

Karikaas Natural Dairy Products

Unsalted Cultured Butter



Here at *Cuisine*, we've been known to get het up about the quality of butter in this country, so it's a delight when great butter comes to our attention. Sweet yet slightly sour with a nice cultured flavour, this traditionally made example was loved by the judges.

Unlike the usual "cream butter", made with cream, salt (mostly) and churned until you're left with butter and whey, this butter is made with whole milk to which a culture is added. It is left for 24 hours, then churned, separating into butter and buttermilk (which they also sell - it's terrific in baking).

Because there is no salt added, it has a shorter shelf life. Around two weeks, says Karikaas general manager, Diana Hawkins, but you can freeze it.

The company also makes Dutch-style cheeses and everything is done in the traditional manner. Nothing they produce is determined by time, like in a standard factory situation; the process is determined by hands-on attention. "We touch it, feel it, smell it," says Diana. Milk, of course, varies through the year and they have to pay attention to what it and the process are telling them.

A food technologist, Diana is constantly amazed by the process of fermentation. "I'm fascinated that you have one starting product and can make so many different things. You're manipulating the conditions. With milk you can make yoghurt, cheese, butter - so many things. You just change the fermentation. I love it."

It's the same with bread, she points out, citing Rachel Scott's breads (another of our winners), which are poles apart from standard commercial types. "If you're making a good product, you have to start with the best ingredients and treat them with care and respect. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

Diana points out that some Kiwis find unsalted butter an acquired taste. "It takes a while to adjust." Well, take the plunge, we say.

* karikaas.co.nz



Diana Hawkins