

Journal Entry from 1725

By ReadWorks

June 21, 1725

Dear Diary,

Today is the summer solstice. Papa says this means that the sun will reach its highest point in the sky today. Mama says this means that today is the longest day of the year. Mary says that this means we will be sticky and sweaty all day today. Me, I know what this really means. It means we'll be able to play outside for longer, and the musicians will play merry tunes on their pipes and accordions.

Summer is my favorite time of the year. We don't have to go to school and study. We also don't have to wake up at the crack of dawn to help Papa with the cows. I like cows; you can look into a cow's eyes and know what she is thinking.

Summer is also good for making butter, and Mama makes me help her with it, so that one day I can make butter on my own. Once I collect the milk in the morning, I separate it into the milk that we will need to drink, and the milk for the butter. Mama pours some of the milk into a large container, which we leave in the kitchen, by the window. Because it is summer, and because today is the longest and sunniest day of the year, it doesn't take long for the milk to harden and curdle into that thick, creamy mixture. After that, I easily skim off the top layers of cream and put that into a new container. Then, Mama and I leave that by the window for a few more hours, while I practice my Bible reading and help Mama wash the clothes.

By evening time, the cream in the kitchen has had some time to set, and it's time for my favorite part of the butter making process. Mama makes sure the container of cream is sealed, and then she hands it to me. I shake it back and forth, shake shake shake. I dance around the kitchen with it, to make the jar shake as much as possible. With enough shaking, the liquid stuff inside the jar separates from the solid stuff, and now we have created two things: butter and buttermilk.

Mama tells me to rest after my dancing exercise, and I watch her pour the buttermilk into another jar, which she keeps in the shade in the kitchen. It's a good thing we have so many empty jars. Meanwhile, she takes the solid chunks and pours water over them to clean them. Then she puts the chunky stuff into a bowl and uses her hands to knead it. I help her do this, so there are four hands in the butter, kneading it and massaging it. It feels cool and creamy, and some of it sticks to my hands. I want to lick it, but Mama tells me to wait until the butter is good and ready. Then it will be even more tasty.

We keep jabbing at the butter until there is no more liquid left; everything is hard. Mama churns the butter as well, for good measure, to make sure that anything that isn't butter is no longer part of the mixture. I can't believe that something I squeezed out of a cow's udder is now something so hard and tasty!

We celebrate summer solstice by eating freshly made butter with bread that Papa has brought back from the market. Outside, the musicians play on their accordions, Mary does a little summer solstice dance, and we wait for the sun to set.