

Making Butter, Long Ago and Today

by Susan LaBella



People have been eating butter for a long time. How was it made in the past? Do we produce it differently today?

Long ago, working women called milkmaids poured cow's milk into pans. The milkmaids knew that when milk got warm, part of it turned into cream. They waited till cream rose to the top of the milk. Then they removed it and let it get sour. That gave the cream flavor.

These workers poured the sour cream into wooden tubs called *churns*.

Churns had big paddles that had to be pushed and pulled. That hard work turned cream into butter! The butter was rinsed with cold water. Finally, salt was added to keep the butter from spoiling.

Today, we produce butter a little differently. First, cow's milk goes into big cans that spin the milk. Cream moves to the top. The cream is heated to kill germs. The cooled cream goes into a metal churn that spins like a clothes dryer. The churn tumbles the cream. Soon, butter forms. Salt is added, and the butter is churned again.

That butter is sent to a packager. It is shaped into sticks, wrapped, and sold to grocery stores. Then people buy it and take it home!