



**YEARS OF MARGARINE**

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**1865**

# Napoleon's Prize

Not many products can boast the involvement of Emperor Napoleon III in its invention.

## **Margarine can.**

Napoleon III was pondering the fact that not only poor people in his empire, but also his armed forces, could use an affordable substitute for butter. Butter was expensive, hard to come by, and didn't hold up for long. A substitute was needed for troops to carry as a ready and low-cost source of energy.

So he offered a reward to anyone clever enough to come up with a suitable, low-cost replacement.

The rest is history. *Correction: savory history.*



**1869**

# Hippolyte Mège-Mouriès

A chemist named *Hippolyte Mège-Mouriès* rose to the occasion, inventing a substance he called oleomargarine - which was later shortened to margarine.

By 1869, *Mège-Mouriès* had patented the process for creating margarine that won him Napoleon's prize.

His oleomargarine was comprised primarily of beef fat and skimmed milk, all heated and mixed into a butter-like substance.

The name margarine was inspired by its lustre and shine, an allusion to the Greek *margaritēs* meaning "pearl".

Though in truth, at this stage, it was more of a "jelly" than what we think of as margarine today, it did do the job.

Namely: **replace butter.**



**1886**

# Margarine Act

By the late 19th century, several companies were manufacturing margarine.

How do you think people who sold butter reacted to this news? Butter was *big business*, and the notion that a cheaper substitute might storm the market – even if made in part with milk – terrified dairy farmers.

They didn't take the threat lying down and convinced European and national legislators to put restrictions on packaging and tax margarine at a heavy rate. Measures that were squarely aimed at protecting the dairy industry.

Even to this day, little has been done to modernise legislation and make consumer protection its prime focus.



**1901**

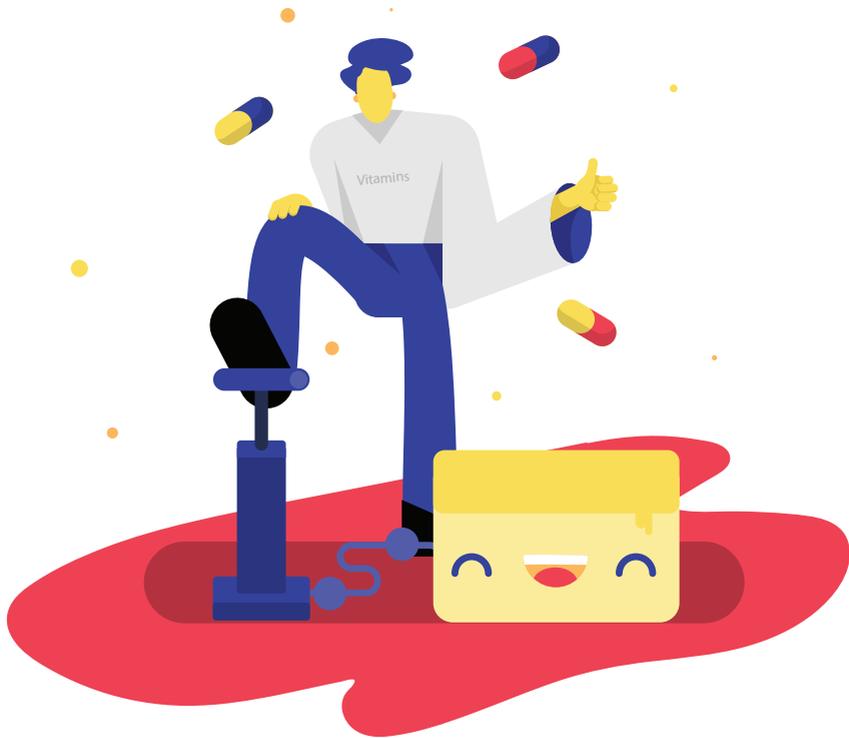
# Mooogarine

Today, margarine is known as a plant-based product that perfectly fits a plant-based lifestyle. Margarine and plants weren't always intertwined. It was a shortage in beef fat that led to the successful introduction of vegetable oils.

It was back in 1871 that Henry W. Bradley of New York patented a process for *creating margarine* which – at first – used vegetable oil combined with animal fats.

The year 1901 saw the invention of hydrogenation by the German scientist, Wilhelm Norman: a process by which vegetable oils could be transformed into solid fats.

The name of the game then became how to combine different oils, fats and fatty acids to enhance the texture of margarine. Coupled with the **worldwide depression** of the 1930s, this created the perfect catalyst for the *margarine industry to grow*.



**1925**

# Pump up the goodness

Eating sufficient amounts of the right types of fats is important for a *number of reasons*. Dietary fats are a major source of energy for our bodies and are structural components of our body cells. The fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K cannot be absorbed by the body without the help of fats.

Margarines and fat-based spreads have been fortified with vitamins A and D within the European Community for over 85 years now – following an initial trial in the US in 1925. Today, many European countries even require the mandatory addition of vitamins A and D to margarine and fat-based spreads for reasons of public health.

Adding vitamins A and D to margarine turned out to be not only smart, but also **highly efficient**.



**1950**

# Flying off the shelves

In the 50s margarine started to boom. But its accessible price wasn't its only draw card. Consumers were ideologically smitten with the ever-growing selection of packaged, standardised foods being offered to them in *new-concept supermarkets*.

In buying these foods, homemakers gained ready-to-eat convenience as well as cultural status. Margarine wasn't just a pale substitute, but a modern marvel.

The real European heyday of margarine was in the 80s. Margarine was a 'natural reflex', a want-to-have product that was **loved by young and old**.



**1985**

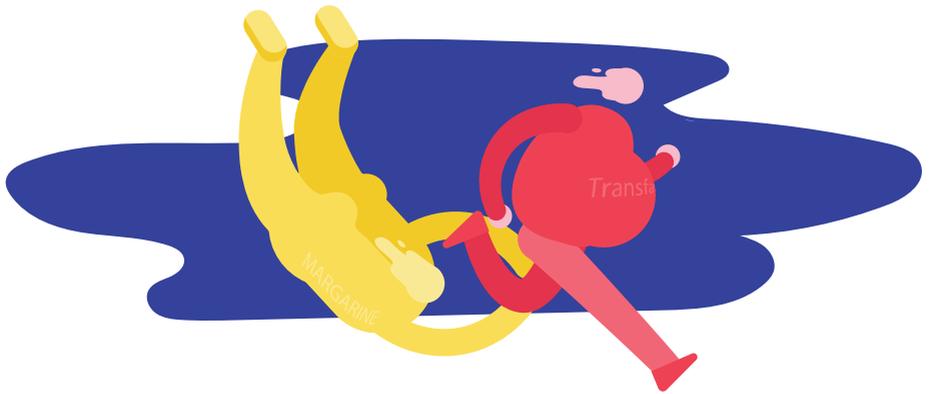
# Health-euh?!

A flourishing category is bound to get backlash.  
Fueled by competing industries. Fueled by critics.  
Fueled by everyone who finds out something they  
*don't like about you.*

It did not take long for 'margarine naysayers' to gain  
traction after the golden 80s.

They said: margarine makes your arteries clog,  
it is pro-inflammatory, it contains chemical and  
artificial ingredients, it is only one molecule away  
from plastic, it contains harmful trans fats.

The margarine iNdustry fought back, but also listened.  
Carefully – as some claims turned out  
**to be more true** than others.



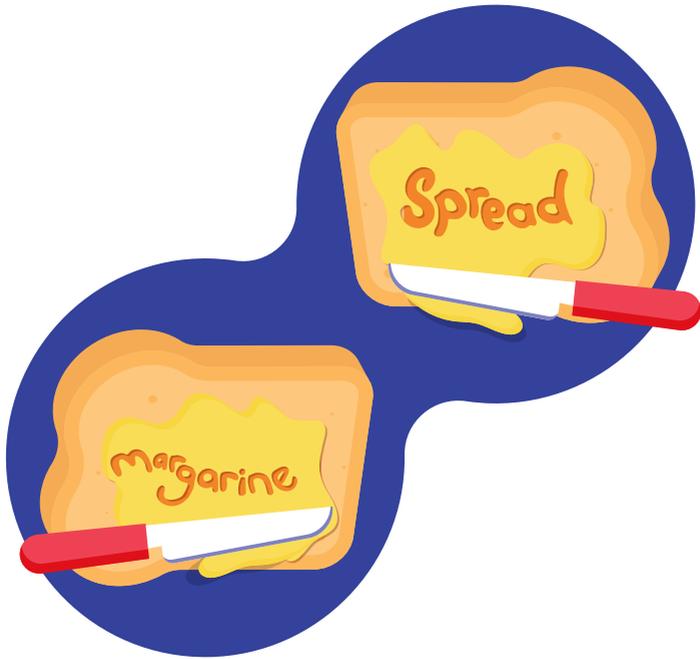
**1990**

# Tackling trans fat

As early as in the 90s, the European margarine sector, represented by IMACE, started working on the reduction of trans fat levels in its margarines and vegetable oil spreads.

As a result, trans fat levels in margarines and spreads have been well *below 2% on fat basis (or below 1% on product basis)* for some time now, as recommended by public authorities.

This joint effort of the European margarine industry was an important leap forward to making margarine **future-proof**.



**1994**

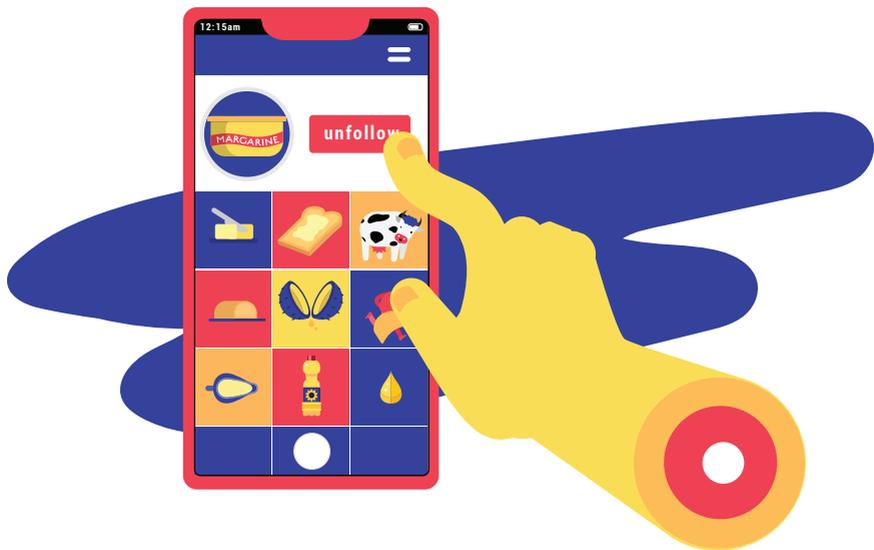
# What's in a name?

What's in a name? Is it margarine? Is it minarine?  
Or simply spread? On 5 December 1994 the 'yellow fats regulation'  
was published under nr 2291/94/EEC. One small step for man, but  
*one giant leap* for the margarine industry.

In collaboration with the dairy industry, the new legislation saw the  
light of day. It ended an era of restricted production under the name  
of margarine or minarine and opened up roads to the creation of  
new blends.

The road to product innovation was opened. Think of innovations  
including liquid baking margarines, Omega-3 fatty acid content,  
products low in salt or containing none, the introduction of plant  
sterols, olive oil or certified vegan oils.

Packaging was on the move as well: the squeeze bottle was  
introduced – to the delight of **many consumers**.



**2000**

# Je t'aime, moi non plus

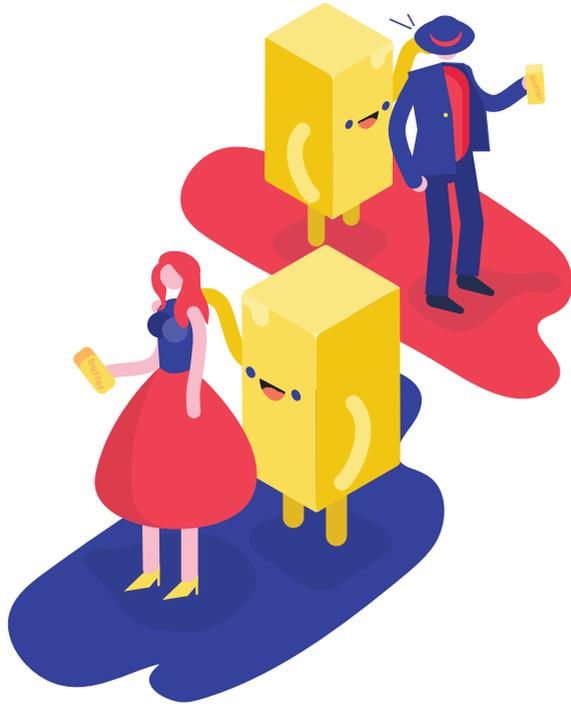
Je t'aime, moi non plus. This classic of the French singer-composer Serge Gainsbourg could have been written as the theme song for the margarine industry.

Over the past decades, people have loved to fall in and out of **love with margarine.**

Though in the 2000s the industry had long moved away from harmful trans fats, a certain stigma remained. Marketing was in flux, with a number of brands dropping the term margarine altogether. They started calling their products a 'spread' – the name used for modern margarines with lower fat content.

*Recipes were also changing to produce lower-fat versions.*

Semi-solid oils like coconut or palm oil entered the game. These were used as alternatives for the partially hydrogenated fats that contained trans fat.



**2005**

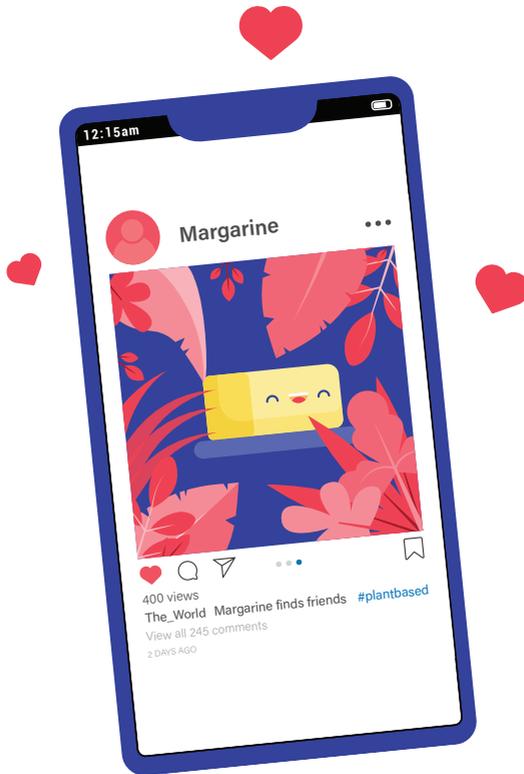
# Secret motor for good

What can we do to get people to eat **healthier**?

That challenge is being picked up by margarine on a daily basis in the B2B world. Margarine is the *hidden ingredient* of many product improvements. Think of better fatty acid profiles or lower environmental impact.

It is only fair to say that Mège-Mouriès' invention lead to healthier and more sustainable foods – and that on a massive scale. Even today, the margarine industry isn't particularly boastful about the *'change for the better'* they are able to power.

With consumers slowly but surely adopting plant-based eating habits, it is time for this product to get the credit it deserves: to become a loved and daily plant-based reflex in people's lives.



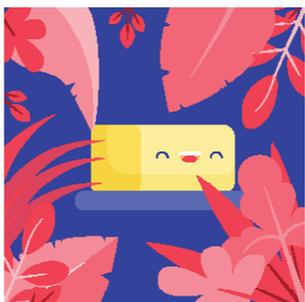
**2010**

# The plant-based opportunity

Margarine has a significantly lower environmental impact compared with animal fats such as butter. According to a study conducted in multiple European markets in 2010, the margarine production chain is shown to be a lot lighter on its feet compared to animal fats like butter. The carbon footprint of margarine, namely, was proven to be less than one third that of butter.

How come? Land use for margarine is about half that of butter. More land is needed to produce the feed for dairy cows than is needed to grow the crops for vegetable oils used to make margarine.

That eating plant-based products is **good for people and the planet** was underlined by Oxford Martin School researchers. They calculated that a global switch to diets that rely less on meat and more on fruit and vegetables could save up to *8 million lives* by 2050, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by two thirds, lead to healthcare-related savings and avoid climate damages of 1.8 trillion euro.



# Sustainability

Sometimes life hands you a gift as big as an enormous box of chocolates. That happened to the margarine industry when the plant-based movement started to grow explosively around 2015.

Today, in a special report on the development of plant based eating in the European Union, the European Commission recognizes that plant-based alternatives are rapidly gaining popularity in Europe.

In a section dedicated to the development of plant based foods for human consumption, the report identifies the “particularly promising” market for dairy alternatives, which represent an annual growth rate of 11%. The report also notes that plant-based analogs are no longer a niche market – they are becoming mainstream as the group of vegans, vegetarians and flexitarians grows every day.



**2019**

# Spreading the love

Today, plant-based margarine is surely but steadily carving out a niche in the plant-based world. Some brands proudly spur 100% plant-based margarines and launch vegan spreads. All made with nothing more than a blend of plant-based oils, water and a pinch of renewed *category love*.

The plant-based community is keen to embrace these products since they fit their lifestyle like a glove. This shift in consumer behaviour is particularly visible in western and northern Europe and can be explained by “changing eating habits with a growing number of flexitarians” as well as the growing popularity of international cuisines rich in plant-based ingredients.

With the plant-based eating trend well under way, it is needless to say that many more old and new brands will be **“spreading the love”**.



**One fine day**

# The Future

The future of margarine is bright. 150 years down the road, margarine is bound to flourish in a plant-based world.

Margarine producers have rekindled with category pride. They look forward to a promising future where margarine is not just a part of a healthy lifestyle, but where margarine contributes to a healthier life.

Personalized nutrition is *growing fast*: it is the science between nutrients and genes to create tailored diets which complement a person's unique genetic profile. Not only will personalized nutrition optimize the health of the individual, it may also work on a larger scale to help prevent society-wide diseases.

The margarine industry is working hard to deserve a prominent place in this exciting personalized, plant-based new world.

**Onward to the next 150 years!**





