

ArtiFactsheet: Butter mould and stamp

A butter mould is a tool used to form butter into shapes, while a butter stamp is used to mark the butter with a design. In many instances they were combined in the same device. Butter moulds and stamps were introduced to North America by European settlers who brought the tools and techniques from their homelands. Butter moulds were particularly useful for marketing butter as it allowed producers to form a quantity of butter with a desired weight, while the stamp could be used to identify the maker. The stamps were also decorative, with symbols and designs reflecting particular regions.

Moulds and stamps were initially carved by hand from wood, often by the farmer who was made the butter. Production eventually moved to factories that could quickly produce moulds and stamps in larger quantities. Butter moulds and stamps were popular from the mid-1700s until the early 1900s, but gradually fell out of use as butter became mass-produced in creameries.

Many artifacts related to butter moulds and stamps can be found in the collection of Ingenium – Canada's Museums of Science and Innovation:
ingeniumcanada.org/ingenium/collection-research/collection.php.

Artifact Details

Butter mould, circa 1890
Manufacturer: Unknown
Artifact no. 1987.0387.001

People used butter moulds, like the one pictured below, to shape butter into rectangular blocks, and imprint them with designs. This particular mould is Canadian-made from maple wood and metal fittings. The design on the stamp consists of the letters SRL (possibly the initials of the butter maker) with stars on both sides surrounded by vertical and horizontal lines.

Fun Fact

Butter stamps typically have agricultural themed designs, such as cows and different types of grains and flowers.

