

Butter Making

by Alexander von Lübeck

What is the history of butter? Butter has probably been in use since people had access to goats, sheep, and cows (so a VERY long time ago). The earliest butter would have been from sheep or goat's milk, as cows are thought to have only been domesticated about 10,000 years ago. Butter serves as an efficient way to eat fat, which our bodies need to function properly ... and it tastes great on bread! In the early 16th century, bread and butter became common fare among the middle class. Melted butter was also used liberally as a sauce with meat and vegetables in England.

Did You Know? Butter was sometimes used as oil for lamps in 16th century Europe!

How do you make butter? There are several ways to make butter. Here are two ways that would have been used by our ancestors:

A. Churn It! (Good for larger amounts)

Put some heavy cream in your churn (no more than 1/3 full), insert the churn and lid, and close tightly. Now move the churn up and down quickly in a rhythmic manner until the cream becomes a solid. How long this takes depends on how much cream is in your churn and how fast and consistently you churn your butter. When it seems to be done, pour off any liquid and enjoy!

B. Shake It! (Good for small amounts)

Put some heavy cream in a jar, close it tightly, and shake until the cream turns into butter. You can do this in just 5 minutes. Other methods of shaking include a large drum that is rocked back and forth.

Another shaking method, still used today in parts of Africa and the Near East, involves putting milk in goat skin half filled with milk, inflated with air, sealing the skin, hanging with ropes on a tripod of sticks, and rocking until the movement leads to the formation of butter.



Tip: You can use your little butter churn to shake cream into butter if you first remove the churn, replace the cover, and then cover the hole with plastic wrap and/or tape.

Note: After you make your butter, eat it right away and keep the rest cool. If it gets too warm, it melts and starts to go bad. You can mix other flavors in your butter, such as honey and herbs!