

As the World Churns

The fresh and local movement spreads to butter BY SASHA CHAPMAN

You'd think it would be easy to find good local butter. It's one of the world's simplest foods: you churn whipping cream till it curdles, then drain off the liquid. But a handful of chefs have given up looking and taken matters into their own hands. Mark Cutrara of **Cowbell** (1564 Queen St. W., 416-849-1095) sends out his sweet fresh-churned organic butter with baguette in lieu of an amuse. The by-product, buttermilk, lends its sour edge to his soups, crème fraîche and biscuits.

"Most generic butter lacks character," says Scot Woods, who churns his own at **Lucien** (36 Wellington St. E., 416-504-9990). Many factors can affect flavour, from the type of cow milked—and the pasture she grazes on—to the bacteria that sours the cream. He ages Hewitt's whipping cream for 48 hours before adding crème fraîche to lend a cheese-like quality. The tangy buttermilk finds its way into cakes, brines for meat and batters for frying, while the butter accompanies the house-baked breads.

Rob Howland, the pastry chef at **Langdon Hall** (Exit 275, Hwy. 401, Cambridge, 1-800-268-1898), began making his own a year ago to improve the flavour of his croissants. He creates a bacteria blend for his butter (made from Harmony's organic cream), to further develop its complex yogurt-like flavours. He now makes about 3,000 pounds each year for the restaurant. When guests started asking for doggy bags, he decided it was time to go retail. His wife, Ann Marie Virostek, plans to sell their butter through Butterworks (www.thebutterworks.com).

Butter fingers:
Rob Howland
of Langdon Hall

