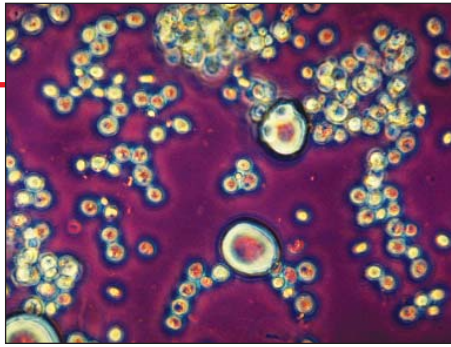


RESOURCES

Name That Yeast



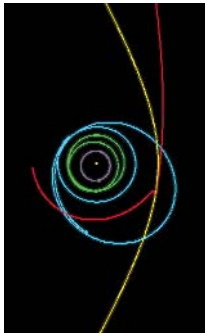
Stumped by a yeast? Microbiologists struggling to key out a specimen can find help at this site from the Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Click on the Identification button to enter physical, biochemical, and molecular attributes for the puzzling fungus—from colony texture and color to growth temperatures to DNA sequences. The algorithm then selects the best matches from among the 900 named yeast species, including the familiar brewer's yeast (above). The site also serves as a taxonomic storehouse, holding details of classification and naming.

www.cbs.knaw.nl/yeast/biolomics.aspx

EDUCATION

Silicon Solar System

What would happen to Earth if a wandering star careened through the solar system? If the moon were farther away from Earth, would the sun's gravity snatch away our satellite and spoil all those romantic songs? Students can take a crack at these questions with Astronomy Workshop, a set of Java applets and calculators designed to help users better understand solar system structure and dynamics. Astronomer Douglas Hamilton of the University of Maryland, College Park, and his students stocked the site with exercises for levels from junior high to college. To test whether an extrasolar planet could hold onto a moon, for example, students can try adjusting the planet's size, distance from its star, and other characteristics. And according to the simulations, a near miss from a rogue star less than half the size of the sun could bounce Earth (orbit in blue above) and Mars (red) out of their normal trajectories.



janus.astro.umd.edu

FUN

Debunker's Guide

From Bigfoot to dowsing, many bogus beliefs refuse to die, and new ones keep sprouting. Keep up on the latest varieties of pseudoscience and irrationality with *The Skeptic's Dictionary*, compiled by philosophy professor Robert Carroll of Sacramento City College in California. Carroll wittily explains and skewers more than 400 frauds, fads, superstitions, and other forms of popular nonsense. Everything from creationism to iridology, the belief that illnesses can be diagnosed by examining the iris of the eye, gets the skeptical treatment.

skepdic.com

DATABASE

When RNA Says No

Small strands of RNA that stifle protein synthesis are one of the hottest topics in molecular biology because they might be able to stem cancer and other diseases. Researchers looking for information on one type of obstructionist RNA, called microRNA (miRNA), should check out the miRNA Registry from the Sanger Institute in Hinxton, U.K. The site tallies sequence data on more than 700 miRNAs from eight species, including humans. You can also locate the original literature description and similar miRNAs. To help the field keep miRNA nomenclature straight, researchers can deposit a newly discovered sequence, and the curators will name it.

www.sanger.ac.uk/Software/Rfam/mirna

RESOURCES

Hop With the Springtails

Tiny but tough, springtails can endure some of Earth's most inhospitable environments: the slopes of Mount Everest, the recesses of caves, even Antarctica. Members of the group Collembola, the minuscule arthropods are not only some of the most abundant animals, they are among the oldest, with fossils dating back 400 million years. Catch up on springtail systematics with the Checklist of the Collembola of the World, created by Frans Janssens of the University of Antwerp in Belgium and colleagues. The taxonomic synopsis furnishes identification keys and distribution maps for families, genera, and species.

More than just a catalog, the site offers a quick tour of springtail ecology and anatomy. (The name springtail comes from a lever attached to the abdomen; triggering it can propel the animal more than 25 times its body length.) The gallery features photogenic species such as this silky *Tetrodontophora bielanensis* from Germany (below).

www.collembola.org



Send site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org. Archive: www.sciencemag.org/netwatch