

COOKING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

WAIT FOR BUTTER TO STOP FOAMING BEFORE SAUTEING

=> Why Do It: Saut  ing is best done in hot fat. When foaming subsides, it's an easy visual cue that the melted butter is hot enough for cooking. More specifically, it indicates that all the water in the butter (about 16 percent by mass evaporated, and the temperature a rise above water's boiling point degrees. As foaming sub

tter continues heat naturally smokes at 300 degrees. (To use butter at higher

temperatures, use clarified

USE COLD—NOT SOFTENED—

BUTTER FOR PASTRY Why Do It: Good, light pastry and biscuits depend on thin pieces of cold, solid butter distrib-

uted throughout the dough that melt during and leave behind pockets

keeping the butter cold

using the

of a box grater.

ADD COLD BUTTER TO PAN SAUCES Why Do It: Swirling a tablespoon or two of cold butter into a pan sauce right before serving adds both richness and body. (Cold, firm butter resists separating the water in softened sauce)

er separates more

and can lead to a thin emulsion.)

the butter into

CLARIFYING CLARIFIED BUTTER AND GHEE

Clarified Butter

Butter is mostly made up of fat, but it also contains small amounts of proteins, carbohydrates, minerals (the milk solids), and water, all of which are distributed throughout the fat. In an emulsion. When butter is heated, this emulsion is broken, causing the different components to separate according to density and chemical predisposi-

tion. The pure fat left standing is called clarified butter,

Since clarified butter has a higher smoke point than whole butter (clarified ranges from 350-375 degrees, whole butter from 250-300 degrees), food can be seared in it without the danger of milk solids burning and becoming bitter. The second, and more specific, application is working with phyllo dough. We've found that clarified butter's pure fat produces particularly flaky, crispy layers,

SLIP BUTTER UNDER THE SKIN

OF CHICKEN BREASTS

Why Do It: Notoriously dry and chalky, roast chicken breasts can be transformed with softened butter. Two tablespoons of unsalted butter mixed with 1/2 teaspoon salt and spread underneath

the skin of a whole breast before roasting will baste the white meat, keeping it juicy while adding flavor.

ADD BUTTER BEFORE DAIRY IN MASHED POTATOES

= Why Do It: If the dairy is stirred into the hot cooked potatoes before the butter, the water in the dairy will combine with the potatoes' starch, making them gummy. When melted butter is added first, the fat coats the starch molecules and prevents them from reacting with the water in the dairy. The result? Smoother, more velvety mashed potatoes.

ADD BUTTER BITS TO UNCOOKED EGGS FOR OMELETS

@ Why Do It: Whisking a tablespoon of cold, diced butter into the eggs before cooking is the secret to a soft, creamy omelet. Without butter, the proteins in egg whites form tight, cross-linked bonds, yielding a dense, rubbery version of the French classic. But with our method, the eggs cook as the butter melts and disperses, coating the proteins and stopping them from linking.

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Ghee Ghee, a butter product used throughout Indian cooking, takes clarification a step further by simmering the butter until all the moisture is evaporated and the milk solids begin to brown, giving the fat a slightly nutty flavor and aroma. You can find ghee in unrefrigerated jars (100 percent fat is shelf stable) ; at Indian and Middle Eastern markets, as well as in natural foods stores. The

two products | can be used interchangeably, but ghee will

lend foods cooked in it a slightly richer, more buttery flavor.

Simple Butter Recipes

GARLIC COMPOUND BUTTER MAKES 4 TABLESPOONS

Using fork, beat 4 tablespoons softened unsalted butter, 1/2 teaspoon finely grated lemon Zest, 1/2 tablespoon minced fresh parsley, 1/2 minced garlic clove, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and ground black pepper to taste in small bowl until combined. Serve as a topping on steak, pork chops, or fish.

FOOLPROOF HOLLANDAISE SAUCE MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

Whisk 12 tablespoons softened unsalted butter and 6 large egg yolks in large heat-resistant bowl set over medium saucepan filled with 1/2 inch of barely simmering water (don't let bowl touch water) until mixture is smooth and homogeneous. Slowly add 2 cup boiling water and cook, whisking constantly, until thickened and sauce registers 160 degrees on instant-read thermometer, 7 to 10 minutes. Off heat, stir in 2 teaspoons lemon juice and 1/2 teaspoon cayenne. Season with salt to taste. Serve immediately over prepared asparagus or eggs Benedict.

BROWN BUTTER SAUCE MAKES ABOUT 1/4 CUP

Melt 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces, in small, heavy-bottomed, traditional (not nonstick) skillet over medium-low heat. Continue to cook, swirling constantly, until butter is dark golden brown and has nutty aroma, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove pan from heat and let stand 1 minute. Add 1/2 tablespoon lemon juice, 1/2 tablespoon chopped parsley, and salt and pepper to taste; swirl pan to combine. Let milk solids settle to bottom of pan, about 10 seconds. Drizzle liquid over gnocchi, mushrooms, steak, or fish, leaving as many solids behind as possible.

WHITE BUTTER SAUCE MAKES ABOUT 1/4 CUP

Bring 3 tablespoons dry white wine, 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar, 1/2 tablespoon minced shallots, and pinch salt to boil in small, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until reduced by

two-thirds, about 5 minutes. Whisk in 1/2 tablespoon heavy cream. Increase heat to high and add 8 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, Cut into 4 pieces. Whisk vigorously until butter is incorporated and forms thick, Pale yellow sauce, 30 to 60 seconds, Remove pan from heat and serve sauce immediately with fish or vegetables.