

Let's Celebrate Butter!



The full moon of May, also known as the "Milk moon," occurred at 7:07 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time this past Thursday, May 27. To ancient peoples without complex calendars, the moon was probably the most important marker of the passage of time. The 'milk moon' marks the return of spring, when rains come, the grass turns green and lush, the cream is plentiful again, and the butter made from this cream turns a deep yellow gold.

In the remote Alpine villages of the Loetschental Valley in Switzerland, the people used to gather together to honor the life-giving qualities of the butter made in June when the cows returned to their summer pastures near the glaciers and ate grass near the snow line. The village lit a wick in a bowl of the first butter of the season, that burned in a special sanctuary in their churches.

Today, most of us have come to believe that butter is bad for us but traditional cultures, before the twentieth century, revered fats because of the health they bestow on us. For millennia fats have been the foundation of the human diet. American folk wisdom recognized that children raised on butter were robust and sturdy while children given skim milk during their growing years were pale and thin, with "pinched" faces.

In the 1930s, Weston A. Price, a dentist from Cleveland, traveled around the world in search of traditional, pre-industrial cultures to document what they ate, which he presumed was the source of their extraordinary health. He found that a diet rich in traditional fats was the one common denominator in the diets of all traditional people with good health. Today, the Weston A. Price Foundation continues to teach and research the principles of traditional cooking and food preparation.

Why Butter?

Butter protects us against many diseases and provides the best and most easily absorbed source of vitamin A. Healthy fats provide the fat soluble vitamins A, D, E, K which are essential to absorb and use the minerals in our diet, digest protein and protect our immune system. Fats are a concentrated source of energy and nutrients that build cell membranes and hormones crucial to our brains, nervous system and intestinal tracts. This results in broad faces, healthy dental structure, no dental crowding or decay, and nasal passages that allow adequate oxygen to the brain. Saturated fat from coconut oil and animal foods is extremely important for fertility, pregnancy, breastfeeding, infant/child nutrition, balancing hormones, controlling cravings for unhealthy foods, and preserving quality of life for the elderly.

We feel sated when we have enough fats in our diet because fats slow down the release of glucose into the blood stream, making each meal last longer, curbing our hunger. Fats taste good and satisfy. Fats also provide a highly efficient form of energy. One molecule of fat requires only 5 enzymes and vitamins and minerals to produce 146 units of ATP (the energy carrier in the cells). On the other hand, one molecule of glucose from carbohydrates requires 15 enzymes and numerous vitamins and minerals, especially chromium and magnesium to produce only 38 units of ATP.

What about cholesterol? Cholesterol found in butterfat plays an important role in the development of the brain and nervous system. Mother's milk is naturally high in cholesterol and contains over 50 percent of its calories as butterfat. Butter contains lecithin, a substance that assists in the proper assimilation and metabolism of cholesterol and other fat constituents. Butter is also a good dietary source of cholesterol. A Medical Research Council survey showed that men eating butter ran half the risk of developing heart disease as those using margarine (Enig, Mary G, PhD, *Nutrition Quarterly*, 1993 Vol 17, No 4A). Butter protects us against cancer, heart disease, arthritis, osteoporosis, thyroid disorders, gastro-intestinal disorders, and weight gain. See <http://www.westonaprice.org/food-features/why-butter-is-better> for detailed references to the benefits of butter and the scientific studies to back up these claims. There is no question that saturated fats play an important role in our body chemistry:

1. At least 50% of the cell membranes must be saturated fatty acids for your cells to work properly
2. Saturated fatty acids are needed for the laying down of calcium in the bones
3. The lungs cannot work without saturated fats, which protects against asthma
4. Kidneys can't function without saturated fats
5. The immune system is enhanced by saturated fats, which fights infection
6. Saturated fats protect the liver from alcohol and other poisons (drugs, pesticides, etc)
7. Essential fatty acids work synergistically with saturated fats. Saturated fats help put the essential fatty acids into the tissues where they belong, and keep them there. When you have lots of saturated fats in the diet you actually only need very small amounts of essential fatty acids. Saturated fatty acids are the preferred food for the heart, which is why the fats in the cavity of humans and animals is highly saturated.

Since the 1950s, the U.S. government and the media have vilified fats to such a degree that today almost everyone is afraid to eat them, especially saturated animal fats, like butter. The result, along with other misguided dietary recommendations, and toxic environmental influences, is that we are suffering serious and tragic health epidemics. When we do not get enough nutrients from our food, our body takes what it needs to survive from our bones and the brain. Crowded dental arches, dental decay, osteoporosis, alzheimers, and infertility are all signs of malnutrition. When fat is removed from the food through industrial processing, it is replaced by sugar and "natural flavors" in an attempt to put flavor back into the food. Hydrogenated oils, starches and gums are added to replace the missing sensation of richness in the mouth. Sugar, gum, filler, and chemical compounds are much cheaper than healthy fats. Cravings are a cry for the vital nutrients that are missing in many of our modern foods. Children, in particular, need traditional, saturated fats. A low-fat, standard American diet that is promoted by the USDA starves children of vital nutrients during their formative years. Most young children love to eat butter straight off the spoon, and their bodies instinctively know what is good for them.

Let's ignore the media which is a marketing arm of the vegetable oil and food processing industry. Let's return to basics! [Virtually all of the health issues that plague the modern human are related to our collective loss of food wisdom.](#) Let me repeat: a diet rich in traditional fats was the one common

denominator in the diets of all traditional people with good health that Weston A. Price researched. Sally Fallon and Mary Enig, in their article “Why Butter is Better” note that ethnic groups who do not use butter obtain the same nutrients from things like insects, organ meats, fish eggs and the fat of marine animals, food items that today many of us might find repulsive. Therefore, they conclude, “for Americans, who do not eat bugs or blubber, butter is not just better, it is essential.” (See <http://www.westonaprice.org/food-features/why-butter-is-better>).

Let's have a little bread with our butter!

Butter should be the topping of choice for everything from vegetables to oatmeal. It is good on soft boiled eggs, whole grain breakfast cereals, side dishes, cooked vegetables and potatoes, steak and fish, rubbed liberally over chicken before roasting, for Hollandaise and other sauces, in vanilla pudding, on popcorn, and eaten by the spoonful! Ghee, clarified butter is good for frying as it remains stable at high temperatures and does not break down and form trans fatty acids the way vegetable oils do.

Lather those carrots and greens with butter! Dietary fats are needed for the conversion of carotene in carrots to vitamin A. Whereas the fat soluble form of vitamin A in fish oil, butter, or egg yolk is immediately available to the body, the vitamin content in vegetables is often unavailable to humans, especially if their digestive systems are immature (children) or compromised (sick). Excessive, unprocessed beta carotene gives an orange hue to the skin. In fact, children cannot fully process vegetables until they hit puberty. So, don't worry if your children won't eat their vegetables. If you can, give them cream and butter instead.

Healthy fats are precious and can be hard to come by. Traditional cultures, went to great lengths to collect them. Today we have challenges unique to our times. Healthy fats require a well managed, expansive, clean ecosystem because chemicals and toxins will end up in the fat deposits of animals high in the food chain, including humans. Therefore the quality of your butter is of paramount importance. Raw, grass fed and organic quality are essential. Also the milk from most heritage breed cows such as the Jersey or Guernsey will have a higher butter fat content than the Holstein.

Grass Fed: Spring butter has a deep yellow color because the cream it comes from has high levels of vitamin A absorbed from the lush grass that grows from the spring rains. The rains in the fall produce a similar lush growth with the resulting yellow butter. Cows are meant to eat grass and become sick when confined and fed grain. Grain fed cows do not produce yellow colored cream and their milk is not as nutritious. In [The Full Moon Feast](#), Jessica Prentice suggests that the single greatest gift a cow offers us is to turn inedible grass into nourishing milk and cream.

Raw: Unpasteurized, fresh milk and cream contain live enzymes that help us digest the milk sugar, lactose. With pasteurization, the enzymes and many vitamins are destroyed, and the proteins are changed, making the milk more difficult to digest. Homogenization alters the fat molecules, making them more difficult to digest as well. Never use ultra-pasteurized cream. All the nutritional value has been destroyed.

Culturing: when you let your milk and cream sit out at room temperature, it breaks down the lactose (milk sugar) into lactic acid, and predigests casein, the milk protein, making it even more digestible than raw dairy. Butter and cream contain little lactose or casein and are usually well tolerated in their natural state, even by those who are lactose intolerant. Even so, fermented or soured butter and cream are preferable and add beneficial flora to our gut, as do yogurt and kefir. Before the mass production of

butter in factories, all butter was routinely cultured.

Sources: raw milk is available in many retail outlets and farmers markets in our area. The Hardler Farm is the closest source to Honesdale. Unfortunately, raw cream is hard to come by because the raw dairy laws in PA apply only to whole milk and aged cheeses. Sometimes you can find grass fed, lightly pasteurized, un-homogenized milk or cream in the stores. There are several good organic butters (sweet, salted, and cultured) on the market. Kerry Gold is a grass fed butter and Organic Valley produces a grassfed, spring butter in the springtime with a green packaging.

Recipes

Butter

1 quart of cream makes 1 lb of butter

Leave 1 quart heavy “whipping” cream left at room temperature for a day to sour. You can also use fresh, unsoured cream. Chill the cream before churning. If cream is too warm when churned, the butter will be soft and greasy. If it's too cold, not all of the butterfat will separate out. Around 60 degrees is good.

Put cream in food processor no more than 1/3rd full, fitted with a steel blade. Process until butter forms. It will only take a few minutes. Pour off the buttermilk and keep it to make delicious pancakes, biscuits, and breads or drink it straight. It is very nutritious. This is known as *traditional buttermilk* and it is not as thick as commercial buttermilk because it has not been cultured.

What's left in the churn is mostly butter with a bit of buttermilk mixed in. You can form the butter at this point, or you can wash the butter to remove the remaining buttermilk which will lengthen its keeping quality. To rinse, add fresh, cold water to your food processor and churn again for a few seconds. Pour off and refill until the water is clearer. Do this a few times.

To work the butter, take a hunk from the food processor and place in a smaller bowl. Press and squeeze against the sides until no more water can be poured off. Use wooden rice paddle, or grooved butter paddle for this. Press the the butter into a container for storage. Repeat until all the butter is worked. Salting the butter will enhance the flavor and lengthen the butter's keeping quality. Add ½ teaspoon per pound of butter (2 cups). Work it in by pressing in and folding over until the butter is firm and waxy.

Butter can be rolled into balls, pressed into a mold, or stored in crocks. Cover and chill well. It will last at least 2 weeks in the fridge. Butter can be frozen for long-term storage. Do not keep more than 6 months. It takes about 3 hours to thaw in the fridge. Store the buttermilk in a glass container and store in fridge. It has a very short shelf life but can be frozen as well.

Dill Butter

from Stocking Up, Carol Hopping
yield: 2/3 cup

3 tablespoon finely chopped fresh dill

2 tablespoon finely chopped scallions
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
¼ cup butter
1 teaspoon lemon juice

Mix all ingredients together and pack into small containers and freeze up to 6 months. Delicious on potatoes, cabbage, fish, and pasta.

Garlic Dill Butter

from Stocking Up, Carol Huppig
yield: 2/3 cup

6 cloves garlic
½ cup butter
1 tablespoon finely chopped dill
dash of paprika

Cover garlic with water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain, cool and slip skins off. Crush through a press. Combine mashed garlic, butter, dill and paprika in food processor. Process until well combined. Refrigerate. Delicious on pasta, eggs, potatoes, vegetables, and fish.

Easy Hollandaise Sauce

from Hannah Springer EarthBodyBalance.com
enough for 2 people

In a small metal bowl, combine 1 egg yolk with 1 tsp fresh-squeezed lemon juice (approx. one lemon wedge). Place the bowl over a small pot of hot (not boiling) water, and whisk while slowly pouring in a 3 tbsp melted butter. Whisk in ½ tsp dried tarragon leaves, fresh-ground black pepper, and a small pinch of salt. Sauce will thicken quickly. Remove from heat so it doesn't get too hot and separate. Serve over eggs and seasonal cooked greens or vegetables like kale, mustard greens, string beans, and asparagus. Hollandaise is great for little ones, as well as for pregnant/breastfeeding women, and men and women preparing for conception (not to mention the rest of us too!).

Buttermilk Biscuits

from Nourishing Traditions, Sally Fallon
makes about 1 dozen

3 ½ cups spelt or whole wheat flour (freshly ground if possible)
1 cup buttermilk
4 tablespoons melted butter or lard
1 ½ teaspoons sea salt
2 teaspoons baking soda

Mix flour with buttermilk to form a thick dough. Cover and leave in a warm place for 12 to 24 hours. Place in food processor and process several minutes to knead. Blend in remaining ingredients. Remove dough to a well- floured board and sprinkle with white flour to prevent sticking. Roll dough to about ¾

inch thickness. Cut biscuits with a glass and place on a buttered baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for about 40 minutes. Serve with butter and honey or mustard and cold meats.

Buttermilk Pancakes

from Nourishing Traditions, Sally Fallon
makes 16-20

2 cups spelt or wholewheat flour (freshly ground if possible)
2 cups buttermilk
2 eggs, lightly beaten
½ teaspoon sea salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 tablespoons melted butter

Soak flour in buttermilk in a warm place 12-24 hours. Stir in other ingredients and thin to desired consistency with water. Cook on a hot, oiled skillet. These pancakes cook more slowly than unsoaked flour or white flour. The texture will be chewy and the taste pleasantly sour. Serve with melted butter and maple syrup, or apple butter.

Variation: Crispy Pancakes. Let the pancakes dry out in a warm oven, instead of cooking in a skillet. They make delicious snacks with honey and butter, cream cheese, and used in place of crackers or chips to serve chicken liver pate!

Recommended Reading

Nourishing Traditions, Sally Fallon

Full Moon Feast, Jessica Prentice

Stocking Up, Carol Huppung

The Oiling of America, Sally Fallon and Mary Enig

Eat Fat, Lose Fat, Sally Fallon and Mary Enig

Nutrition and Physical Degeneration, Weston A. Price, D.D.S

<http://www.westonaprice.org/food-features/why-butter-is-better>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/know-your-fats/skinny-on-fats>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/know-your-fats/the-oiling-of-america>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/know-your-fats/questions-and-misconceptions-on-fats-and-oils>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/know-your-fats/good-fats-bad-fats-separating-fact-from-fiction>

<http://www.westonaprice.org/beginner-videos/traditional-fats-and-sacred-foods-video-by-sarah-pope>

Compiled by Lucia Ruedenberg-Wright for the Upper Delaware Chapter, Weston A. Price Foundation

<http://upperdelaware-wapf.org/>

© 2012