

Title:

All About Cream

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529

Summary:

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Cream is an essential ingredient in the kitchen - rich in flavor with a smooth and velvety texture.

Scones wouldn't taste quite right without a big spoonful of cream. Where would strawberries n cream be without the cream? And a dollop of thick cream on the side always completes a homemade cake.

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Article Body:

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Cream is an essential ingredient in the kitchen - rich in flavor with a smooth and velvety texture.

Scones wouldn't taste quite right without a big spoonful of cream. Where would strawberries n cream be without the cream? And a dollop of thick cream on the side always completes a homemade cake.

Cream is the fat component of fresh milk.

Commercially, the cream is separated from the milk by centrifugal force. Often cream sold commercial has been pasteurised.

Pasteurization is the process of heating the cream to kill harmful organisms like viruses, molds, yeasts, protozoa and or course bacteria. Invented by the French scientist Louis Pasteur in 1862, pasteurization does on kill all micro-

organisms but reduces their number to a level unlikely to cause disease.

The many varieties of cream available on the market today can leave one feeling bewildered and lost. But with a little understanding you won't be left in the cold isle feeling glazed-eyed any longer.

Cream is categorized by the amount of milk fat it contains. This percentage should be clearly stated on the label.

Depending on what country you live in the cream will be called different things, but it is the fat content that is important.

Half and half cream is a mixture of half cream and half milk with a fat content of between 10.5 and 18%. It is great as a lighter alternative in coffee.

Light cream has a fat content of between 18 and 30%. This can be used in cooking and is fantastic in soups and curries. However please be aware that it will not whip.

Whipping or pouring cream has a fat content of between 30 and 36% fat. In order for the cream to whip well it needs to contain 30 to 36% fat. So this type of cream is ideal for whipping. It has many cooking uses and is great used in gratins, quiches, pasta sauces or cocktails.

Double Cream has 48% plus fat. This cream holds its shape when spooned out of the container. It best not whipped as it tends to separate easily.

Thickened cream contains 35% milk fat and also contains thickening agents, such as gelatine or vegetable gum. These are added to stabilise the cream, making it easier to whip and less likely to curdle or separate. Use it whipped in ice-creams, mousses and cheesecakes or as a filling for sponges.

Sour cream contains 35% to 38% milk fat. It is cream that has been subjected to a bacterial culture that produces lactic acid. This produces thicker cream with a slightly sour-tasting product.

Light sour cream is produced the same way, but it contains only 10% to 18% milk fat and has a thinner consistency. It is more likely to curdle when heated. Use in dressings, casseroles, soups and sauces or on potatoes. Dips are best made with the full-fat variety.

Crème fraîche contains 35% to 48% milk fat. It's thicker and less tart than sour cream, with a slightly nutty flavour. Lactic acid has been added to fresh cream

and allowed to mature under controlled conditions, making it more stable (it won't curdle) than sour cream when heated.

Happy Cooking

Lisa Paterson