopotamia as early as 8000 B.C.E., the milking of dairy cows did not become a major part of Sumerian civilization until approximately 3000 B.C.E.

This early population was notable for strides in the development of civilization such as farming and raising cattle, weaving textiles, working with carpentry and pottery and even enjoying beer.

Picture 09 - The Domesticated Cow Appears in Ancient Egyptian Civilization.



The manufacture of cheese is depicted in murals in Egyptian tombs from 2,000 BC.

Two alabaster jars found at Saqqara, dating from the First Dynasty of Egypt, contained cheese. These were placed in the tomb about 3,000 BC. They were likely fresh cheeses coagulated with acid or a combination of acid and heat.

Cottage cheese was made in ancient Egypt by churning milk in a goatskin and then straining the residue using a reed mat.

Picture 10 – The Cow and the Water Buffalo.



At least as early as 3100 B.C.E., the domesticated cow had been introduced to, or had been separately domesticated in, Northern Africa.

Its central role in Egyptian life, the cow was deified. The Egyptians "held the cow sacred and dedicated her to Isis, goddess of agriculture; but more than that, the cow was a goddess in her own right, named Hathor, who guarded the fertility of the land."

Picture 11 – History of Donkey Milk.



Donkey milk has been used by humans for alimentary and cosmetic purposes since Egyptian antiquity.

Doctors recommended it to treat several afflictions because of its supposed healing and cosmetic virtues.

The earliest historical records date back to 2500 BC. They were found on Egyptian bas-reliefs, but it was not until the Renaissance that this milk gained a real scientific consideration.

It is said that Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, maintained her beauty and the youth of her skin in baths of donkey milk. The daily care required a herd of about 700 donkeys.

Picture 12 – The Vedic period in India.



By 2000BC. the domesticated cow had appeared in Northern India, coinciding with the arrival of the Aryan nomads.

The heavy dependence on the cow was reinforced by the Vedas (the religious epics of the Hindu religion) wherein the cow was considered a sacred animal.

Picture 13 – Bog Butter.



The practice of people depositing butter in bogs in Ireland dates from at least the Early Bronze Age (1750 BC) and may reflect a booming dairying industry at the time.

There is debate, however, on why exactly people deposited butter in bogs, with there being ample evidence that supports theories on both the practical (peat bogs could have been a means of helping people preserve the butter for longer).

Also, the spiritual (butter may have been deposited in peat bogs as offerings to gods, goddesses, local spirits or ancestors) and it is also quite possible that both reasons were true.

Picture 14 – Butter – ‘Making the evil one’



There used to be many ancient superstitions surrounding butter in Ireland. For example, like this folklore from County Wexford:

If the butter was ‘taken’, the milk would rise in froth all over the churn but there would be no butter.

Sometimes the cream would have an awful smell. The power was supposed to be got from the Evil One on May morning by skimming a well before the sun rose. Hares, too, believed to be shape-shifting witches, were also chased from the land on May Day."

There was a rhyme to be recited whilst the skimming was going on. A piece of whitish fat or butter with milk dropping from it was supposed to be left at the door of the house where the butter was to be taken.

The people of the house would know then that they would have no butter when churning. The cure for this was to get the coulter (cutting blade) out of the plough and put it in the fire and redden it in the devil’s name.

Picture 15 – So, what is Bog Butter?



Many examples of the butter are found in Irish museums, including the place dedicated to the golden spread, Cork’s Butter Museum.

It's exactly what it sounds like—butter made from cow's milk, buried in a bog. What makes it special is its age.

After spending so much time in the cool, damp peat, it starts to take on the appearance and consistency of paraffin wax. According to a study on bog butter by researchers from the University of Bristol, some of the chunks are non-dairy.

The cool, low-oxygen, high acid environment of the bog made a perfect natural refrigerator. Seeing as butter was a valuable commodity and was used to pay taxes, saving it for times of drought, famine, or war would have been a good idea.

Picture 16 – 1700-63 BC - Milk in Ancient Hebrew Civilization and the Bible



The Old Testament refers to a 'land which floweth with milk and honey' some twenty times. The phrase describes Palestine as a land of extraordinary fertility, providing all the comforts and necessities of life.

Did Israelites really eat milk and honey?

In ancient Israel, milk was mainly procured from herds of sheep and goats rather than from cattle, which were primarily used for ploughing.

Sheep and goat bones are found in abundance across excavations showing that the majority of ancient Israelites depended on these animals for their milk, wool, and dung for fuelling fires and ovens.

Picture 17 – Ancient Egyptian Drinks.



As early as 1450 B.C., depictions on wall painting from a pharaoh's tomb show, the ancient Egyptians practiced a form of water purification.

On drinks found in Nubia: "Since the people of Nubia had domesticated animals, milk would have been a common drink.

Strabo, a Roman geographer who lived in the first century B.C. writes that Kushites live on the "meats, blood, milk, and cheese."

Traces for milk have also been found on the teeth of Nubian mummies and pots. Wine was, one the most flourishing product in Nubia.

Picture 18 – Wine was the main drink of ancient Rome.



Milk in ancient Rome was mainly used for making cheeses and medical purposes only. Milk was also considered an uncivilized drink; hence why Romans did not drink it unless it was necessary. It was believed the lower classes and slaves

drank goat milk for substance but in limited quantities.

Romans would also dilute their drinks 1:2 or 1:3 dilutions with water. Romans did not drink beer as this was considered a barbarian drink and rarely drank milk.

Picture 19 - End.