

KINGS LANDING

# A HISTORY LESSON ON BUTTER MAKING





## OBJECTIVES

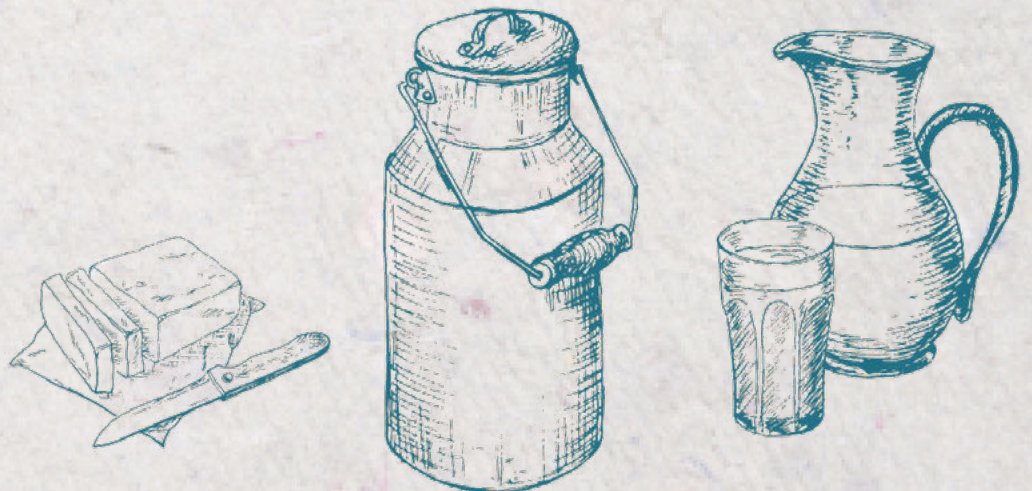
- Learn a brief history on butter making
- Compare methods of butter making throughout history
- Discover how butter is made at Kings Landing
- Learn to make butter at home

## GRADE LEVEL(S)

- Suitable for most ages from pre-school to middle school
- Assistance from an older friend or relative may be required for the activity

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- heavy whipping cream
- 1 Mason jar with lid
- strainer
- salt
- water





# LESSON

## INTRODUCTION

Do you like to eat butter on toast? Or drizzle it over popcorn while watching a movie? Butter is a common ingredient in baking and cooking as it adds a yummy, rich flavour that is unmatched. Do you ever wonder where it comes from or how it's made?

At Kings Landing, butter making is a task that visitors love to watch. It can take a while to make butter, so visitors don't always get to see the whole process. The result, however, is most people's favourite part because they get to taste fresh butter that was made before their eyes.

In this lesson, we will quickly explore the long history of butter making. We will look at how it was made in the 1800s and how it compares to the way butter is made today. Plus, we will teach you how to make butter at home. We hope you enjoy this lesson on butter!

## A BRIEF HISTORY ON BUTTER MAKING

It is difficult to say exactly where butter was first made because versions of butter appear around the world. One thing is certain: butter making has been around for a long time. Some of the earliest mentions of butter date back thousands of years with origins in the Middle East and Northern Europe. Back then, butter was made from goat, sheep, and yak milk rather than from cows' milk.

One common understanding is that butter was made accidentally when milk stored in a bag made from animal skin was shaken or churned while travelling over a bumpy road. From this discovery, folks in the Middle East built stands to hang up bags of milk and spin them until the butter forms. In Europe, the earliest butter churns from hundreds of years ago seem to be fairly similar to what is used at Kings Landing. These are made from clay or wood with a paddle or stick inside to mix up or churn the butter.

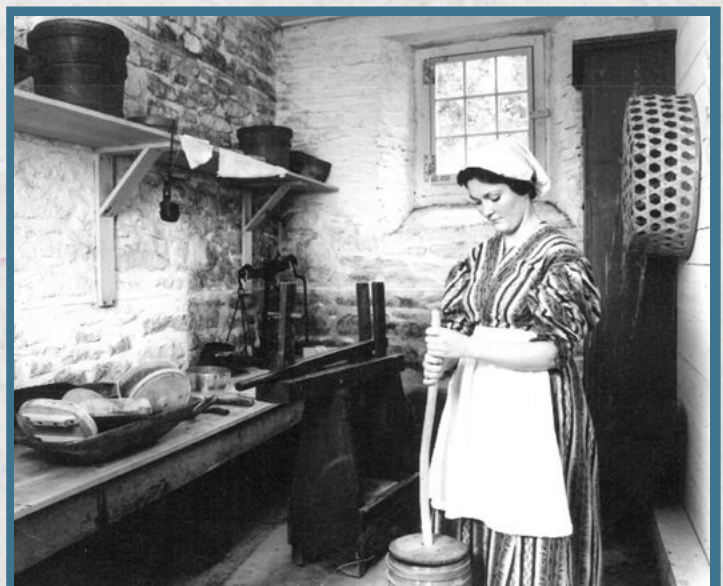
The way butter is made at Kings Landing originates among settlers who arrived in what is now known as North America. Most households kept a dairy



Guests watch as butter is made in a ceramic churn at the Ingraham House. From the Kings Landing photograph collection.



An example of a hanging wooden butter churn in Azerbaijan courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Photographer: Chaojoker.



A woman churns butter using a wooden churn. Photograph from the Kings Landing image collection.



cow or two that provided milk used to make butter or cheese. Settlers churned the cream from the milk by shaking and mixing it until the fat in the cream became a solid mass. Some churns looked like a small barrel with a 'dasher' used to mix the cream. They washed the firm butter in cold water, placed it in a large wooden bowl and used a wooden paddle to work the butter and squeeze out any remaining liquid. If available, added salt flavoured and helped preserve the butter.

At this time, people mostly made butter at home for their families to use in cooking and baking. People began making butter on a larger scale in factories in North America around the 1860s. This way of making butter continued to advance over the years. Today, butter remains an important product in Canada that dairy farmers make and sell. However, some people around the world still make butter the old-fashioned way because it fits into their lifestyle.

The butter you buy in stores today made in factories follows these steps:

1. Dairy farmers collect milk from their cows;
2. Machines spin the liquid to separate the skim milk from the cream;
3. The cream is whipped in churning cylinders to separate the buttermilk from the butter; and,
4. The butter is sometimes salted and then weighed, cut, wrapped and kept refrigerated until it reaches the store where folks buy it.

Modern butter made this way can last 3 weeks in the fridge. Unsalted butter can last 3 months in the freezer or up to 1 year if its salted.



Butter Molds

These objects also originate in northern Europe and were popular in households during the 1800s before butter was made in factories. The molds were filled with freshly made butter to keep its form and create a lovely design on top. Common designs included plants, grains, and animals.

*Photograph from the Kings Landing image collection.*



From Miss Beecher's Domestic Recipe Book

"Two particulars are indispensable to success in making good butter; the first is, that the churning be frequent, so that the cream will not grow bitter, or sour; and the second is cleanliness in all the implements and processes connect with it."

*Photograph from the Kings Landing image collection.*



Butter's Other Uses

Over time, butter has been used for reasons other than eating. Butter has been used to light lamps or lanterns. It has also been used on skin as medicine and to keep people warm. Would you put butter on your skin to protect from the cold wind and weather?

*Photograph courtesy of Canva.*



# ACTIVITY

## BUTTER MAKING: THEN AND NOW

We don't expect you to have a butter churn to use, but you can still make butter with a few common items and your strength and energy. As you go through the steps to making butter, compare your method to how folks at Kings Landing make butter.

### You will need:

- 2/3 cup of heavy whipping cream
- 1 Mason jar with lid
- strainer
- salt
- water

### What to do:

1. Pour the heavy whipping cream into the jar and screw on the lid.
2. Shake the jar until butter forms a soft lump, approximately 15 mins. Continue to shake until buttermilk separates from the lump and the jar contains a solid lump of butter and liquid buttermilk. Take turns shaking with someone else if you get tired!
3. Place the contents of the jar into a strainer to pour out the buttermilk, leaving the solid butter.
4. Rinse your butter in cold water while it is still in the strainer. Rinse and dry the jar.
5. Add a pinch of salt and knead or press it into the butter (optional). You may also add flavours if you are feeling adventurous. See the flavour examples below.
6. Place the finished butter back into the clean jar and refrigerate until needed. Enjoy on bread, biscuits, muffins, crackers, and more!



### How to make butter like the Ingraham Family:

1. After you have milked your cow, pour the milk into shallow pans and let sit. The cream will rise to the top.
2. Scoop the cream off the top and put in your churn (approx. 2 litres). Churn with your dasher until the butter separates from the buttermilk. The length of time this will take depends on the weather and the quality of your cream.
3. Strain out the buttermilk and reserve for cooking. Wash your butter in very cold water.
4. Using a butter paddle or wooden spoon work as much salt as you would like into your butter. Flavour your butter as desired.
5. Lastly, press your butter into a mould and serve fresh!

The Ingraham ladies have three preferred butter flavourings:

- Rose petals: chop petals and work into the butter to fashion a lovely rose butter.
- Chives: chop and work into the butter to create a delicious chive butter.
- Garden herbs and garlic: chop and add to the butter for a flavourful butter.

**We hope you have enjoyed this lesson on butter making, and we hope you're not too tired from making your own!**



## SOURCES

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*Butter & Cheese* [Early Farming in New Brunswick]. (2018). Kings Landing, Prince William, New Brunswick, Canada.

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Wikipedia, (2021, December 16). Butter. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butter>.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ancient Butter Churn Lid: <http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-103-159-C>.

Ancient Firkins: <https://web.archive.org/web/20051021003815/http://webexhibits.org/butter/history-firkins.html#>.

Bog Butter: <https://globalnews.ca/news/2761120/man-unearths-massive-chunk-of-butter-believed-to-be-2000-years-old/>.