

The Best Spreads for Your Bread

Margarine and Butter Nutrition Comparison

As with all EN comparisons, this is only a sampling of what's available. Products are listed alphabetically.

✓ = **EN's Picks.** Spread picks contain no more than 8 g fat (12% DV), 3.5 g saturated fat (18%), and 0 mg trans fats.

Margarine/Butter, based on 1 Tbsp Serving Size	Cal	Fat	Sat Fat (g)	Trans Fat (g)	Cholesterol (mg)	Sodium (mg)
MARGARINE SPREADS						
✓ Benecol Light	50	5	0.5	0	0	110
✓ Best Life Buttery Spread	60	6	2	0	0	100
✓ Best Life Buttery Spread with Extra Virgin Olive Oil	60	6	2	0	0	100
✓ Brummel & Brown	45	5	1.5	0	0	90
Earth Balance Organic Buttery Spread, Original	100	11	3	0	0	100
Earth Balance Organic Buttery Spread, Whipped	80	9	2.5	0	0	100
✓ I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, Light	45	5	1.5	0	0	85
✓ I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, Original	70	8	2	0	0	90
✓ I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, Whipped & Creamy	50	6	1.5	0	0	65
✓ Land O Lakes Fresh Buttery Taste Spread	70	8	2	0	0	80
✓ Land O Lakes Fresh Buttery Taste Spread with Olive Oil	70	8	2	0	0	80
Land O Lakes Margarine (tub)	100	11	3	0	0	125
✓ Olivio Light	50	5	1	0	0	90
✓ Olivio Original	80	8	1.5	0	0	95
✓ Promise Active, Light	45	5	1	0	<5	85
✓ Promise, Buttery	80	8	1.5	0	0	85
✓ Promise, Fat Free	5	0	0	0	0	85
✓ Promise, Light	45	5	1	0	0	85
✓ Shedd's Spread Country Crock, Calcium with Vitamin D	50	5	1.5	0	0	95
✓ Shedd's Spread Country Crock, Churn Style	60	7	2	0	0	85
✓ Shedd's Spread Country Crock, Light	50	5	1.5	0	0	90
✓ Shedd's Spread Country Crock, Original	60	7	2	0	0	100
Smart Balance Buttery Spread with Calcium	80	9	2.5	0	0	90
✓ Smart Balance Heart Right, Light	45	5	1.5	0	0	80
✓ Smart Balance, Light	50	5	1.5	0	0	85
✓ Smart Balance Buttery Spread, Omega 3	80	5	1.5	0	0	90
Smart Balance, Original	80	9	2.5	0	0	85
MARGARINE STICKS						
I Can't Believe It's Not Butter	100	11	3.5	0	0	95
Land O Lakes Margarine	100	11	2	2.5	0	105
Parkay	80	9	1.5	1.5	0	130
Shedd's Spread Country Crock Spreadable Sticks	80	8	1.5	2	0	90
BUTTER						
Butter, salted, stick	100	11	7	0	30	90
Land O Lakes All Natural Butter with Canola Oil, Spreadable	100	11	4	0	15	85
Land O Lakes All Natural Butter with Olive Oil, Spreadable	90	10	4	0	15	90
✓ Land O Lakes All Natural Whipped Butter, Salted	50	6	3.5	0	15	50
✓ Land O Lakes Light Butter with Canola Oil	50	5	2	0	5	90
✓ Land O Lakes Whipped Light Butter	45	5	3	0	15	85
Olivio Spreadable Butter	90	10	3.5	0	10	80

Note: g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value, daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: package labels

Margarine has been around for almost 140 years, but it didn't always enjoy today's popularity. When it was the new kid in town, dairy processors were in an uproar about it and margarine laws were enacted involving labeling, coloring, and even restriction of sales. Fast forward 70 years and I'm sure the lawmakers from those days would be amazed at what the margarine shelves look like now.

These days you can find margarine made with yogurt, olive oil, flax seed oil, and more. There are also full-fat, low-fat, and fat-free products. All in all, it's confusing to figure out which margarine is best for you. So, we've taken all the information we could find and boiled it down to a few key nutrients in order to help you make the right choices.

Helpful hints. Here are a few points to consider when selecting the right spread.

- **Keep it real.** No review of margarine would be complete without mentioning what it was created as a substitute for: butter. Butter is an all-natural product containing the basic ingredients cream and salt, thus it contains more saturated fat and small amounts of cholesterol. Margarine is a manufactured item, containing a much longer list of ingredients, several of which are formed in a lab, but it is lower in saturated fat and is cholesterol-free. Many people prefer real butter, despite its fat profile, because it's more natural.

- **Plant stanols.** Added to some margarines, plant sterols/stanols are components found in many types of plants—fruits, grains, vegetables and nuts. Research shows that 2 grams a day can help lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol by 8 to 15 percent when consumed with meals and/or snacks.

- **The chef in you.** You may like to keep the calories low when topping your toast, but if you plan on using margarine for cooking, the “light” ones aren't the best choice. Added water makes them low in calories, but it can have a negative effect in baking cookies or sautéing veggies.

- **Stick to soft.** Margarine is available in both sticks and tubs—both about equal in calories and total fat. It's their fat breakdown that's important; sticks go through a process called hydrogenation, which produces a firm shape, but, unfortunately, also trans fats—a substance more harmful than saturated fats. Tub margarines contain more liquid oil (and little to no trans fat). [EN](#)

—Heidi McIndoo, M.S., R.D.