

kerrygold butter

Silver and gold for the holidays!

What's better butter like? Quite simply, the best butters have distinctive, full flavors. And just as with the best cheeses, a butter's flavor will vary from maker to maker, region to region, and batch to batch. The Irish butter we get in the Kerrygold packages is really some of the best—and consistently so—around. I confess to having taken it for granted for many years. I'm not sure why really. But I tried it anew a couple years back, and I was immediately and happily surprised with how good it was.

One of the main things that makes the Kerrygold butters so special is that they're made only when the cows are out grazing on grass under the open sky. The grass is good and, as always, what the animals are eating is all-important to the quality of the butter. The cream is taken off the milk and then turned into butter. You can see the impact of the grazing in the color—the Kerrygold butters are very yellow, a product of the high beta-carotene levels naturally found in the milk because of all the good grass the cows are consuming. As with good cheese, wine and all traditional food, the soil impacts the grasses that grow in the field, which in turn alters the flavor of the milk and the cream. Writing in the *The Ballymaloe Cookbook*, Myrtle Allen says, "The butter your sister is sending is very good," I said to my neighbour one day. 'Yes,' he said, 'that field always made good butter.' That is long ago and the fragrance is almost forgotten." Fortunately, the Kerrygold butters still give us a chance to at least come close every day. And for what it's worth, the foil wrapping (which certainly costs a few cents more) helps protect the fragile butter flavor far better than the paper that most other producers use.

Kerrygold Irish Butter is pretty available in the US now, but most all of what's out there is the gold foil, which is very good, uncultured sweet butter. At Zingerman's, we also carry the cultured butter in the silver foil. In this butter, lactic acid bacteria is added to induce fermentation. As a result, the butter develops a more complex, slightly soured quality, like in the days when raw cream was used. Both butters are made from cream bought daily from a number of co-ops around the country. The co-ops themselves are buying from surprisingly small farms—many are in the range of a dozen or two-dozen grass-fed cows that have been out grazing the fields—no silage, no barn feeding. Come see us and ask for a taste!

Ari

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