



Butter vs Margarine

Welcome to the September edition of NutEd by Email. Today's topic looks at the butter versus margarine debate. There is much confusion around butter and margarine and many myths to debunk. Perhaps you have heard that butter is more natural, or heard others claim that margarine is processed and unsafe? Keep reading to learn which spread is better for your health. Scroll to the bottom to see the Miles and Chinchilla branches celebrating Women's Wellness Day for this month's out.

Fats are an essential part of our diet and are important for good health. There are different types of fats, with some fats being healthier than others. Margarine was originally invented as a cheap alternative to butter. While butter is made from churning cream, margarine today is made from solidified vegetable fats. When it comes to choosing a spread, which is better butter or margarine? Let's start by looking at the different types of fat.

Saturated Fats

Saturated fat is linked with an increased risk of heart disease and high blood cholesterol levels. Typically solid at room temperature, these fats can be found in animal-based products, such as meat and dairy, including butter, as well as palm oil, coconut products and processed and packaged foods, such as chips, cakes, pies and pastries.

Both butter and margarine contain saturated fats, but their amounts differ significantly. 56% of butter is saturated fat. That's more than double the amount found in Australian margarines, which contain 22% saturated fat.

Unsaturated fats

Unsaturated fats help reduce the risk of heart disease and lower cholesterol levels when they replace saturated fats in the diet and are important for a healthy diet.

Polyunsaturated fats:

- omega-3 fats which are found in fish, especially oily fish
- omega-6 fats which are found in some nuts, such as brazil nuts, and oils such as safflower and soybean oil, which margarine is made from.

Monounsaturated fats:

- found in olive and canola oil, avocados and some nuts, such as cashews and almonds.

Margarine contains much higher amounts of healthy fats when compared against butter. Over 75% of margarine is made of healthy mono and polyunsaturated fats. Butter still contains these healthy fats, but only 23% of them.





Trans fats

Trans fats can increase the levels of 'bad' cholesterol and decrease the levels of 'good' cholesterol in the body which is a major risk factor for heart disease. It is important to lower the amounts of trans fats you eat to help you stay healthy. Trans fats played a role in the development of margarines, as they were used in the processing of the product. Due to the links with heart health, manufacturers have moved to replace trans fats in margarines and now most margarines available in Australia contain low levels of trans-fat.

The Heart Foundation did a lot of advocating to achieve this and brought in strict guidelines for Australian margarine manufacturers. To receive the Heart Foundation tick of approval, trans fats in margarine cannot exceed more than 1%. These are some of the strictest guidelines in the world, which is great news for us Aussie's health!

Butter or margarine?

Butter and margarine are both high in fat. The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating recommends we limit intake of foods containing saturated fat and replace high fat foods such as butter with foods that contain predominately polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Margarines contain predominately unsaturated fats and as such are the preferred choice over butter, however there are also some great alternatives to margarine such as nut butters/pastes and avocado.

Putting aside the butter versus margarine debate, it is important to consider our food intake holistically. Eating a wide variety of minimally processed foods, including vegetables and legumes, fruit, wholegrains, nuts and seeds and lean protein should be consumed every day to promote health and wellbeing and help protect against chronic disease.

