

Ah non! As croissants go global, France butter shortages bite

By Agence France-Presse, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.26.17

Word Count **638**

Level **880L**



Croissants are growing in popularity outside of their native France, including in Asia and parts of the Middle East. Photo by: Pexels

Buttery crisp croissants are French pastries made from flour, milk and lots of butter.

All of Europe used to have too much butter, leaving plenty for bakeries. But recently, a new demand has made butter hard to find in France.

New tastes for full-fat spreads in Western countries and for French pastries in Asia have created butter shortages in France.

Not Enough Milk To Make Butter

Across France, shops are finding it difficult to keep their shelves stocked. There is not enough milk to make butter.

"Because of a shortage of French milk, our suppliers cannot fulfill our butter orders," said a sign last week in an Intermarche supermarket. It is in the city of Rouen, in northern France.

At a Super U supermarket in central Paris, a popular brand of butter had vanished. It was a salty type from the Western area of Brittany.

"Customers have been stocking up, particularly local restaurant owners. For the moment we're able to manage but we've been warned to expect more shortages," said Adrien, who runs the store. He did not give his last name.

The uncertainty in the butter market began when the European Union (EU) ended its milk program in 2015. The EU is a group of countries in Europe that works together on trade and other money matters. The EU had worked to control milk supplies.

The end of the program brought too much milk, butter and cheese. The huge supply caused a drop in worldwide dairy prices. Lower prices prompted dairy farmers to cut how much milk they were making.

The decrease in output came as butter-lovers got some good news. Studies suggested that certain fats were not as harmful as thought. Some kinds of fats had been linked to heart disease. People started buying more butter again.

The return of animal fats "has caused demand for butter to explode around the world," said Gerard Calbrix. He works for the Association of French Dairy Producers.

Butter Now Popular In China And The Middle East

The growth in demand is particularly pronounced in China and the Middle East. Croissants and other buttery treats are becoming more popular there.

The new demand has caused prices to rocket. Industrial butter is priced by the ton. This is a huge quantity of 2,205 pounds. Butter was being sold at 2,500 euros, or \$2,941 U.S. dollars per ton, in April 2016. It jumped to 7,000 euros, or \$8,234 per metric ton, this summer.

"If this continues we'll have to increase our prices because we have wages to pay," said Jose Pires. He runs a bakery in the Montorgueil district of Paris. The bakery uses only the finest whipped butter in its products.

He ruled out using margarine instead of butter in his croissants, chocolate bread and sandwiches. Margarine would be cheaper. It is made from oil instead of milk.

"We cannot change the recipe. That would be unprofessional," he said.

Increasing Prices To Cover Costs

Thierry Lucas is the owner of a bakery in the Normandy region. He said he had increased the prices of his croissants to cover his costs.

To save money he had also begun buying his butter carefully. Lucas went to a supermarket that had yet to pass along the price increases. He saved over 1,000 euros (\$1,176) on a metric ton.

Not everyone has been able to work around the problem, however.

Claude Francois is the owner of a small pastry producer in the central Cher region. She said she had cut her workers' hours by more than half. It was because she could not get enough butter for products.

They have been on limited supplies since mid-August, she said. She said that they are receiving only one metric ton a week when they need three metric tons. "We cannot go on like this for much longer."

Quiz **Type the word "yes" on the left hand side of your chosen answer.**

- 1 Read the section "Not Enough Milk To Make Butter."
Select the paragraph from the section that shows WHY the production of milk increased.

- 2 Which sentence from the article shows the MAIN problem?
- (A) New tastes for full-fat spreads in Western countries and for French pastries in Asia have created butter shortages in France.
 - (B) "Because of a shortage of French milk, our suppliers cannot fulfill our butter orders," said a sign last week in an Intermarche supermarket.
 - (C) Butter was being sold at 2,500 euros, or \$2,941 U.S. dollars per ton, in April 2016.
 - (D) "If this continues we'll have to increase our prices because we have wages to pay," said Jose Pires.

- 3 Read the section "Increasing Prices To Cover Costs."
Which answer choice BEST describes the structure of the section?

- (A) cause and effect
- (B) question and answer
- (C) chronology
- (D) description

- 4 Read the following paragraph from the section "Not Enough Milk To Make Butter."

The decrease in output came as butter-lovers got some good news. Studies suggested that certain fats were not as harmful as thought. Some kinds of fats had been linked to heart disease. People started buying more butter again.

How does this sentence develop the MAIN idea?

- (A) It shows why heart disease has decreased.
- (B) It explains why butter became so popular.
- (C) It highlights changes in dietary habits.
- (D) It provides new information about fats.