Know Your Grades of Butter

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How Can I Tell What Grade Of Butter I Buy?

It is now required by law that any butter offered for sale at retail in South Dakota which does not meet the standards for South Dakota Grade B or better, must be labeled *undergrade*, effective July 1, 1955. It is not required that butter be grade labeled until July 1, 1957 if it scores Grade B or above; however, processors may voluntarily grade label their butter if they comply with all the provisions of the law.

With the different grades of butter placed on the market it is to the consumer's advantage to know what these various grades mean and how they are determined. This circular is designed to give the consumer information about the various grades of butter, the factors used to determine butter quality or grade and how butter quality can be maintained in the retail store and in the home. Every carton of butter stamped with a South Dakota or U.S. grade is packed with butter graded by official butter graders.

What Factors Determine The Grades Of Butter?

The factors that determine the grade of butter are: *flavor*, *body* and *texture*, *color*, and *salt*. Flavor is of utmost importance in all foods and this is especially so with butter. For this reason flavor is rated 45 points out of 100 on the butter score card. It takes both smell and taste to determine flavor. By letting the butter melt in his mouth and comparing taste to the aroma, the butter grader can identify the flavors.
Body and texture are next in order of importance. Butter should have a waxy (smooth texture not sticky) and the moisture droplets should be very small (not leaky). A smooth body with good spreadability is most desirable. The color of butter should be a uniform natural yellow, with no highly colored waves or specks. Butter should contain enough salt to avoid a flat flavor and the salt should be uniformly distributed so that the flavor is not coarse or gritty.

**Is The Percent Of Butterfat In Butter Considered In The Grade Label?**

No, state and federal standards require that butter contain at least 80 percent fat, regardless of its grade.

**What Are The South Dakota Official Grades of Butter?**

There are four: Grade AA, Grade A, Grade B, and Undergrade.

**How Will The Grades Appear On The Butter Cartons?**

The grade label will be placed on the butter carton where it may be easily seen. The butter carton may have either a South Dakota grade label or a U.S. Department of Agriculture grade label.

The four grades that may be seen on the butter cartons if they meet the specified requirements are:

- South Dakota Grade AA or S.D. Grade AA
- South Dakota Grade A or S.D. Grade A
- South Dakota Grade B or S.D. Grade B
- South Dakota Undergrade or S.D. Undergrade

Know Your Grades of Butter

1. Grade AA or 93 Score: This is the highest commercial grade of butter. It has a fine highly pleasing flavor, a smooth creamy texture and is slightly waxy, which allows the butter to spread readily without crumbling. Grade AA butter is made from fresh sweet cream. The only flavor defects permitted in this top grade butter are a slight normal feed and cooked flavors.

Butter culture (starter) may be used in any of the grades of butter. The purpose of the culture is to give an increasing amount of a pleasing butter flavor.

2. Grade A or 92 Score: This grade of butter has a pleasing and desirable flavor. It is made from sweet cream or from cream that is slightly sour. For those who prefer a fresh mild flavor, Grade A is a very close second to Grade AA.

3. Grade B or 90 Score: This grade of butter is usually made from farm separated cream. It is wholesome, palatable butter but lacks some of the characteristic fine sweet flavor of the two top grades. The various flavors permitted in this grade are those usually associated with sour cream.

Undergrade Butter or 89 Score: Butter that is labeled undergrade is usually made from old sour cream. It is nutritious butter, but generally contains undesirable flavors.

What Factors Contribute To The Keeping Quality Of Butter?

Proper refrigeration. The temperature at which butter is stored is very important. In general, the lower the temperature, the longer the butter will retain its fine flavor. When butter is kept in commercial cold storage for periods of two months or more, temperatures of 10 to 20 degrees below zero must be maintained. For short periods of time, temperatures of 30 to 40 degrees F. are satisfactory. Creamery refrigerators and self service display cabinets should be checked regularly to see that proper temperatures are maintained.

Length of time butter is held. The fine fresh flavor of butter gradually disappears and an aged flavor takes its place, when it is held too long in the grocery store or home refrigerator. It is therefore recommended that grocers and homemakers limit their purchases to supplies which they expect to last no more than two weeks. Grocers should also be sure that their supplies of butter are properly rotated in the display case so that none of it gets too old.

Protection from high humidity. High humidity in the air encourages the growth of molds on butter. This results in a very unattractive
appearance as well as flavor defects. Butter should be kept in dry, refrigerated storage.

Protection from light. Butter which is exposed to sunlight or other bright light will develop an oxidized or cardboard-like flavor on the surface. This may happen even at low temperatures. To maintain freshness, butter should be protected with a carton or other light-resistant wrapper, such as aluminum foil.

Butter Is Nutritious

Butter is an excellent source of energy and vitamin A. Like all fats, butter furnishes high energy—and adds flavor to many foods. A large pat of butter furnishes about 10 percent of your daily needs of Vitamin A. Nutritionists recommend some table fat each day for a well-rounded diet.