

Cultured Butter Recipe from Claudia

(This recipe is inspired by similar recipes on [Cook's Illustrated](#) and [The Washington Post](#) as well as various Internet posts and videos on fermented-foods and cheese-making boards and my own experimentation.)

You will need:

One pint heavy cream, not ultra-pasteurized
Kosher salt to taste (start with about ¼ teaspoon), Fleur de Sel or other fancy kind optional
2 tablespoons of store-bought cultured buttermilk OR 2 heaping tablespoons of creme fraiche

Equipment:

Small bowl or glass container
Food processor
Fine mesh strainer
Large bowl
Optional but very helpful: Butter paddles
Spatula or wooden spoon if no butter paddles

Start by introducing the good bacteria: Mix a small amount of cream (best if at room temperature) with the buttermilk or creme fraiche in any glass vessel that will hold at least a pint with extra room. After thoroughly mixing it, add the rest of the cream. Cover it with a clean kitchen towel and let it do its thing for at least 24 hours on a counter or any other suitable spot.

At the end of your chosen culturing time, move the vessel to the fridge for 24 hours or at least overnight (this will make the butter smoother and easier to spread.)

On the day you are ready to “churn” it, move the container with the cream mixture to the counter and let it come to room temperature, or about 60F, 65F. You can speed up that process by adding the vessel to a bowl of warm water.

Add the cream to the food processor's bowl. It should be thicker and off white after the culturing. Turn on the food processor and watch the cream go from whipping cream to a pale yellow grainy mixture. In about a minute or so you will hear splatting sounds and see the gobs of butter and the resulting buttermilk separate. This should take about 4-6 minutes, total.

Strain the freshly churned butter solids and resulting buttermilk onto a bowl. (You can drink the buttermilk, and it tastes a lot like kefir and skyr to me. Or use it for marinades or baking: sub it in any quick-bread recipe that calls for buttermilk, like pancakes and biscuits. You can also freeze the liquid for later use.)

You are now ready to massage the butter blob and wash off the residual buttermilk. Use very cold water (I add ice cubes to a big glass and use the icy cold water to do this). Use your butter paddles or spatula to press the butter together until the water runs clear. (You will change the cold water at least twice).

Add salt after discarding the last of the cold water. Massage the butter with the butter paddles or if using a regular spatula press it against the sides of your bowl. You can also toss the blob from a little bit of a height a couple of times, use two spatulas to squish it, etc.

Shape it in any form you like, use immediately or freeze it. I usually make two small-ish sticks of butter and depending on what I have stashed, freeze the new ones so there's always some fresh cultured butter in the wings.

Notes:

You usually see recipes calling for a quart of cream to start but I believe one pint is easier to deal with.

There are two schools of thought on how much buttermilk you should wash off the freshly churned cultured butter. Some people prefer it with still some buttermilk in it for a tangier taste and therefore will only 'wash' the butter once or not at all. The more buttermilk left, though, the faster the butter will go rancid, so bear that in mind.

You sure can take the same steps to churn cream without culturing it and make sweet butter, but the results might not be worth the effort vs. commercially available sweet butter, in my opinion.

You can do it with no salt but salt is a preservative and the resulting no-salt cultured butter will go rancid faster.

I've seen recipes that call for cheesecloth or butter cloth but I think a strainer works just as well to separate freshly churned butter from buttermilk. I have also seen recipes call for kneading the butter blob with gloved hands, etc. After some experimentation I believe strainer and butter paddles are the way to go, personally, or strainer and spatula if you are not sure you want to invest in wooden butter paddles (about \$11). Just make sure you keep things cold.

I like the results of a three, four-day culturing so I usually time the process to be "churning" it on Saturday or Sunday. You can experiment with the culturing time but maybe not more than a week.

You can also "churn" it using a standing mixer, but due to the splatting and high risk of flying blobs of butter, I believe using a food processor is way less messy and faster to boot. Washing the butter by hand rather than in a mixer is also easier.

I've recently bought a freeze-dried culture to inoculate the cream (Flora Danica; some people also like to use Aroma B culture) but all the cultured butters I've done using pricey creme fraiche and regular grocery-store cultured buttermilk were very good.

I've been known for skipping or forgetting to do the 24-hour beauty rest in the fridge, it was still fine but I believe less spreadable. With that and the butter-paddle massage in a bowl, my current results are very smooth and spreadable, but my first tries were less so.

I never bake with homemade cultured butter because I believe the different moisture levels vs. commercial sweet butter would be an issue in baking. Also, I believe cultured butter is better savored on good bread or crackers.

This may look overly complicated but really is not and mostly hands off!