

The first thing in making butter, you have to start with the cow. There's where you get your cream. So they milks the cow by hand in a pail and then they took it into the house and it had to be strained before it could be set and put in a creamer can. The way that separated, the cream would raise to the top so with the gauge on the side of the can you could tell when you're drawing the milk off when you got to your cream, so you could separate that way, draw the milk and keep the cream. Of course to churn it, you had to wait until it was sour. If you didn't the churning would be a long time before you'd get butter. So you usually waited until your cream was quite sour.

And they had different forms of churning it. Some was the little hand ones. Some was the ones that was either propelled by hand – the barrel churn -- or the foot pedal. Others churns would be like a crock, an earthen crock, with a stick in it and you would work that up and down, which had a ladle on the bottom and as you worked it up and down that would separate your buttermilk from your butter. And then of course after you got your butter, you wanted to prepare it, wash it and get it ready for sale or eating. But first you'd have to draw that buttermilk off the churn and then you had to take your butter and you had to wash that well. Some would wash it right in the churn maybe a couple times to get the excess buttermilk out best you could. Then you'd put it in a tray and there again working the butter there were different ways of doing that. Some would just put it in a big tray, a wooden tray and they had a wooden ladle and they'd work it back and forth and get the buttermilk out of it.

After they felt they got the buttermilk all worked out and the water, they would sprinkle salt in it, and work that salt in to taste and when they felt they had it salty enough and firm enough they would proceed to put it in the butter prints, which you would, there was different forms of those too, some would just roll it up in a pat, but especially if they were going to sell it, they had the brick butter printers that they'd fill with the butter and proceed to take it out after it was printed. Some sold it over and above what they needed for the household use. Some was packed in jars for the winter.

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Description: Personal memories of making butter on a Maine farm in the 1930s by Dorothy Campbell.