

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!

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the article, what have people been eating for a long time?

- A. butter
- B. meat
- C. eggs

2. What does this article describe?

- A. the reasons that butter is produced in a different way now than it was long ago
- B. how butter used to be produced and how it is produced now
- C. how much butter people used to eat and how much people eat now

3. Butter was produced differently long ago than it is today.

What evidence in the article supports this statement?

- A. Long ago butter had to be churned by people, but now machines can churn butter on their own.
- B. After butter is sent to a packager, it is shaped into sticks, wrapped, and sold to grocery stores.
- C. Long ago milkmaids removed the cream that rose to the top of milk and let it go sour.

4. What is one similarity between the way butter was produced long ago and the way it is produced now?

- A. the use of salt
- B. the use of heat to kill germs
- C. the importance of milkmaids

5. What is the main idea of this article?

- A. When milk gets warm, part of it turns to cream.
- B. People have been eating butter for a long time.
- C. The way butter is produced has changed.

6. Reread the first paragraph of the article.

Why might the author have asked the two questions in that paragraph?

- A. to help readers imagine what it was like to be a milkmaid who made butter
- B. to let readers know that no one is sure what the answers to those questions are
- C. to introduce ideas that will be discussed later in the article

7. Milk turns into cream _____ it turns into butter.

- A. after
- B. when
- C. before

8. Describe churns.

9. Why is cream now heated before it is turned into butter?

10. What is the biggest difference between the way butter was produced long ago and the way butter is produced today? Support your answer with evidence from the article.
