

Calling All Cooks: Real Buttermilk Rides Again

Old Orchard Beach, Maine: Real buttermilk is back on the shelves, thanks to Kate's of Maine, makers of award-winning, homemade butter. Buttermilk is the natural by-product when cream is churned into butter. So who better than a traditional creamery, like Kate's, to offer the real thing?

Real buttermilk has been hard to come by in the last few decades, as big dairies have absorbed many of the artisanal creameries that used to make it. To appease cooks, many offer a product that would more aptly be called cultured milk, typically skim milk with a culture added to give it buttery flavor, thickness and that special tang.

But real buttermilk is far more than just flavor and tang. It's nutritious – a good source of vitamins E and A – and has less than one third the fat of whole milk. Best of all, real buttermilk contains phospholipids separated from the cream during churning, one of which is lecithin. These natural emulsifiers are what makes real buttermilk a cook's best friend – a magical ingredient that imbues baked goods with a smooth texture. The "fine crumb" mouthfeel is instantly recognizable in everything from pancakes to pie crusts.

"Kate's Real Buttermilk has a much fuller flavor compared to the cultured alternatives," says Rob Evans, chef/owner of Hugo's in Portland, Maine and winner of the 2009 James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Northeast. Evans has used the product in everything from Hugo's signature potato garlic biscuits to a favorite emulsion for fish dishes, panna cotta and homemade ice creams. "It's quality you can taste," he says, "and it's the only buttermilk we use at Hugo's. Best of all it's made right here in Maine."

"My wife and I have baked with real buttermilk for years," says Kate's of Maine owner, Daniel Patry. "Making this product available to a wider audience is something we've wanted to do for a long time. Our business has finally grown to a point that made it feasible to invest in the equipment necessary to do it, and do it right."

When asked the secret to Kate's Real Buttermilk, Patry replies, "Just grade A cream and meticulous quality control. It's the same cream we use for our butter and it's that quality that has earned us awards in the dairy world and beyond. I'm happy to say that the initial response has been overwhelming. We're getting e-mails from people who tell us they love the taste – straight from the bottle."

For more information contact Kate's at 207-934-5134 or visit www.kateshomeadebutter.com, where you'll also find recipes that showcase real buttermilk at its best.

Company History:

The Patry family dairy heritage dates back to the early 1900s in Minot, Maine. Alphonse Hemond produced milk, cream, butter and buttermilk on his farm and passed the tradition on to his son, Roland. Daniel Patry learned to make butter in small wooden churns alongside his Uncle Roland at the age of 13. After years of producing delicious sweet cream butter for family and friends, Daniel introduced Kate's Homemade Butter to the market in 1981.

The slow-batch churn process is still used today at Kate's modern facility in Old Orchard Beach, Maine. Although the line is expanding to include Kate's Real Buttermilk, all Kate's products are still produced one batch at a time. "We want to give people the same natural dairy products that we enjoyed in 'the old days,' when it was made fresh daily on the farm," says Patry. "There is nothing more flavorful."

The Patry family tradition continues at Kate's of Maine, with fourth-generation, Lucas Patry on board as the director of research and development.