

# NUTRITION UPDATE<sup>SM</sup>

## Margarines and Spreads: Definitions and Uses

Selecting a margarine or spread today is similar to buying athletic shoes. There are running shoes, aerobic sneakers, cross trainers, and more. There are also different margarine products to meet your cooking and eating needs. The more you know about margarines and spreads, the better equipped you will be to prepare healthful and delicious meals.

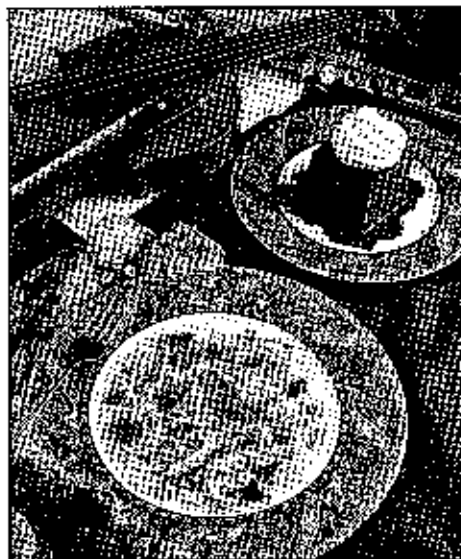
### What's In A Name?

Shopping for margarines can be confusing since there are so many types to choose from. Here's a run-down on the various products available.

**BUTTER AND MARGARINE:** Standards set by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration require both butter and margarine to contain at least 80 percent fat by weight and to be fortified with Vitamin A. One tablespoon of either has approximately 11 grams of fat and 100 calories.

Butter must be made from cream and milk. The addition of salt and/or coloring is optional. Margarine must contain vegetable oil, water and/or milk. Optional ingredients include salt, other vitamins, food coloring, emulsifying agents such as lecithin, and preservatives.

**SPREADS:** Any butter or margarine product containing less than 80% fat by weight is classified as a spread. The percent of fat by weight in the product must appear on the label. Water, gums, gelatins, and various starches are used in spreads to replace some or all of the fat, or air may be whipped into the product.



Gingerbread with Raspberry Sauce  
Pasta Primavera with Roasted Garlic Sauce

Unsalted and fat-free spreads are also available today.

**BLENDS:** Blends are made from vegetable oil in addition to milk fat and other dairy ingredients added to give the product a buttery taste. Blends can have the same fat content as butter or margarine, or they can be reduced-in-fat, like spreads.

All butters and some blends contain cholesterol since they are made from animal fat. Pure vegetable oil margarines and spreads contain less saturated fat than butter and are cholesterol-free. Some are also lactose-free and pareve. To be sure the product you select is right for your dietary needs, it is important to read the Nutrition Facts panel on the food label to determine the exact amount and type of fat and the cholesterol content per serving.

**BUDS:** Butter-flavored buds are designed for use on hot, moist foods, such as vegetables, potatoes, pasta, and sauces. Buds can also be mixed directly with

water to make butter-flavored sauces. Although these products contain a small amount of dehydrated butter, they are eligible for "fat-free" and "cholesterol-free" label claims.

### Matching Product With Purpose

While we might want to take full advantage of the significant fat and calorie savings offered by many of the spreads and sprays available, not all of these products can be used in exactly the same way. For example, the added water in some spreads and sprays can make bread or toast soggy, while those with gums and gelatins may resist melting. Pan frying or sautéing with spreads that have a high water content may cause splattering, or the water may evaporate very quickly causing foods to stick to the pan's surface.

Refer to the "How to Use" chart on the next page for general guidelines on choosing the right product to meet your cooking needs.

### What's In A Shape?

When deciding which margarine or spread to use, consider the physical form of the products as well as their fat contents. Margarines can be found both in stick form and in tubs. Spreads can be found in sticks, tubs, liquids, and sprays.

Stick margarines and spreads have fat contents ranging from a low of 40% up to a high of 80%. While some varieties are better for baking and cooking, all are suitable for tabletop use. (However, many health professionals recommend lower-fat margarines or spreads for tabletop use.)



