

CREAM

If whole cows' milk is left to stand, the richest part of it consisting of larger but lighter fat globules, rises to the top form the cream. At one time, cream was separated from milk simply by leaving the milk to stand and 'creaming off' the cream, nowadays separation is carried out mechanically. Most cream available today is pasteurized before it is sold, and may also undergo other treatment depending on what type of cream it is to become. All creams are perishable and should be kept refrigerated.

A wide variety of types of cream is available, each one with specific uses. The different types are classified according to their fat content. In order to whip successfully, cream must have a fat content of at least 35%.

Half Cream -

Half cream is the thinnest, least rich cream available and is best used for pouring over desserts or for adding to coffee. It is usually homogenized to prevent separation, but is also available in pasteurized form. The fat content of half cream is 12%.

Single Cream -

Is a popular pouring cream, delicious served with fresh strawberries or fruit salad. It is usually homogenized to prevent separation, and may also be pasteurized. Single cream can also be added to coffee or pored over breakfast cereals, or used to enrich soups and other savoury dishes. Its fat content is 18%.

Whipping Cream -

Has not been homogenized and is therefore suitable for whipping. It has a higher fat content than single cream but is less rich than double cream. If whipped correctly, it will double in volume and is ideal for piping in decorative shapes on cakes and cold desserts, or for folding into mousses and foos. Un-whipped, the cream can be used as a pouring cream or to enrich soups and sauces. Its fat content is between 35 & 40%.

Double Cream -

Is most frequently used for whipping and serving with desserts, or folding into mousses or foos. It will whip to slightly less volume than whipping cream, but adding 15ml milk for every 150ml cream will help it achieve greater volume. Double cream is a vital ingredient in many cream desserts, such as cream brulee and ice-creams. Its fat content is 48%.

Extra Thick Double Cream -

Also has a fat content of 48% and is a rich spooning cream, though it can not be whipped because it has been homogenized. It can be served with desserts and fruit salads.

Clotted Cream -

Is the richest cream of all. It is a speciality of south west England and is often called Cornish or Devonshire Cream. Clotted cream is the main constituent of a cream tea, served with scones and jam. It is produced commercially by scalding and cooking cream until it forms a thick yellow crust which is skimmed off. Its fat content is 55%.

Soured Cream -

Is made by adding a souring culture to homogenized single cream. It is used in a number of sweet and savoury dishes and is delicious mixed with snipped chives or spring onions and served with baked jacket potatoes. It has the same fat content as single cream.

UHT Cream -

Has been heated to a high temperature to destroy all micro-organisms that may be present in the cream and which might otherwise cause the cream to deteriorate. The treatment slightly alters the flavour of the cream, which is subsequently homogenized and packed and sealed under sterile conditions. UHT forms of half, single, double, and whipping cream are all available.

Cream Fraiche -

Is an important ingredient in French cooking. It is fresh cream that has matured and fermented to the point where it has thickened slightly and has a faintly acid taste. It adds a slight tang to savoury dishes and acts as a very good thickener. It is possible to make a home-made version by gently heating together double cream and soured cream or butter milk, then leaving the mixture in a warm place until thick. Cream Fraiche keeps better than fresh cream - 10 to 14 days in the refrigerator - though it will become thicker as time goes on.

Frozen Single, Double or Whipping Cream -

Is available in chip or stick form. Only double and whipping creams can be frozen at home successfully. Both creams benefit from being semi-whipped before freezing, then whipped to the desired consistency after thawing.

Aerosol Cream -

Is a fairly recent development. Whipped UHT cream is packed into aerosol containers with up to 13% added sugar, stabilizers and a propellant to make it flow from its container. Although it is convenient for topping desserts, it can not be used for decoration as it does not hold its shape for long periods.

Sterilized Cream -

Is available in cans and has been heat-treated and homogenized. The sterilization process gives it a distinctive caramel flavour. It will not whip.

Extended Life Cream -

Is packed in vacuum-sealed bottles and keeps in the refrigerator, unopened, for 2 to 3 weeks. It is spoonable double cream and can be whipped.