

News, lore and bite-sized reviews



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Better with Butter

Years ago, when my children were young and the weeks a haze of nightshift nursing and marathon stroller treks, I was perpetually ravenous. At an especially low moment, I crumpled on a friend's porch, and she responded with Dutch hospitality, plying me with a cheese sandwich on bread buttered so thickly that the Gouda seemed an afterthought. Her offering was scandalous in that lipophobic era, but I licked my fingers clean, filed the taste memory under "best meals of all time" and went home vibrating with energy. Though not comparable to the noble exertions of a lumberjack or Olympic swimmer, the demands of early motherhood seemed arduous enough to me to justify an awe-inspiring, visceral craving for fat as fuel.

While it's probably wise for those of us with physically comfortable lives to steer clear of items at the top of the food pyramid, it doesn't seem right to eschew all-natural butter with the same vehemence as sugary snacks and greasy junk foods. After all, butter is the "crème de la crème" of the dairy world, and when eaten moderately and mindfully, it delivers immense pleasure at the table and in the kitchen. Although Toronto supermarkets stock a limited range, there are distinctive butter options available around town and

further afield. Here are Cheese Culture's favourites, along with serving suggestions and a recipe or two.

Available Locally

Hewitt's Goat Butter: Like fresh goat cheese, this unsalted butter is purest white and has a caprine yogurt-like tang that's especially welcome in dough for ruggelah or cream cheese Danish. It's also terrific in the [Honey Seed Butter recipe below](#).

Manteiga Açores: This Portuguese butter is extra salty, reflecting Azorean island tastes. It's an everyday spread for homesick patrons of Kensington's Lusitania Market, but I prefer it in pecan pie, where extremes of fat, sugar and salt strike perfect balance.

Beurre d'Échiré: This cultured, teak-churned treat sports an 84% fat content, and arrives clad in elegant gold-foil and woven basket. Whisk a few nuggets into deglazed pan juices for a simple sauce with body, gloss, and more than a little "je ne sais quoi."

La Barrate des Gourmets: With an AOC pedigree no less, this butter is packed with crunchy gros sel crystals from ancient salt-beds. Spread on chewy St. John's bread.

Cross-border Shopping

Beurre Non-salé Beurrerie du Patrimoine: An organic offering from La Belle Province with a spectacular 88% butterfat, but alas not the federal certification to allow it to be sold in Ontario. Pick some up at Montréal's Fromagerie du Marché Atwater or Marché des Saveurs. Or, visit the Groleau farm itself to learn more at their Economusée du Beurre. If you're a dab hand at puff pastry, you'll love the light layers that result from using butter this low in water content.

Vermont Butter & Cheese Co. Cultured Butter: Here's a good reason to drive to Buffalo! This nutty tasting 86% fat product has quite a cult following among US foodies. Its light saltiness makes it particularly versatile in cooking and baking. While trolling Wegman's, you may as well stock up on Danish Lurpack (a nation of butter-cookie makers can't be wrong) and Irish Kerrygold (sprightly and golden as the name suggests) or the domestically made 82% Plugra.

Recipes

[Honey Seed Butter:](#)

Beat 2 tbsp runny honey, 1 tbsp flax seed oil, 1 tbsp toasted sesame seed, 2 tsp ground flax seed, and a pinch or two of sea salt into 1 cup softened goat butter. Form into logs, wrap in foil and refrigerate until firm. Use on whole-grain toast or muffins.

[Roquefort and Walnut Canapés \(adapted from Larousse des Fromages\):](#)

Cream together 2 parts unsalted butter, 1 part crumbled Roquefort and a pinch of cayenne. Spread generously on lightly toasted rounds of whole-wheat baguette, and cover the surface with freshly toasted, coarsely chopped walnuts. Drink a medium-dry Oloroso Sherry such as El Maestro Sierra 15 Anos: a bargain at under \$17.

On My Teaching Calendar

March 16 &

April 6 **Sherry and Port.** WSET Intermediate Certificate.
<http://www.iweg.org>

March 19 **Old World Cheese/New World Cheese.** Night School for Cheese Fans.
<http://www.cheeseculture.ca/news.html>
Leslieville Cheese Market. 7 pm and 8:30 pm.

April 30 **Ewe Rule.** Night School for Cheese Fans. <http://www.cheeseculture.ca/news.html>
Leslieville Cheese Market. 7 pm and 8:30 pm.

May 19 **Vive La France.** Night School for Cheese Fans. <http://www.cheeseculture.ca/news.html>
Leslieville Cheese Market. 7 pm and 8:30 pm.

June 18 **Farmer's Market Cheese.** Night School for Cheese Fans. <http://www.cheeseculture.ca/news.html>
Leslieville Cheese Market. 7 pm and 8:30 pm.

Coming Up

More fat! Goose, duck and pork drippings are once again stars of the sauté pan. Cheese Culture's March Wedge Issue tells you more about traditional unadulterated animal fats, where to find them and how to use them to best effect.

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