

# ArtiFactsheet: Butter churn

Butter is made by agitating cream obtained from cow's milk. One of the first devices used to make butter was the butter churn. Early churns were essentially containers. They were made from such materials as animal skins, and were filled with cream and then shaken until butter formed.

Butter churns became more complex over time. The "dasher model", seen in the photo to the right, was a popular design favoured by North American settlers. It consists of a container, which holds the cream, and a rod with a wooden x-shaped dasher at the end. This rod is plunged up and down to churn the cream into butter. Later, barrel churns came into use. This churn is composed of a barrel, which held the cream, and a crank, which can be used to turn the barrel and produce butter.

Churns, and home-made butter, became less common when dairy factories, or creameries, began producing butter and other dairy products to meet the demand of growing urban markets in the late 19th century

Many artifacts related to butter churns and butter making can be found in the collection of Ingenium – Canada's Museums of Science and Innovation: [ingeniumcanada.org/ingenium/collection-research/collection.php](http://ingeniumcanada.org/ingenium/collection-research/collection.php).

## Artifact Details

Butter churn, circa 1900  
Manufacturer: Unknown  
Artifact no. 1987.0363.001

The butter churn pictured below is the familiar "dasher churn" in which the dasher (a plunger with an x-shaped attachment) was moved up and down to churn cream into butter. In this particular churn, the dasher was made out of wood. The barrel is ceramic with a pinkish-gray glaze.

## Fun Fact

It takes around 21 kilograms of fresh cow's milk to make the cream needed to make one kilogram of butter

