

Make Your Own Butter

Making butter in your classroom involves only a few simple kitchen tools.

Equipment:

- Jar with a tightly fitted lid
- Wooden spoon
- Mixing bowl
- Measuring cup

Ingredients:

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon salt (if desired)

Activity:

1. Remove the cream from the refrigerator and allow it to sit at room temperature for about ten minutes. Assemble the supplies for making butter.



2. Pour the cream into the jar.

When using a jar fill it half to two-thirds full. Empty space is needed in the jar for the cream to move freely. Place the lid on tightly.



3. Agitate the cream by shaking the jar.



4. Continue to agitate the cream until butter forms. This begins as small granules of butter forming throughout the cream. Stop agitating when the butter has clumped together. The liquid will be buttermilk which is less opaque than cream. A half cup of cream in a pint jar will form butter in roughly ten to fifteen minutes.



5. Pour off the buttermilk after the butter has formed. Place the butter in the mixing bowl. Some buttermilk will remain in the butter. Use the wooden spoon to squeeze, or work, as much of the remaining buttermilk out of the butter as possible.



6. To remove the small amount of remaining buttermilk wash the ball of butter with cold water until the water runs clear.

Buttermilk spoils more quickly than butter so it is important to remove all the buttermilk unless the butter will be consumed soon.



7. Use the butter as it is for sweet butter. For salted butter work in the salt with the wooden spoon. Spread on crackers and enjoy!



Butter Making in Early Kansas

Butter is made from milk. The process begins by separating fresh milk into milk and cream. This can be done with a mechanical separator or by letting the milk sit until the cream rises to the top and can be skimmed off. The cream is then churned, or agitated, which makes the tiny bits of butter, or fat, in it stick together. Eventually the cream itself separates into butter and buttermilk, a lump of butter sitting in buttermilk. At this point the bits of butter have stuck together enough to form a larger lump of butter.

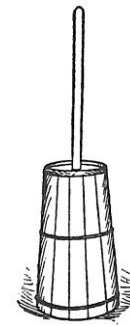
Churning and butter consumption date back centuries. Some believe nomads discovered butter as the milk in the skin bags carried by their pack animals rocked with the movement of the animals. Over time people developed and used other types of churns. Dash churns date from at least the Middle



Kansas Memory 226759

Ages. Barrel churns appeared by the mid-18th century, and various churn designs appeared throughout the 19th

century. This young Kansas girl and her dog are all set to make butter with a dog powered butter churn. As the dog walked on a treadmill it provided the energy to move the dasher up and down in the churn which turned the cream inside



Dash Churn



Barrel Churn

to butter. Butter played an important role in American history. According to the *Butter Journal*, Americans consumed an average of 18 pounds of butter per person per year by the end of the 19th century. People churning butter at home from the milk their cows produced might trade extra butter at the store for items they could not produce themselves. In an 1857 letter from Miami County, Kansas, John and Sarah Everett wrote, “We make butter enough to pay all our store bills at present.” For some, selling butter became one source of income people relied on. Born an enslaved person, Josephine Johnson moved to Kansas with her family after the

Civil War. She ran a boarding house in Dunlap, Kansas where she sold butter, eggs, and garden produce to supplement her income from the boarding house.

Commercial butter production in the United States began as early as the 1830s. According to a 1917 report produced by the Kansas State Agricultural College, combined farm-made and creamery-made Kansas butter production went from 1,098,497 pounds in 1869 to 59,837,255 pounds in 1899. The report noted that dairy farming “has been, and continues to be, a side line on the average farm.” By 1914 the amount produced had dropped to 46,169,810 pounds. Cans of cream ready for loading onto the ATSF train in the early 20th century by the Merritt-Schwier Creamery Co. are shown here. This amount of cream would produce 10,000 pounds of butter.



Kansas Memory #213349

Even with the growth of a butter industry in Kansas, many continued to churn butter at home. In rural areas especially, churning butter for home use continued though the mid-20th century. The woman pictured here is churning butter as part of a 1930s Works Progress Administration’s adult and worker education program. Do-it-yourself and homesteading movements in the late-20th and early 21st centuries have inspired some people to begin making their own butter once again.



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