Production of Lactic Farmhouse Butter

Introduction

There are two distinct types of butter, sweet cream butter, which makes up the majority of the butter produced today and lactic or ripened butter made from bacteriologically soured cream. Butter can also be classified according to salt content: unsalted, salted or extra salted.

Lactic or farmhouse butter was traditionally made by allowing the milk to sour naturally. The cream was then 'skimmed' from the surface of the milk and churned in a wooden tub. Unfortunately this method of natural souring led to a very variable product often contaminated with spoilage micro-organisms. As our knowledge of the process increased it was found that sweet cream could be separated in a more efficient manner and then soured with commercial starter bacteria to give a more acceptable and uniform product with increased yield. Farmhouse butter contains 84% fat and 12-15% moisture, with the addition of approximately 1-3% salt. Butter also contains the vitamins A and D.

Market

The market for farmhouse butter and buttermilk is essentially domestic. The advent of spreads led to a reduction in the consumption of butter generally, but there remains a niche market that appreciates the flavour and tradition associated with farmhouse butter.

Manufacturing Method

Commercial pasteurised cream is seeded with a bacterial starter culture and allowed to ferment overnight until the desired flavour is reached. The fermented cream is then cooled prior to churning. After churning the buttermilk is removed packed and refrigerated. The butter is then washed to remove unwanted buttermilk, salted and then extruded into final shape before packaging and refrigeration.

To manufacture farmhouse butter, you must firstly have suitable premises, which conforms to health and safety guidelines. A fermentation vessel, butter churn, extruder, and work table is required. A packaging store and refrigerated room is also required.

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This is one of a series of fact sheets on potential income generating activities.

All fact sheets are available in the Advisory Section of the Teagasc Website
http://www.teagasc.ie/

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Teagasc Fact Sheets present a brief overview of a topic. Further detailed advice should always be sought from relevant sources.

Establishment Costs

	€	
Fermentation Vessel (500 l)	7,500	
Butter Churn (100 l)	5,000	
Extruder	3,000	
Work Table x 2	1,500	
Misc. Equipment	1,500	
Total	**€18,500**	

Direct Costs of Production

	€	
Cream 25,000litres	62,500	
Starter Culture & Salt	750	
Packaging	6,500	
Total	**€69,750**	

Output

	€	
11,000 kgs of butter @ €2/250g	88,000	
14,000 litres of buttermilk @ €0.40/litre	5,600	
Total	**€93,600**	
Gross Margin*	**€24,850**	

*Does not include cost of labour or loan repayments, or fixed costs.

The above data show a slim gross margin and considerable output would be required to cover all costs including fixed costs.

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