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Butter Sculpture Display Facts

In the early 1900s, The Ohio State University and Ohio's dairy processors sponsored butter sculpting contests at the Ohio State Fair. The subjects of these contests were not restricted to specific themes.

As a result of one of the sculpting contests, the first butter cow made its debut at the fair in 1903 and was crafted by A.T. Shelton & Co., distributors of Sunbury Cooperative Creamery butter.

Eventually, the butter cow, and later the butter calf, found a permanent "home" in the Dairy Products Building, which was constructed in the 1920s. New cow and calf sculptures are crafted in butter each year, thus becoming a fair tradition.

Additional butter figures were added to the butter cow and calf display in the early 1960s, and the subject changes every year.

The Dairy Products Building and the butter sculpture display are sponsored by the American Dairy Association Mideast, Ohio's dairy-farmer funded marketing and promotion program.

Each year, the American Dairy Association Mideast selects an icon or theme to feature in butter that is non-political, non-controversial and reflects optimism and broad audience-appeal.

On behalf of Ohio's dairy farmers, the American Dairy Association Mideast commissions a group of technical sculptors to create the butter masterpiece. The Ohio-based team includes lead sculptors Paul Brooke and Alex Balz of Cincinnati, Tammy Buerk of West Chester, Erin Birum of Columbus and dairy farmer Matt Davidson of Sidney.

The mural in the display is painted by Ohio-based artist Ted Hendricks of Cincinnati.

The butter display is completed in about 500 hours, of which 400 hours are spent sculpting, and is made from approximately 2,200 pounds of butter, donated in part by Dairy Farmers of America.

The butter sculptures are displayed in a large walk-in cooler, where the temperature is maintained at 46 degrees. The energy-efficient refrigerated display case is 36 feet long by 11 feet wide and also houses Ohio's Blue Ribbon Cheeses from the Ohio State Fair cheese contest.

After the fair, the butter is recycled and refined into an ingredient used in products like soaps and grease for metal forging.

More than 500,000 fairgoers visit the Dairy Products Building annually to see the butter sculptures and enjoy ice cream, milkshakes and cheese sandwiches.

Previous butter displays include:

- Astronaut Neil Armstrong
- Golfer Jack Nicklaus
- Star War's Darth Vader
- A Tribute to the Arts
- A Tribute to Milk Delivery
- Indy 500 Winner Bobby Rahal

Continued

- Jack Hanna and the Columbus Zoo
- The Modern Dairy Farmer
- Boxer Buster Douglas
- A Salute to the Armed Forces
- A Tribute to the Olympics
- A Tribute to 4-H
- The Anniversary of the Ice Cream Cone
- Wendy's founder Dave Thomas
- A Salute to Dairy Product Development
- The Ohio State Buckeyes
- Space Pioneer John Glenn
- Fuel Up to Play 60 school wellness program
- A Tribute to the Nation's Space Program
- A Salute to the Columbus Bicentennial
- Anniversary of the All-Ohio Youth Choir
- A Tribute to Ohio's State Symbols
- Ohio State Football National Championship
- Retired Butter Sculptor Dan Ross
- A Day at the Fair with Hasbro Toys
- The Columbus Crew
- A Salute to America
- Aviators Orville and Wilbur Wright
- Great Explorers Lewis and Clark
- America's Favorite Treat - Ice Cream
- Cincinnati Bengals and Cleveland Browns
- Ohio as the Nation's Leader in Swiss Cheese
- Tribute to Ohio's U.S. Presidents
- A Salute to Ohio Dairy Farmers
- Cleveland Cavaliers NBA Championship
- Chocolate milk, the Official Beverage of the Ohio High School Athletic Association
- A Tribute to A Christmas Story
- 50th Anniversary of the Moon Landing