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Butter is an ingredient long revered for its versatility and indulgence, elevating an array of dishes across both sweet and savoury food categories. Now, thanks to advancements in the alternative fats category, dairy-free substitutes for this classic staple are churning up interest. Producers are working to perfect their plant-based butters and spreads for every culinary occasion. We take a look.

There are numerous ways for butter to be enjoyed across the culinary world – as a cooking aid, for frying, sautéing and coating; as a functional ingredient in baked goods, sauces and more; or simply enjoyed as a condiment in its own right, spread across bread, pastries and beyond.

While previous generations of plant-based butters may have lacked the traditional dairy product's rich and creamy qualities, efforts have been made to bring improved iterations to the forefront, some designed to fulfil specific use cases such as baking while others promise original butter's adaptability across applications.

Itai Cohen, co-founder and CEO of Israeli alt-fat start-up Gavan Technologies, said: "The alt-fat and plant-based butters category is poised for substantial growth, driven by evolving consumer preferences. Taste, reduced saturated fat, clean labels and price are all driving forces for companies to use more plant-based fat in their products, as long as the consumer's sensory experience [needs are] met."

Rethinking fats

New alt-fat solutions like Gavan's can provide the building blocks for next-generation plant-based butters – while traditional butter is churned up and formed from the animal-derived fat found in cow's milk, food-tech start-ups are turning their attention to plant-sourced fats that can mimic animal fats' behaviours.

Gavan raised \$8 million in a Series A funding round in December 2024, to support the commercialisation of its Fatrix ingredient – an animal fat alternative that manufacturers can use to replace butter in formulations.

This includes serving as a replacement for butter in bakery applications, replicating butter's functional properties as an ingredient, and contributing to the formulation of dairy alternative products like cream, desserts, spreadable cheeses and plant-based butter alternatives. Fatrix is made from plant protein isolate, vegetable oil and water, formulated into a high-performance gel.

"Gavan's proprietary technology focuses on extracting and processing plant-based ingredients in their natural form through innovative methods that preserve their inherent functional properties," Cohen explained.

"Our unique extraction and formulation process maintains the structural integrity of ingredients, creating a stable emulsion that mimics the performance of animal fats in various applications. This cutting-edge technology seamlessly combines sustainability,



simple ingredients, reduced saturated fat and sensory excellence to address modern food production challenges."

The ingredient is said to provide the creaminess, mouthfeel and performance of traditional butter while reducing saturated fat content by 80% and calorie content by 30%, offering a better-for-you alternative without sacrificing quality or sensory appeal. Additionally, it supports clean label formulations, with no artificial additives or allergens.

Also innovating to offer a butter alternative for bakery applications – with a particular focus on pastry – is Be Better My Friend, based in the Netherlands. Joost Lindeman, the company's co-founder and director, said that Be Better My Friend's plant-based butter product was established to guide chefs toward "plant-based pastry mastery," where existing alternatives did not meet professional standards.

"Be Better plant butter is pure, clean and neutral – designed to enhance, not overpower," Lindeman said. "Unlike dairy butter, which can mask delicate flavours, our plant butter respects and elevates the true essence of ingredients like fine chocolates and fruits."

The ingredient serves as a 1:1 butter replacement, free from cholesterol and common allergens, while also reducing carbon emissions by 82% and water usage by 88% compared to dairy butter.

"Pastry is chemistry, and butter is its backbone," added Lindeman. "It needs to work across a wide variety of ingredients, processes and techniques – from croissants to cakes."

"Co-founded by award-winning pastry chef Marike van Beurden, our butter reflects a chef's understanding of precision and excellence. It has been tested and optimised to ensure stability and performance across the most demanding techniques, offering unmatched versatility for chefs."

Be Better My Friend blends plant-based fats like shea butter, organic coconut and organic sunflower oil to create its solution, which replicates the melting point, stability and mouthfeel of dairy butter while being free from hydrogenated fats, palm oil, GMOs and artificial additives.

Lindeman continued: "Pastry's reliance on butter has remained unchanged for centuries. Our mission is to educate and empower chefs, proving that Be Better performs just like traditional butter and that you don't need animals to create pastry."

He emphasised that Be Better is not a margarine but a "next-gen butter solution," designed to easily integrate into traditional baking recipes and methods.

In the US, California-headquartered Savor is taking a unique approach: creating a novel non-dairy butter that is claimed to perform just like its traditional dairy counterpart, made from carbon dioxide and hydrogen through a thermomechanical process.

Kathleen Alexander, co-founder and CEO of Savor, told *The Plant Base*: "Agriculture has allowed us to thrive for thousands of years, but the cost of our food system is staggering...Savor envisions a world where commodity farming for delicious fats is no longer required."

According to Alexander, the company's thermomechanical method for producing fatty acids is "far more scalable" than conventional plant- and animal-based agriculture or newer fermentation-derived techniques. This approach enables Savor to craft "deliciously rich" ingredients that can reach price parity with major conventional fats more quickly than other non-traditional methods.

"In addition to our forthcoming first product, butter, we have developed multiple prototypes that replicate the functional properties of products beyond milk fat – including cocoa butter, lard, beef tallow and liquid vegetable oils," ►



Alexander enthused. “Each functionality can be achieved by tuning the composition, using different carbon sources.”

Through Savor’s process, fatty acids are created from scratch by combining primordial elements like hydrogen and oxygen from water, and carbon from gases like CO₂ or methane, under high temperatures and pressure.

“These fatty acids are then assembled to produce high-quality medium- and long-chain triglyceride (MLCT) products that can replace conventional fats in a variety of food and CPG applications,” Alexander continued, adding that the start-up’s process can generate a “near-infinite” stable supply of non-allergenic, customisable fat formulations tailored for various applications and nutritional needs. According to the company, its method can provide a 70% carbon reduction opportunity.

“Since fats and oils contribute 7% of global greenhouse gas emissions, comparable to emissions from all cars on the road, sustainable and high-performing swaps like Savor’s can significantly reduce this sector’s environmental impact,” she added.

“Savor’s is the only technology with the potential to replace palm oil with a very low-carbon equivalent within the next decade...While our current production capacity is quite limited, the opening of our new facility in Illinois will grow our production capacity to yearly metric tons in 2025.”

Savor is partnering with chefs to launch its non-dairy butter product early this year, with additional production focused on joint development agreements and partnerships. Last year, the company was selected to compete in an innovation challenge powered by industry giant Flora Food Group (formerly named Upfield), the creator of globally successful plant-based butter brands such as Violife and Flora.

“Consistently produced, high-quality ingredients like those made by Savor can help future-proof

this sector for generations to come,” Alexander pointed out. “But this can only happen if the ingredients being developed today are embraced by the culinary community, the food industry and consumers in the future.”

Meeting consumer needs

Just as chefs and manufacturers in the bakery sector and beyond are adopting plant-based butter alternative ingredients, many consumers are now turning to plant-based butter and spread products in the supermarkets. The shift is driven by factors such as environmental and animal welfare concerns, as well as allergies.

Brands, from smaller start-ups to large multinational companies, continue to strive to meet this growing demand. Flora Food Group removed the buttermilk from its ‘Buttery’ product in 2023, making its range fully plant-based again. The company also refreshed all its spreads, aligning them with the same branding used for its Plant B+tter line to better reflect their natural, plant-based status.

More recently, dairy cooperative Arla Foods released a plant-based version of its popular Lurpak butter last summer, aiming to meet evolving consumer preferences and new consumption habits. Lurpak Plant Based is made from rapeseed, coconut and shea oil, as well as water, oat, culture, salt, carrot concentrate and lemon concentrate.

Speaking to *The Plant Base*, Elena Marchenko, vice president at Arla Foods and head of Lurpak emphasised that dairy “is and always will be at the core of our business” – but acknowledged that many consumers are now showing interest in plant-based, and Arla wanted to offer a high-quality product that can meet the needs of consumers regardless of whether they want dairy.

“The development phase [for Lurpak Plant Based] started back in 2020,” Marchenko said. “We have spent a lot of time developing this product to

achieve a product that offers all the great taste and quality you would expect from Lurpak, but in a plant-based spread."

While Marchenko observed that growth in the plant-based category has slowed more than anticipated after its peak in previous years, she suggested this could be due to the taste and texture compromises seen in many products. This is an issue that Lurpak was determined to address by leveraging its expertise in dairy.

Innovation in flavoured butter products, a trend that has been gaining traction in the traditional butters category, has also increased in the plant-based sector over the last year. Savoury offerings like Flora's Smoked Garlic Plant B+tter, launched in September 2024, can be used to enhance recipes such as garlic mushrooms or pasta dishes. And Miyoko's Creamery, a US-based alt-dairy brand, has extended its oat milk butter range with a savoury Garlic Parm flavour and a sweet Cinnamon Brown Sugar flavour, both introduced last summer.

Stuart Kronauge, CEO of Miyoko's Creamery, said: "Miyoko's Creamery is leading innovation by crafting plant-based butters and spreads with high-quality, organic ingredients and bold and unique flavours".

"Our Garlic Parm and Cinnamon Brown Sugar oat milk butters were inspired by consumer demand for more versatile and flavourful dairy-free butter alternatives, as well as by the ever-growing popularity of oat milk."

She added that Miyoko's endeavours to create products that appeal to a broad audience – not just those who are vegan, plant-based or dairy-free. To achieve this, the brand selected flavours based on research that indicated they would suit a variety of tastes and meal occasions, both savoury and sweet.

"We're seeing the rise of indulgent and functional flavours, an emphasis on sustainability and even more demand for allergen-friendly options. These trends have directly influenced Miyoko's product development, pushing us to create innovative new products that check all these boxes – like our new oat milk butters."

The brand's use of oats and cashews in its butters and spreads lends to their creamy texture, as well as appealing to consumers looking for sustainable alternatives outside of almond or soy choices, which are common allergens.

"We also use traditional creamery methods to craft our products, which means that our butters



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actually brown like traditional dairy-based options," Kronauge highlighted.

"The biggest challenge in crafting plant-based butters and spreads lies in achieving the desired texture and taste that mimics traditional dairy products, because that is ultimately what consumers are looking for. They want their dairy-free options to be familiar. At Miyoko's, we've been able to overcome this using these traditional creamery methods that enhance flavour and consistency."

In the future, Kronauge expects to see plant-based butters and spreads continue to evolve toward bolder flavour innovation, more recognisable and diverse ingredient profiles, and improved functionality.

As Be Better My Friend's Lindeman pointed out, the future "is not about plant-based vs dairy" – he believes as more chefs continue to embrace plant butter solutions like Be Better, these will integrate seamlessly into their craft.

"Over time, labels like 'vegan' or 'plant-based' will fade to the background as we already see happening in cities like London and Amsterdam, leaving only quality, trust and sustainability," he concluded. ●