NEWS LESSON

Why Butter Has Become a Small Luxury



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Which ordinary food would you queue to try?
2. Can good packaging make a familiar product feel special?
3. Would you travel across town for something you saw online?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**eccentric**	☐	A	safe and good to eat
2	**celebrated**	☐	B	famous and admired by many people
3	**versatility**	☐	C	costing or using much more than is needed
4	**peculiar**	☐	D	facts or ideas that do not fit together
5	**extravagant**	☐	E	the ability to be used in many different ways
6	**edible**	☐	F	strange in a way that is unusual or a little funny
7	**contradictions**	☐	G	strange or unusual, often in an unexpected way
8	**marketable**	☐	H	easy to sell because people want it

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A mundane kitchen essential has been repackaged as a luxury. The trend may reveal more about how we treat food than about butter itself.

1 In the summer of 2026, opening a shop dedicated to butter in Paris looked like an eccentric commercial gamble. The city was enduring temperatures approaching 41°C, and proprietor Erwan Leo was understandably anxious about his refrigerators, let alone the size of his potential customer base. Yet his shop, Le Butter, quickly drew enough attention to warrant managing queues outside. A substance that had spent decades as a mundane kitchen essential was being transformed into a desirable souvenir, an object of culinary expertise and, increasingly, a social media spectacle.

2 The Paris boutique stocks roughly fifty varieties, while a celebrated food hall elsewhere in the city offers an even more extensive selection. Customers compare the subtle flavours of salted, cultured and regionally produced butters much as enthusiasts might discuss wine. Reporting for the Guardian in October 2026, Morwenna Ferrier described tourists stocking up, restaurants presenting elaborate butter dishes and fashionable events using the ingredient as decoration. Butter has moved beyond the bread basket and into a strange new role as a statement about taste.

3 Its rehabilitation is remarkable given the ingredient's recent history. For years, conversations about saturated fat gave butter an unhealthy reputation, and many consumers moved towards margarine or vegetable oils. The current enthusiasm does not erase those concerns, but it does highlight the difference between nutritional guidance and food culture. Chefs have long valued butter for its richness and versatility. What's new is the extent to which a once-unremarkable ingredient is being singled out for admiration, photographed and sold as an experience in itself.

4 Part of the appeal lies in what might be called affordable indulgence. During periods of financial pressure, a costly holiday or designer purchase may be out of the question, whereas a beautifully wrapped packet of butter remains attainable. Add crusty bread and a quiet evening, and an everyday meal can feel unexpectedly luxurious. Social media helps such small pleasures catch on, particularly when producers package them with the visual care ordinarily associated with jewellery or cosmetics. The result is a peculiar mixture of genuine gastronomic curiosity and highly marketable nostalgia.

5 Still, the butter boom carries contradictions. Restaurants that pride themselves on sustainability may struggle to justify extravagant edible centrepieces that risk ending up in the bin. Social media encourages ever more theatrical displays, even when the ingredient's real virtues are best appreciated in modest quantities. And although butter's reputation may have softened, it remains rich in saturated fat. The claim that something is traditional, artisanal or beautifully presented should not be mistaken for scientific evidence that unlimited consumption is harmless.

6 Perhaps the more revealing question is why we continually turn familiar foods into cultural events. A good ingredient deserves recognition, and skilled producers can offer real differences in flavour and quality. But trends also encourage us to confuse scarcity, packaging and online popularity with lasting value. When the queues shorten, butter will still have its simplest appeal: melting into warm bread.

Sources: The Guardian. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer suggests that butter's return owes more to food culture than to any change in nutritional guidance. T F NG
2. Most of the customers at Le Butter are tourists. T F NG
3. The writer treats packaging as irrelevant to the appeal of small luxuries. T F NG
4. Butter's unhealthy reputation in recent decades came from nutritional concerns, not from chefs disliking it. T F NG
5. Butter sales in Paris have doubled since the shop opened. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

affluence **attainable** **connoisseur** **gastronomic** **nostalgia** **proprietor** **rehabilitation** **warrant**

1. The evidence is too thin to _____ a full investigation.
2. The _____ of the family restaurant refused to sell it, whatever the offer.
3. After years of disgrace, the architect's _____ began when a major museum put his work on display.
4. A house in the city centre is no longer _____ for most young people on average wages.
5. The film trades on _____ for a simpler past.
6. The region is a magnet for _____ tourism, with food trails and tasting menus.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The company's _____ to adapt cost it dearly. (WILLING)
2. Critics questioned the _____ of building yet another stadium. (SUSTAIN)
3. Her _____ approach to money meant she saved little and spent on a whim. (IMPULSE)
4. The _____ that the firm had hidden its losses was firmly denied. (ALLEGE)
5. The _____ of fresh herbs in winter forces chefs to plan ahead. (SCARCE)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At this level, notice register and grammar. Notwithstanding takes a noun, albeit takes an adjective or phrase, and hence follows a semicolon.

albeit **hence** **namely** **nonetheless** **notwithstanding** **thereby** **whereas**

1. _____ the high prices, the shop was packed every weekend.
2. The recipe was tasty, _____ rather rich.
3. Critics call the dish overpriced, _____ its fans insist it is worth every penny.
4. The festival was meant to be small; _____ , it drew crowds in the thousands.
5. Demand far exceeded supply; _____ , prices climbed sharply.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. When is a food trend worth the fuss?
2. Would a special version of an everyday food feel like a treat or a waste?
3. What familiar food from your area deserves more attention?

9 Role-play: a trip to the butter shop

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the food fan

You've seen a shop that sells fifty kinds of butter. You want to spend Saturday morning there. Persuade your friend to come. Say why it's worth a trip.

Student B · the sensible friend

You think queuing for butter is silly. You'd rather save money and cook at home. Ask questions, then agree on a plan you both like.

Useful phrases

Have you seen this shop?

I'd love to go on Saturday.

Is it really worth queuing for?

I'd rather save my money, to be honest.

We could go early, so there won't be a queue.

Let's meet in the middle: shop first, then lunch at home.

Afterwards, tell the class: where did you decide to go, and who gave way?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 F · 2 B · 3 E · 4 G · 5 C · 6 A · 7 D · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 NG · 3 F · 4 T · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 warrant · 2 proprietor · 3 rehabilitation · 4 attainable · 5 nostalgia · 6 gastronomic

6 Word forms

1 unwillingness · 2 sustainability · 3 impulsive · 4 allegation · 5 scarcity

7 Language focus

1 Notwithstanding · 2 albeit · 3 whereas · 4 nonetheless · 5 hence

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