

How to Make Butter



Butter:

Yummy, nutritious, and vital to your body's basic fat needs. Modern dietary myths demonize the consumption of this age-old staple as new, "improved" vegetable and soybean imposters crowd the shelves of your local grocer. The studies pumped into mainstream media since the seventies have promoted the factory-produced alternatives.

Consider:

Your body needs the saturated fat found in butter for crucial cell structure. Butter is a valuable source of fat soluble Vitamins A, D and K, vitamins essential for proper hormone balance, healthy reproductive systems, strengthened immunity and much, much more. Saturated fats are far more stable at higher temps than polyunsaturated vegetable fats found in synthetic butters, keeping them from becoming oxidized and damaging healthy cells when absorbed by your body. Saturated fat also contains fatty acids which are antifungal, antimicrobial and antiviral, and strengthen your immune system.

Did you know that more than half of your brain consists of saturated fat *and* cholesterol and that those are the very things being taken out of modern-day butter alternatives? Discrepancies in these areas can cause breakdown of the armor surrounding nerve fibers, compromising proper message relays between the brain and your nervous system. But slowly, thankfully, the margarine myths are being debunked, and the trans-fatty Parkays are being set aside for traditional, body soluble, vitamin rich yellow goodness. Overall, making butter at home will make your family not only happier (because butter just tastes better) but healthier, too. Join those of us who turn our healthy noses up at factory-produced posers and value the simple joy of doing it better, right in your own kitchen.

To make your own sweet cream butter, you will need:

1 half gallon of cool (not cold) sweet cream

Your churn, cleaned and sanitized, or if you don't have a churn:

3 clean, sanitized quart jars with discs and rings

A colander or other coarse strainer

2 medium sized mixing bowls

1 gallon of cold, clean water

A clean pitcher or large container for buttermilk

1 largish Tupperware dish or similar container with an airtight lid

A rubber spatula or wooden butter paddle

Salt (optional)

I want to start by mentioning that you can make butter with any amount of cream you happen to have. If you have one cup of cream, you can make butter, if you have one gallon of cream, you can make butter. There is no solid ratio of how much butter you can make out of how much cream, since it depends on the fat content of the cream, which depends on the diet or situation of the cow (or other dairy animal) that you harvested the cream from. I chose to make this list of instructions for a half gallon of cream to standardize the procedure on paper.

With that out of the way, let's shake it up!

Begin by pouring your cream into your churn or jar. Fit the lid tightly on. Begin agitating the cream. Keep a calm, steady pace. Enthusiastic children are a great help here, I've found. (I have laid a blanket on the floor and had two young ones roll a quart jar of cream back and forth, and it worked well, while it lasted. Don't overestimate attention spans.) How long your butter takes to separate is a huge variable. It depends largely on the temperature your cream was when you started, and the temperature it is able to maintain during agitation. But it also depends on overall fat content. I have shaken cream for twenty minutes and gotten butter, and I have shaken cream for an hour and gotten butter. Patience is key here. (And strong arms.)

Once your cream begins to get grainy, then quickly gets thick, don't slow down! You are almost there! If

you keep your steady pace of agitation going, your butter should separate within minutes of reaching that thick stage. When your butter is made, it should look like two completely separated forms. If you used a churn, your butter probably will have stuck to the paddles. If you used a jar, your butter will be just floating around in the buttermilk.

At this point, you might note the color of your butter. Well, don't get attached. The color will most likely vary very frequently. Sometimes daily. Again, the diet and situation of the dairy animal of origin will determine the color and taste of your butter. If your creature has been largely grass fed in the previous days, your butter could be a dark, rich yellow. If she is on high protein grain, you might have lighter color butter. Everything factors in, and constancy should not be something you expect.

Next, if you used a jar, strain your butter, using the colander if you need it. If you used a churn, just scrape it off the paddles and stick it straight into the mixing bowl, then strain the remaining buttermilk to get the few precious butter bits that are bound to be floating in there. Don't press the butter into the colander or strainer. Just lightly plunk it from the colander/strainer into the mixing bowl. It will still be milky.

Now, use the rubber spatula to press the butter against the sides of the mixing bowl, squeezing out the excess buttermilk and pouring it off periodically. Once you are satisfied that you have removed as much buttermilk as possible, pour a bit of the cold water in with your butter. Continue working the butter with the spatula against the side of the bowl until the water becomes milky. Drain the water off, pour more water in, work the butter, and drain the milky water off again. Repeat this process until your water comes off of the butter clear. Drain off the last bit of water, and fold, press and squeeze your butter until you have gotten as much of the water out as possible.

If you want to salt your butter, you can do it now. Always add less salt than you think it needs, stir it in very well, and then taste it. Add more if you need to, but over-salting is very easy to do, so just add little bits and keep tasting it until it is to your liking.

Put your beautiful, homemade butter into an airtight container, keep it cool and it should stay sweet for about a week. But, if your house is like mine, delicious butter won't last a week. People just won't stop eating it.