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MORE SPECIALTY BUTTERS ENTER THE MARKET

As more U.S. dairy companies are making European-style and other artisan butters, chefs and consumers are finding them ideal for cooking, entertaining—and tasting.

While these artisan butters typically have a higher fat content, the benefits achieved in taste, texture and use make up for any extra calories, says Andrea Neu with Wisconsin's Dairy Business Innovation Center (DBIS).

"If people are buying and using butter for flavor quality, they're not worrying about fat," Neu says. "There are many consumers who say 'I want the real thing,' and will just use less of it."

Higher-fat, low-moisture butters with fewer milk solids are especially ideal for cooking as they are easier to sauté with and put in sauces. The smaller amounts of milk solids in these butters allow for cooking at higher temperatures without burning, Neu says.

She says demand for these butters is high in the chef sector, but also has been increasing in the consumer sector in light of the local food movement.

"Consumers looking for local, farmers' market foods who want to know who makes their food and are interested in new taste experiences are increasingly interested in artisan butters," she says.

According to Jennifer Giambroni, director of communications, California Advisory Board (CMAB), the rise in demand for specialty butters can be linked to the growing U.S. food culture and demand for hand-crafted foods from local sources, with significant growth in European-style butters that have a higher fat content.

Theresa Marquez, chief marketing executive for Organic Valley, says "Butter is delicious and yes, it is fat, but eaten with common sense, in moderation, it is an important part of a healthy diet. Fats hold vitamins and have an important role in our bodies, and butter has been a staple of the human diet for centuries."

CLARIFIED BUTTER FOR EASTER

Clarified butter is unsalted butter that has the milk solids removed, creating a pure liquid, golden yellow butterfat. Often referred to as drawn butter, this product is 99.8 percent pure butterfat creating the perfect product to serve with seafood dishes. With Easter approaching and seafood becoming a staple meal on Fridays throughout Lent, clarified butter offers no hassle prep for restaurant chefs.

To manufacture clarified butter, cream is concentrated through a separation process where the majority of moisture and milk solids are removed. Unlike the way chefs prepare back-of-house clarified butter, pre-manufactured clarified butter allows end users to avoid wasting the unneeded ingredients thus creating a bigger bang for your buck.

Convenient and ready to use, clarified butter also has a longer shelf life than any back-of-the house product. Seeing it is an oil, the flash/burn point is higher than any product an operator can produce his or her own allowing a higher cook temp while still avoiding any scorching or splattering. This product is kosher certified while maintaining an excellent flavor.

Clarified butter has a variety of applications. It is excellent for sautéing, and is perfect for applications calling for a distinct fragrant, nutty flavor. It helps retain more moisture in baked goods, creating more puff. Other applications include using it as an ingredient in hollandaise sauce, Madeleines (French butter cakes) or baking genoise (French angel food cake).

