

The Greek Yogurt Vanilla Blended Billionaire Shepherd

**HOW A NOMAD FROM TURKEY SHOWED
THE WORLD A NEW WAY TO TASTE HIS
CULTURE AND BECAME A HUGE SUCCESS.**



A letter from the publisher



Dear Reader,

This playful book-series is a publication of AlligatorZone®, where students meet startups, an impact initiative as well as a community of life-long learners who explore the world through the eyes of the entrepreneurial problem-solver.

AlligatorZone® is proud to present this series of stories and related playful explorations designed to surface the delightful conversationalist that lurks within each of us, and to shine a light on our charismatic side, while we explore the world of future careers, and perhaps find a calling, sooner than later. This activity book can be enjoyed by students of ages ten through the teens. In fact, any life-long learner will enjoy this booklet.

If you choose to read this book aloud, enunciate like your favorite TV newscaster, actor or YouTuber. If you post it online outside of AlligatorZone, tag @alligatorzone or even #alligatorzone. If reading aloud, slow down so that audiences of all backgrounds may understand you clearly. This exercise fine-tunes our personality, making people pause and listen when we speak. That's because the knowledge in this book series will appeal to most people, and this exercise powers up style with substance.

These stories and explorations will make you look at the world through the eyes of an entrepreneur and observe opportunities to solve problems everywhere around you. Included with this story, is a set of questions to jog your thinking, and an activity for you to go on a journey of discovery, somewhat like an investigative journalist. After you read this book, you can continue learning about more lessons drawn from this book through additional programs offered by AlligatorZone online.

LIFE-LESSONS: With this exploration-book and program, readers will understand, among other things, that

- opportunities to improve things and make a difference exist all around us
- industries require a variety of skills
- there is something to learn even from the most mundane things around us
- the world is an encyclopedia, when we don't hesitate to ask questions
- with practice, one can learn to ask the right questions and solve problems
- persistent efforts can accumulate to grand outcomes despite humble beginnings
- your voice matters
- even learning to think like an innovator makes one a standout leader
- mindfulness is possible in everyday activities
- understanding a company and its leaders makes us better consumers and investors
- those who make a difference do it regardless of their circumstances, and
- curiosity, listening and observation are super-powers that we all have and can use everyday

Enjoy more advanced explorations and collaborative learning that we bring to you by extending stories from this book to an online environment as a member of AlligatorZone. Visit AlligatorZone.org for more.

Have fun with this story and exploration.

Ramesh Sambasivan
Instructional Designer
AlligatorZone® Academy
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The Billionaire Shepherd.

(To be read aloud to an audience at home, in school, or online)



Once upon a time, there was a young boy named Hamdi Ulukaya growing up in a family of dairy farmers along a tributary of the historic Euphrates river in Turkey. His upbringing was a simple one. Hamdi was born in 1972 but never knew what his actual date of birth was. His family owned goats and sheep, and made cheese, but Hamdi was a very ambitious lad.

When Hamdi decided to find his way to America, with just \$3,000 in hand, he came to New York as a student, to learn English. Later, Hamdi moved to University at Albany in upstate New York and continued his studies. Around the same time, Hamdi's father suggested that he start a business to make feta cheese.

Hamdi got some help from his family and started a small feta cheese factory called Euphrates. The cheese factory was growing but barely making money. One day, he saw in a newspaper, a small advertisement, known as a classified ad, posted by the giant food company Kraft Foods, looking to sell a yogurt factory that was no longer in use. Hamdi discarded the newspaper. A little later, he looked at the trash can, picked up the newspaper and called the phone number on the ad. Making that phone call was a momentous point in Hamdi's life-story.

Hamdi calculated that he could buy the entire factory for less than the cost of one of the machines in it. When he went to see the factory on sale, he saw a few workers in the factory dismantling the machinery. Against the advice of his attorney, Hamdi took a loan from the Small Business Administration (SBA) and bought the entire yogurt factory for just \$700,000. He hired some of the same workers to get the factory and its machines back in working condition. Hamdi now had a factory.

He spent the next two years trying to perfect the yogurt, by bringing a yogurt-expert from his native Turkey. When Hamdi found a grocery store willing to display his Greek yogurt along with other dairy products, he sent his first batch of 150 cups of yogurt. Shortly thereafter, the store-owner called Hamdi, saying that his yogurt cups were flying off the shelf. He was officially in the yogurt business.

Over the next few years, Hamdi's yogurts became the top-selling yogurt brand in the nation. Hamdi expanded his factory, and soon built a big factory in Twin Falls, Idaho, and bought one in Australia.

Hamdi became a billionaire selling his yogurt. Soon he began giving back to the community. He became a model employer, making kindness an important part of his management style.

He started donating large sums of money to causes close to his heart — in particular, helping Kurdish refugees from Syria and Iraq. Hamdi is a Kurd from Turkey, an ethnic group found in the mountains of that region. Therefore, he makes it a point of hiring refugees in his yogurt factories. He also gave a generous donation to the United Nations to help Kurdish refugees who have lost their homes in civil wars. He stands up for them even when people are hesitant about welcome refugees into their communities.

Hamdi also joined the world-renowned investor Warren Buffet's 'The Giving Pledge', and promised to give away most of his fortune to help Kurdish and other refugees. A frequent speaker at Universities, he is considered an inspirational business leader. Hamdi's company was valued recently at \$3 billion, when he gave 10% of his company's ownership to his employees, said to be a first for the dairy industry. Hamdi is working to develop fair trade practices so that sources of milk are known, and dairy farmers are fairly treated.

Hamdi said that the one thing that made his Greek yogurt successful was its placement in grocery stores alongside other dairy products, instead of being placed with specialty foods, so that people could find it easily. In the U.S. alone, people are expected to spend close to \$10 billion on yogurt, and his company, which was started in March 2005, is a market-leader for Greek yogurt and owns the largest yogurt factory in the world. Hamdi Ulukaya named his yogurt brand, inspired by the modern Turkish word for shepherd, viz., *çoban*. Can you guess the name of Hamdi's brand of Greek yogurt?

Quiz your audience.

*This performance task is mainly for the younger members of AlligatorZone®.
(Your audience could be a family member, a classmate, teacher or viewer).*



How old is Hamdi? (Do not use a calculator)

Hamdi Ulukaya came to the United States with \$3,000 in his pocket. What was the value of the company he built, when he decided to give 10% of it to his employees?

What was the phone call about, which was momentous in Hamdi's life?

What seems to be the favorite cause which Hamdi contributes to, through his philanthropy and in his company?

What kind of yogurt does Hamdi's company make?

How many years ago was Hamdi's yogurt company launched? (Do not use a calculator)

Next?

Continue to the next page for participating in an exploration, as part of the premium AlligatorZone plan or go online to our learning community and share your thoughts.



AlligatorZone® Exploration

*Note down your responses, start or join a discussion in our learners' online community.
(This performance task is for older students and life-long learners
who are members of AlligatorZone.)*



1. Yogurt sales, overall, are said to be tapering off because there are too many yogurt choices in the market. The next time you see Chobani® or other brand of Greek yogurt in a store, observe the packaging carefully. Look for design elements that the brands are using to stand out on the store shelf.
2. Can you remember the names of any of the cultures in the yogurt? List them.
3. Read up on probiotics and understand their stated benefits by asking your teacher or parent, or by researching it on your own.
4. Chobani is taking the lead in introducing a Fair Trade certification to protect cows and the workers in the dairy industry, ensuring that dairy products are made in humane working conditions. This is done with Fair Trade USA, a non-profit group in Oakland, California. Are there any other industries or products where you would like to see such fair trade initiatives in place?
5. Demand for yogurt is said to be slipping because consumers have too many choices, according to industry analysts. Do you think it would help the yogurt industry to have an advertising campaign like the iconic 'Got Milk?' campaign? What kind of campaign would you design?
6. If you were to create your own flavor of yogurt, what flavor would that be?
7. Chobani is positioning its yogurt as a health product? If you were to explain the benefits of the yogurt to your friends, what words would you use?
8. Have you seen any unintended uses of yogurt? For instance, some yogurts are used for skin-care products. Can you think of new uses of yogurt based on your understanding of the ingredients of yogurt?
9. Read the packaging of yogurt containers. Does it make sense? How would you describe the value of the yogurt to your friends?
10. Summarize your findings and observations, and post them on AlligatorZone's online learning platform. Share your findings and learn collaboratively with our online community of life-long learners. Visit AlligatorZone.org for more.



Not yet a premium member of AlligatorZone®.
Visit our website <https://alligatorzone.org>

Tips for a Parent, Teacher or a Mentor

(For mentors and coaches using AlligatorZone's Premium Plans)



Here are time-tested tips for mentors who may want to steer the learning at home or in class.

- 1) **Keep it simple.** If the suggested activity calls for going to a specific location, try slipping the field activity into a routine trip to a store or a mall, and make it an ‘oh-by-the-way-let-us-stop-and-look’ kind of detour on an errand, rather than making a special trip for it. The idea is to remove any semblance of pressure to perform and focus purely on the joy of learning something new in a shared experience for a student and the teacher.
- 2) **Go Improv.** Avoid planning and scheduling it in advance. Our goal with the activities is to help children make learning a life-long pursuit and a hobby, not a checklist item that will result in angst until it is completed and cleared.
 - Where an activity involves having a conversation with a stranger at a facility or a manager, consider making it a walk-in experience.
 - This improv-like approach, we believe, teaches the child to be comfortable with uncertain outcomes (“Sorry, the manager is out sick.”) and improvise. They learn to play the hand they are dealt in the project (just like in life). They learn to find alternative sources of information and piece things together.
 - We believe it helps them learn how to focus on things they can control and not worry about things beyond their control.
 - We believe that it teaches them to find insights amid chaos and stay focused on the task at hand despite distractions.
- 4) **Learning, not shopping.** We strive to design activities that do not require making purchases. We strive not to make field activities specific to any particular brand. Use on-site observation to complete the learning with your student. Do not make a purchase for this purpose.
- 5) **Feel free to make a script, if it helps.** If you prefer to schedule a meeting in advance with a store manager or supervisor, prepare a script and encourage your student to be a part of the initial phone request while you stay on the call. Let the student own the process. In our recent summer workshop under the coach’s supervision and guidance we had the 11-year old student conduct a market research. He told us later that it was the first time he had left a voice message and his first time on a business call. The sense of accomplishment and the confidence gained, were priceless.
- 6) **Let the child lead the conversation.** If the student is not yet ready to speak and start a discussion on topics in our activities, try making it a 3-way conversation and keep it casual, referring decision-making to the child (“What do you think?” or “Does that sound reasonable?”) so everyone knows that the student is in charge of the discussion. After the first few times we often see kids lead and handle conversations with aplomb. Let there be no pressure on the student to produce a certain result. Let there be no pressure to use big words or business jargon. If a store owner or employee uses industry parlance or acronyms, seek clarification so the child knows there are no dumb questions.
- 7) **Going off-script is perfectly fine.** Allow the students to find alternative sources of information *under your supervision*, and let them piece things together for their learning. They might find something on TV or Netflix, Youtube, Pinterest or TikTok (if they already use those sites and apps) and be able to connect the dots to fresh insights for improved findings.

Last, but not the least, no matter what, keep it light-hearted and make it a spontaneous and shared experience for both, you and the student.

Sources

(These are the publicly available sources used to compile this story)

Sources:

Please visit AlligatorZone's online learning community to see links to the sources used to pull this story together.

