

Butter



In earlier times, making or churning butter was a common practice on farms. When the first U.S. creamery was built in Iowa in 1871, making butter became a commercial practice.

What is Butter?

Butter is a concentrated source of milk fat (80%) with some water and non-fat milk solids. It is made from milk, cream or both of these ingredients. Salt may or may not be added. Lightly salted butter is often referred to as “sweet cream butter.”



Varieties

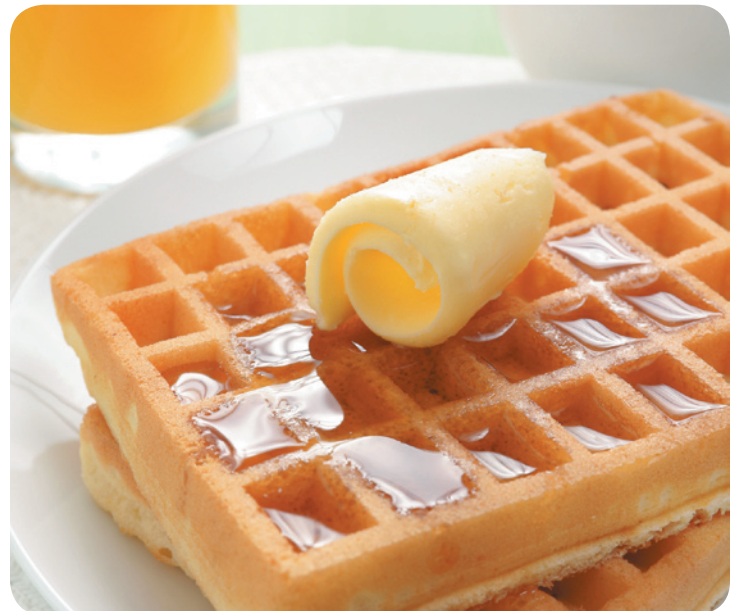
- **Traditional Butter** (80% milk fat) is made from pasteurized cream under approved conditions. The U.S. government grades butter on the basis of its flavor, body, color and salt content. The grades range from superior quality USDA Grade AA to standard quality Grade B. Most butter sold to consumers is USDA Grade AA. Grade B butter is used mainly for manufacturing purposes.
- **Whipped Butter** is regular butter into which air or nitrogen gas has been whipped to increase its volume. Because its density or weight is not the same as an equal measure of butter, it should not be used as a substitute for regular butter in most recipes. Whipped butter spreads more easily and melts more quickly than regular butter.
- **Reduced-Fat Butter** contains non-fat milk, water and/or gelatin. This product contains 40% or less milk fat. Government regulations state that the product must not be nutritionally inferior to traditional butter. Its performance should also be similar. Because reduced-fat butter contains more moisture than traditional butter, it should not be substituted for traditional butter in baking or frying.

Nutrition Facts

Butter is a source of vitamin A and certain essential fatty acids. Its caloric content compares similarly to other spreads and fat ingredients.

Storing and Handling

To preserve butter’s flavor and freshness, refrigerate opened butter in a covered dish in the butter compartment. Unopened, wrapped, salted butter may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 months. Butter can be frozen in its original wrapper for several months. Unsalted butter is best kept frozen until ready to use. For longer freezer storage, wrap in foil or plastic. Unsalted butter can be kept frozen for about 5 months at 0° F. Salted butter can be frozen for about 6 to 9 months.



Commonly Asked Questions about Butter

Different recipes call for tablespoons, sticks, cups or pounds of butter. What are the equivalencies for these measurements?

2 cups = 4 sticks = 1 lb = 32 Tbsp
1 cup = 2 sticks = ½ lb = 16 Tbsp
½ cup = 1 stick = ¼ lb = 8 Tbsp
¼ cup = ½ stick = ⅛ lb = 4 Tbsp

How can I make whipped butter?

Cream slightly softened butter in a mixer or processor at medium speed or with on/off pulses of the processor until light in color and slightly fluffy. Continue mixing at high or process continuously until butter is fluffy.

What is clarified butter and how can I make it?

Clarified or drawn butter is clear, melted butter separated from its milk solids and water. To clarify, melt butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Remove white froth as it forms on top. When the milk solids separate and settle at the bottom of the pan, carefully pour off the clear, yellow butter and discard the milk solids. Compared to regular butter, clarified butter can be heated to a higher temperature without burning and can be stored longer.

How much butter is needed to make clarified butter?

One pound of butter makes 12 ounces of clarified butter.

Can butter be softened or melted in the microwave oven?

Yes. To soften butter, microwave one stick of butter on LOW for 1 to 1½ minutes. To melt, place butter in a glass or plastic cup and microwave on HIGH for about 1 minute per stick (½ cup).

How can I prevent butter from going rancid?

Properly storing butter in a refrigerator or freezer and tightly wrapping butter to minimize its exposure to air help keep butter from going rancid. Exposure to oxygen increases the risk of rancidity. When oxygen comes into contact with the unsaturated fatty acids in butter, off-smelling and off-tasting compounds can develop. Rancid butter is not unsafe to eat.

Isn't margarine better for you than butter?

Not necessarily. Margarine has the same amount of calories and fat as butter and does not contain cholesterol. Some margarines contain trans fat which can increase blood cholesterol levels. Butter is low in trans fats. While butter contains a small amount of cholesterol (about 33mg per tablespoon), it is well under the recommended limit of 300mg per day. Small amounts of butter, margarine and other fat-containing foods can be included in a low-fat diet if total fat intake is kept within recommended limits.



A Nutritional Look at Butter

Food: 1 Tablespoon	Calories (Kcal)	Fat (g)	Vitamin A (IU)
Butter, salted	102	12	355
Butter, whipped, with salt	67	8	235
Butter, light, with salt	71	8	238

Source: USDA Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, October 2013.

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