



Airag, a Health Beverage (图)

<http://www.firstlight.cn> 2010-08-30

Can you imagine United States without Coca Cola? As for Mongols the drink of choice is airag. This mild beverage made of fermented mare's milk has a slightly acid taste and great for treating thirst. The beverage makes one of main ingredients of the summer diet of Mongols and no a festive is complete without it.

Airag is produced throughout summer in a specially made hide skin bag. First, fresh milk is added to leaven and then the mix is regularly stirred by special wooden stick. Fresh airag is basically mild but if kept for long enough it may turn sour and acidic. Old airag may contain up to 18 proof or equal to that of wine.

Drinking too much airag, one may easily become drunken, especially given the fact that usually airag is served in huge bowls. Medical features of airag were proven long time ago. It clears any poison, especially the consequences of much fat consumed during long winter, strengthens the body. It contains many types of vitamins, organic and mineral elements. Airag is widely used for treatment of many diseases.

Not all families make airag as it takes time and effort. Mares should be milked every two hours during hot summer days, and every three hours in autumn. To get good quality milk, mares are grazed on best pastures and in cool places near rivers and lakes. In addition, the technology requires accuracy and maintenance of required temperatures.

The best airag is produced in Middle Gobi province called the Land of Airag and Long Songs. What makes Gobi airag's taste special is a unique mixture of desert grasses. Another area famous for airag is Arkhangai province, or Northern Mountains known for beautiful landscapes and also the beauty of local girls skilled in making dairy products.

The amount of milk produced by one mare averages about 1.5-2 liters when milked six times per day. The remaining milk goes to colts. So, in order to make enough airag for family, as well as visitors (no shortage of willing) it is necessary to have at least a dozen mares. In addition, to get good quality airag it is necessary to stir the milk mix no less than 1,000 times each day. So, all guests are expected to contribute and to whirl the airag in the skin bag as many times as they can or willing.

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