

8 Delicious Reasons Butter is Better

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Once upon a time, families raised their own grass-fed cows and used the natural, wholesome gifts they provided. They drank the milk, whipped the cream, and churned the butter. Besides the excellent nutrition these foods offered, they also tasted delicious! Today, most of us do not have the acreage or the inclination to raise our own farm animals for food. However, the challenges of ranching have been replaced by the confusing world of “grocery shopping” - especially in the dairy section. Innumerable choices abound, which include butters, “spreads”, margarines, and more. Many imitation, fabricated products have found their way into our food supply, with many being likened to *plastic*! Hands down, real, true, melt-in-your-mouth butter is better. It is healthier, tastier, and actually offers a vast array of nutrients to protect us against diseases. Below are the top 8 reasons butter is the best way to go.

Buttery History

For centuries, many cultures around the globe have valued butter for its life-sustaining properties. A dentist, turned researcher, by the name of Weston A. Price, studied native diets in the 1930's and found that butter was a staple for many vibrantly-healthy peoples.¹ The groups he studied particularly valued the deep yellow butter produced by cows feeding on rapidly-growing green grass. It wasn't until the beginning of the 1950's that the food industry capitalized on its ability to turn liquid vegetable oils into solid fats, with a process called *hydrogenation*, to supply the budding fast food and snack food industries. Hydrogenation turns oils (like soy, corn, or cottonseed), into margarine and vegetable shortening, which are used in most all processed foods including salad dressings, crackers, fast food, baked goods, and most fried foods. For decades, these fake-fats have been promoted as “healthy alternatives” to butter, but unbeknownst to many, they are actually a key ingredient to disease promotion!

During hydrogenation, liquid vegetable oils are hardened by the addition of hydrogen atoms, toxic elements (e.g. nickel oxide), emulsifiers, and are subjected to high temperatures (to remove the odors). Dyes and flavors are added to make the product resemble the real thing – butter. An “added bonus” of this process is the production of abnormally-shaped molecules known as *trans-fatty acids*. These man-made trans-fats are toxic to the body, but, unfortunately, the digestive system does not recognize them as such. Instead of being eliminated, trans-fats are incorporated into cell membranes as if they were normally- shaped fats – essentially making body cells partially hydrogenated!²

Reasons 1: Naturally Trans-Fat Free

Negative press keeps mounting on trans-fatty acids. As early as the 1940's, researchers found a strong correlation between cancer and the consumption of fat; however, while the fats used were *hydrogenated* fats, the blame was incorrectly placed on saturated fat.³ Altered trans-fats block utilization of essential fatty acids, such as DHA, which can lead to increased blood cholesterol and immune system dysfunction.⁴ Their consumption has also been associated with atherosclerosis, diabetes, obesity, decreased visual acuity, and problems with bones and tendons.^{5,6,7} Essentially, consuming these fabricated fats is likened to eating plastic, due to their similar molecular structure. One can imagine that plastic-like cells do not allow much nutrition in or waste out, which can contribute to countless health problems. In 2002 the National Academy of Sciences attempted to set a safe intake level for trans-fatty acids and concluded, "the only safe intake of trans-fat is zero."⁸

Reason 2: Shorter Fatty Acids Resist Weight Gain

Researchers classify fatty acids (the building blocks of fats and oils) not only according to their degree of saturation (e.g. monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, or saturated), but also by their length. Butter is generously endowed with both short and medium chain fatty acids. As the name implies, these fatty acids are shorter in length than most of the fatty acids found in other fats and oils. Their length allows them to be directly absorbed from the intestines for quick energy.^{9,10} Longer chain fatty acids require enzymes and packaging that takes more energy and time to process through the body.⁸ For this reason, shorter fatty acids are less likely to cause weight gain than vegetable oils that contain a majority of longer chain fatty acids.⁹ Furthermore, because butter is rich in nutrients and saturated fats, it offers a feeling of satisfaction, thus reducing cravings and binging. These short and medium chain fatty acids also contribute to the health of the immune system¹¹ and provide antimicrobial properties, such as protecting the gut from viruses, yeasts, and pathogenic bacteria.^{11,12}

Reason 3: Highly Absorbable Fat-Soluble Vitamins

The fat-soluble vitamins found in butter include true vitamin A, or retinol, along with vitamins D, K and E. It also possesses all the naturally-occurring cofactors needed to optimize absorption of these nutrients. In fact, vitamin A is more easily absorbed and utilized from butter than from any other food.¹² These nutrients play powerful roles in many body functions. For example, vitamins A and D are essential to the proper absorption of calcium, thus are necessary for strong bones and teeth. Vitamin A is particularly important for protein utilization.⁵ Coronary heart disease risk is lower among those who take in more vitamin E than those who take in less.¹³ Butterfat also contains a number of trace minerals, including manganese, zinc, chromium and iodine.¹²

Reason 4: Cancer-Protective Nutrients

Conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA, is a naturally-occurring fatty acid found in meat and dairy products. Research has shown that women with the highest levels of CLA in their diet have a 60% lower risk of breast cancer than those with the lowest levels.¹⁴ CLA has also been found to support the immune system and encourage muscle building, while resisting weight gain.¹⁵ Fat-phobia has led to a reduced intake of this valuable nutrient, since it is only found in foods such as whole milk, beef, lamb, and, of course, butter. Research confirms that naturally-raised grass-fed animals have as much as 500% more CLA in their milk than those fed conventional grain-based diets.¹⁶

Reason 5: Butyric Acid for the Gut and Brain

The short-chain fatty acid butyric acid, or butyrate, is the primary fuel for the colonic walls, and supports the function and integrity of the gastrointestinal tract.¹⁷ This special fatty acid is also extensively used by the brain for the production of GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid), which is the brain's natural calming agent that helps turn off stress reactions.¹⁸ The only natural source of butyric acid is in cow milk-fat; therefore, butter and clarified butter (ghee), which is butter with the milk solids removed, offer high amounts of this beneficial short-chain fatty acid.

Reason 6: Heart Protection

“Wait, did you say heart *protection*?” Yep, that’s right, butter has properties that actually protect the health of the heart, unlike margarine and other fabricated fats that are the real heart disease culprits. The saturated fat stearic acid, found in beef fat and butter, is actually a preferred food for the heart.^{19,20} This is why the fat around the heart is highly saturated. Many studies have also shown the danger of consuming margarine when it comes to heart health. A Medical Research Council survey showed that men eating butter ran half the risk of developing heart disease as those using margarine.²¹ Another study in India, published in the 1976 issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, compared two populations in India (northern and southern), where the notable difference in the diet was the type of fat

consumed. Those in the north consumed meat and ghee as their main sources of fat. The southern population used margarine, did not eat meat, and had a heart disease rate 15 times greater than the northern group despite the fact they had lower cholesterol levels.²² The researchers did a follow-up study 20 years later and reported similar statistics.²³ Clearly, replacing natural saturated fats with processed vegetable oils has proved to be a health disaster!

Interestingly, when heart disease was rare around the 1930's, the consumption of butter averaged 17 pounds per person per year. The media explosion against saturated fat caused fear, and people started to switch from butter to the man-made hydrogenated fats. By 1977, butter consumption dropped to about 4 pounds per person, where it sits today, and heart disease was ranked our leading cause of death. During the same period, the use of margarine rose from 3 pounds to almost 12 pounds per person, which is still the average today. Bear in mind, when our fat sources started to change in America is when heart disease rates started to soar!^{4,5,12}

Reason 7: Cholesterol for Hormone and Brain Stability

Cholesterol is found in all body issues and comprises an integral part of cell membranes. Despite its evil stigma, it is necessary for hormone production (such as estrogen, progesterone, and DHEA), vitamin D, brain function, immune system health, and eye development. Cholesterol is also needed for proper utilization of serotonin, the “feel-good” brain chemical,²⁴ which explains why low cholesterol levels have been linked to poor moods and aggressive behavior. The body tries to maintain a balance between the amount of cholesterol consumed and the amount manufactured but the liver. If too little is taken in through food, the liver will produce more. If adequate amounts are consumed, the liver produces less. This is why even drastic decreases in dietary cholesterol intake often produce only small drops in blood cholesterol.²⁵ Additionally, lecithin is a natural component of butter that assists in the proper assimilation and metabolism of cholesterol and other fat constituents.¹²

Reason 8: Stable Saturated Fat – the Wrongly Accused Nutrient

A main argument of butter-opponents is the fact that this nourishing food contains saturated fat. This nutrient has been wrongfully labeled “dangerous.” The latest fat research clearly shows that the health concerns surrounding fats and oils comes from consuming damaged fats, such as hydrogenated oils or rancid fats that are generated with high temperatures. This is a common occurrence with commercially-produced vegetable oils, due to the extraction process. Saturated fat plays important roles in the body. Besides supporting immune system function²⁶ and helping maintain cell integrity,²⁷ one of the most healthful attributes of saturated fat is its stability. This means it does not normally go rancid when heated during cooking^{27,28} and helps prevent other oils from going rancid in the body,²⁷ which is desirable because rancid oils breed free radicals – disease-causing unstable molecules in the body.^{27,29,30}

Your Best Butter Choices

When perusing the dairy section, look for high-quality butter, preferably from cows raised naturally. These animals have been able to eat freely on a range of sweet, green grass to infuse the butter with an abundance of nutrients. They have not been given antibiotics or feed that contains pesticides or fertilizers. The flavor, texture, and appeal of this traditional fat can be changed by what cows are fed and even how the butter is churned. In the old days, milk was allowed to sit out and sour slightly before churning, giving it a flavor similar to yogurt and boosting its enzyme content.^{31,32} A number of manufacturers are starting to offer butter made with these time-honored traditions. For example, *Organic Valley* makes their Euro-style butter by inoculating the cream with a live culture. It is kept at about 80 degrees and allowed to sit out overnight and churned more slowly. This old-fashioned method brings out the natural sweetness and authentic taste. Another thing that makes the European butters unique is that most have 82% butter-fat, whereas ordinary butter has no more than 80%. Increasing the butter-fat by just 2.5% leads to a 10% reduction in moisture. The main advantage is that the reduced

water content yields foods with a stronger butter flavor as well as a less watery texture, so piecrusts turn out a bit flakier and grains more delicate.³¹

What if you can't do dairy? Butter and cream contain little lactose or casein, the two substances that cause dairy intolerance for some people. Because of the small amount in these foods, they may be well-tolerated in their natural state, even by those who are lactose intolerant. Those with extreme intolerance for milk protein (casein) can often take butter in the form of ghee or clarified butter from which the milk solids have been removed.³² Ghee is made by heating butter until protein precipitates to the bottom, and the clear liquid (ghee) remaining at the top is skimmed off. Ghee, therefore, has a higher concentration of fat than ordinary butter.³³ Keep in mind, some people do have severe allergies to milk and cannot handle any dairy products.

You don't have to be a butter-making rancher to enjoy the tasty, nourishing benefits of real butter. Your first choice should be the higher-fat, cultured, grass-fed, organic butters. Second best is organic and then regular. The prices vary, so go with what is affordable or use one for baking and save the richer, more flavorful varieties for special foods. Just be sure to avoid the plastic-like margarines, hydrogenated oils, or even the "trans-fat free" spreads. They are all processed imitations and do not offer any of butter's health benefits—and most often do the exact opposite! With that said, for those that just cannot tolerate dairy of any kind, there are properly-prepared natural spreads made with quality oils, such as olive and coconut, available in the dairy section.

Side Bar

News Flash on Butter and Asthma

A team from the Dutch National Institute of Public Health and the Environment analyzed the dietary intake of nearly 3,000 children, starting when their mothers were in their last trimester, three months following, and when the children were one, two, and three. They found that by the age of three, those who had consumed full-fat milk and butter on a daily basis were 63% less likely to have developed symptoms of asthma, compared to non-milk drinkers.³⁴ The researchers believe that various compounds in milk fat, such as the specific types of fatty acids, may help to protect against asthma. The lead researcher was quoted as saying, "It is now clear that there must be something in our modern western lifestyle that increases the risk of developing asthma." You bet your boots, Dr. Wijga! Our reduction in quality saturated fats and an equivalent increase in easily-damaged vegetable oils found abundantly in processed foods are intimately linked with the development of asthma and other related conditions like eczema and hay fever.

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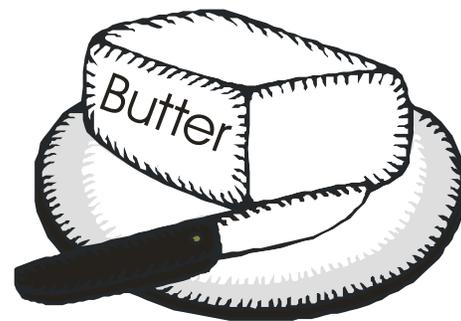
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Buttery Delicacies



Butternut Soup With Ginger Butter

1/4 cup organic butter
2 pounds butternut squash, peeled, seeded, cut into 1-inch chunks
3/4 cup chopped onions
3/4 cup chopped celery
1/4 cup apple juice
6 cups chicken broth
1-1/2 tsp vanilla extract

Heat butter in large saucepan until hot. Add vegetables and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally for about 5 minutes. Add juice to pan; cook 30 seconds. Add chicken broth. Heat to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until squash is tender, about 25 minutes. Remove from heat. Add vanilla. Puree mixture in blender or food processor, half at a time. Serve in individual bowls with a small dollop of Ginger Butter.

Ginger Butter:

1/4 cup organic butter, softened
1 Tbsp grated fresh ginger
1 tsp maple syrup
1/2 tsp ground dried ginger

Heat 1 tablespoon of butter in small skillet over medium heat. Add grated ginger. Cook 30 seconds. Stir in maple syrup and ground ginger. Cook and stir about 30 seconds longer. Remove from heat. Let cool several minutes. Combine remaining butter and ginger mixture in small bowl until smooth. *Found at www.butterisbest.com.*

Did You Know?

The latest fat research clearly shows the health concerns surrounding fats and oils comes from consuming damaged fats, such as hydrogenated oils or rancid fats that are generated with high temperatures. This is a common occurrence with commercially-produced vegetable oils, due to the extraction process. Saturated fat, like that found in butter, plays important roles in the body. Besides supporting immune system function and helping maintain cell integrity, one of the most healthful attributes of saturated fat is its stability, meaning it does not normally go rancid when heated during cooking.

Salmon Butter Spread

1 cup (2 sticks) organic butter, softened
8 oz. smoked salmon, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup fresh dill, chopped or 1 Tbsp dried
2 Tbsp green onion, minced
1-1/2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
1/2 tsp hot pepper sauce
Sesame crackers or rye bread

Combine all ingredients except crackers and bread in medium bowl. Beat with electric mixer until smooth. Serve as an appetizer spread for crackers or rye bread. Store, covered, in refrigerator up to 3 days. *Note:* Allow refrigerated spread to soften at room temperature about 15 to 20 minutes before serving.

Honey Butter

3/4 cup organic butter, softened
1/2 tsp cinnamon
2 Tbsp raw honey
Mix all ingredients and enjoy.

Raspberry Butter

1 pound organic butter
1 cup raspberry jam or marmalade
1/2 cup fresh raspberries

Soften butter in mixing bowl. Blend in jam or marmalade. Blend in fresh raspberries. *Note:* Other fruits may be substituted for raspberries.

Quick Creamy Clam Chowder

3 slices nitrate-free bacon
1 1/2 cups peeled potato, 1/4-inch diced
4 Tbsp organic butter
1 1/4 cups finely chopped onion
1 rib celery, finely chopped
1 bay leaf
3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
2 (6.5-ounce) cans chopped clams
1 (8-ounce) bottle clam juice
1/4 tsp dried thyme
1/2 cup organic heavy cream
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
Sea salt to taste

Crisp-cook the bacon in a skillet. Reserve bacon and transfer 1 tablespoon of the bacon fat to a medium-size soup pot. Crumble the bacon; reserve. Put the diced potato in a small saucepan and add just enough water to cover; salt lightly. Bring to a simmer, cover, and gently boil potatoes for about 5 minutes, until barely tender. Remove from heat; reserve (do not drain). Melt 3 tablespoons of butter with the bacon fat over moderate heat. Stir in the onion, celery, and bay leaf. Sauté the vegetables for 7 to 8 minutes over moderate heat, stirring often. Add the flour and continue to cook, stirring for 1 minute. Stir the canned clams (and their juice), clam juice, thyme, and reserved potatoes (and their cooking water) into the pot. Bring to a simmer, stirring often, then add the heavy cream. Heat, then add salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the remaining tablespoon of butter just before serving. Serve piping hot, garnished with the crumbled bacon. Discard the bay leaf before serving. *Found at www.butterisbest.com.*

Tangy Warm Chicken Salad

1/4 cup (1/2 stick) organic butter, divided
2 whole free-range chicken breasts (skinned, boned and cut into thin strips)
1/3 cup chopped red pepper
1 cup cooked asparagus pieces
2 Tbsp minced shallots
1 tsp dried tarragon OR 1 Tbsp fresh, minced
1 cup organic heavy cream
1 Tbsp Dijon-style prepared mustard
1/4 cup toasted almonds

Over low heat, melt 2 tablespoons butter in large skillet. Sauté chicken pieces until cooked throughout. Meanwhile, melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in medium-sized skillet. Cook red pepper, asparagus, shallots, and tarragon over medium heat until vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes. Set aside. Add whipping cream to chicken. Heat to boiling, stirring frequently. Reduce heat to low, stirring constantly until cream is reduced and thickened, about 5 minutes. Stir in vegetable mixture and mustard, cooking until thoroughly heated. Sprinkle with almonds and serve immediately. *Found at www.butterisbest.com.*

Hollandaise Sauce

4 organic egg yolks
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup unsalted organic butter, melted and cooled to room temperature
Sea salt

Vigorously whisk, or beat with an electric mixer, the egg yolks and lemon juice together in a stainless steel bowl until the mixture is thickened. Place the bowl over a saucepan of barely simmering water (or use a double boiler - do not allow the water to touch the bottom of the bowl or pan). Continue to whisk rapidly, being careful not to let the mixture get too hot or the eggs will scramble. Slowly drizzle in the melted butter and continue to whisk until the sauce is thickened and doubled in volume. Remove from heat and season to taste with salt. Serve warm. Makes about 1 cup.

Serve over asparagus, broccoli, or eggs for Eggs Benedict. *Found at www.cooksrecipes.com.*

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