

Homemade Butter

Here's a satisfying recipe almost anyone can "whip up." It comes to us from cheesemaker Jonathan White, with commentary by Rich Tarlov!

Since cream is the only ingredient of butter, choosing cream is important. Do not use ultra-pasteurized cream. You might try asking a bakery or restaurant to sell you manufacturing cream, which is heavier in fat (at 42 percent) than heavy whipping cream (36 percent) or heavy cream (32 percent). It makes better butter.

The Cream

1 pint heavy whipping cream at 55 degrees to 60 degrees F (13-15°C)

Equipment

Food processor with metal blade

Pour the cream into the processor and process. You will see a whipped-cream stage in a matter of seconds and shortly after that, the first break will occur: the foam stage breaks to liquid buttermilk and butter. Stop and pour off the liquid into a measuring cup. Save it to use for salad dressing, baking, or drinking.

Continue processing for a few more seconds. More buttermilk will leak out. Pour it off again. Work the butter with a rubber spatula to squeeze out more buttermilk. At this point, you have ready-to-use butter.

You can go one step further and wash the butter with very cold ice water (33 degrees F / 0.5°C). Pour in 1 1/2 times the volume [as the] buttermilk you poured off. Process for a few seconds, then discard the wash water. Transfer the butter to a bowl and work it again with a spatula to squeeze out water. At this point, you can mix in a pinch of sea salt if you prefer salted butter.

You can now shape the butter into ramekins or molds, or roll it into a log in parchment or wax paper. Freeze what you won't use in the next three or four days.

Culture Variation

Consider culturing the cream before you whip it. True cultured butters use special dairy bacteria that thrive in cream at low temperatures (order small packets from New England Cheesemaking Supply, at cheesemaking.com or 413-628-3808), but you can approximate this flavor enhancement with other dairy cultures. Pour cream into a bowl and add **1 tablespoon live yogurt** and **1 tablespoon sour cream** that have been mixed well together with **1/2 cup of the cream**. Mix with a spotlessly clean whisk. Let this sit at about 75 degrees F (24°C) for 12 hours, covered tightly.

The mixture will thicken slightly and begin to change flavor as it ripens, beginning its progress toward souring. (If it's gassy, bubbling, or very yeasty-smelling, discard it: your cream is contaminated with unwanted bacteria.) Once it's done, make the butter as above.

Cultured butter is a real treat — the texture is extra-silky and the added flavor enhances the sweetness of the cream. If necessary, you can refrigerate the cultured cream for a day, but remember to bring the cream back to 60 degrees F (15°C) before churning. I recommend washing the cultured butter. My favorite recipe is to use manufacturing cream ripened with fresh culture, called C3, washed and salted with just a bit of *fleur de sel* (hand-harvested sea salt). Melt this on some high-quality pasta and you're in heaven.