

# BUTTER VS MARGARINE



The debate over butter vs. margarine has been ongoing for many years. Which is the better choice? Which is healthier? Let's take a look at the science behind them to clear things up.

## BUTTER

Butter is a dairy product, made by churning cream from cow's milk. Since it is an animal product, it is high in saturated fat. Saturated fat raises the bad cholesterol (LDL) in your blood. When consumed in large amounts, this can lead to a build-up of plaque in your arteries, which can increase your risk for heart disease and stroke.

## THE HISTORY OF MARGARINE

Originally, margarine was made by emulsifying beef fat with water or milk. Eventually, manufacturers began using vegetable oils instead, as it was cheaper to produce. Since vegetable oil is liquid at room temperature, scientists used a process called hydrogenation to change the chemical structure of the oil so it would be more solid and spreadable. Unfortunately, this process created trans fats, which are very damaging to our health and increase our risk of heart disease and stroke. In 2018, Canada banned the use of trans fats in all foods, including margarine, due to the damaging health effects.

## MARGARINE TODAY

Now, margarine in Canada is made from vegetable oils through a new process called interesterification. This process allows margarine to be spreadable, without creating trans fats. This new margarine is called non-hydrogenated margarine.

The vegetable oils in margarine contain unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fat decreases the bad cholesterol (LDL) in your blood, and can also increase the good cholesterol (HDL). These fats can help to improve your heart health and lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Thanks to the modern process of creating margarine, margarine is likely the "healthier" choice. This may be especially true if you have concerns about your risk of heart disease or stroke, or eat a lot of saturated fat from other sources like red meat, chicken skin, high fat dairy products, or processed foods. Non-hydrogenated margarine provides healthy, unsaturated fats, as opposed to the saturated fats provided by butter.

That being said, if you prefer butter over margarine, that's okay! Simply opt for small amounts, look for other ways to reduce your intake of saturated fat, and include other sources of unsaturated fat in your diet.