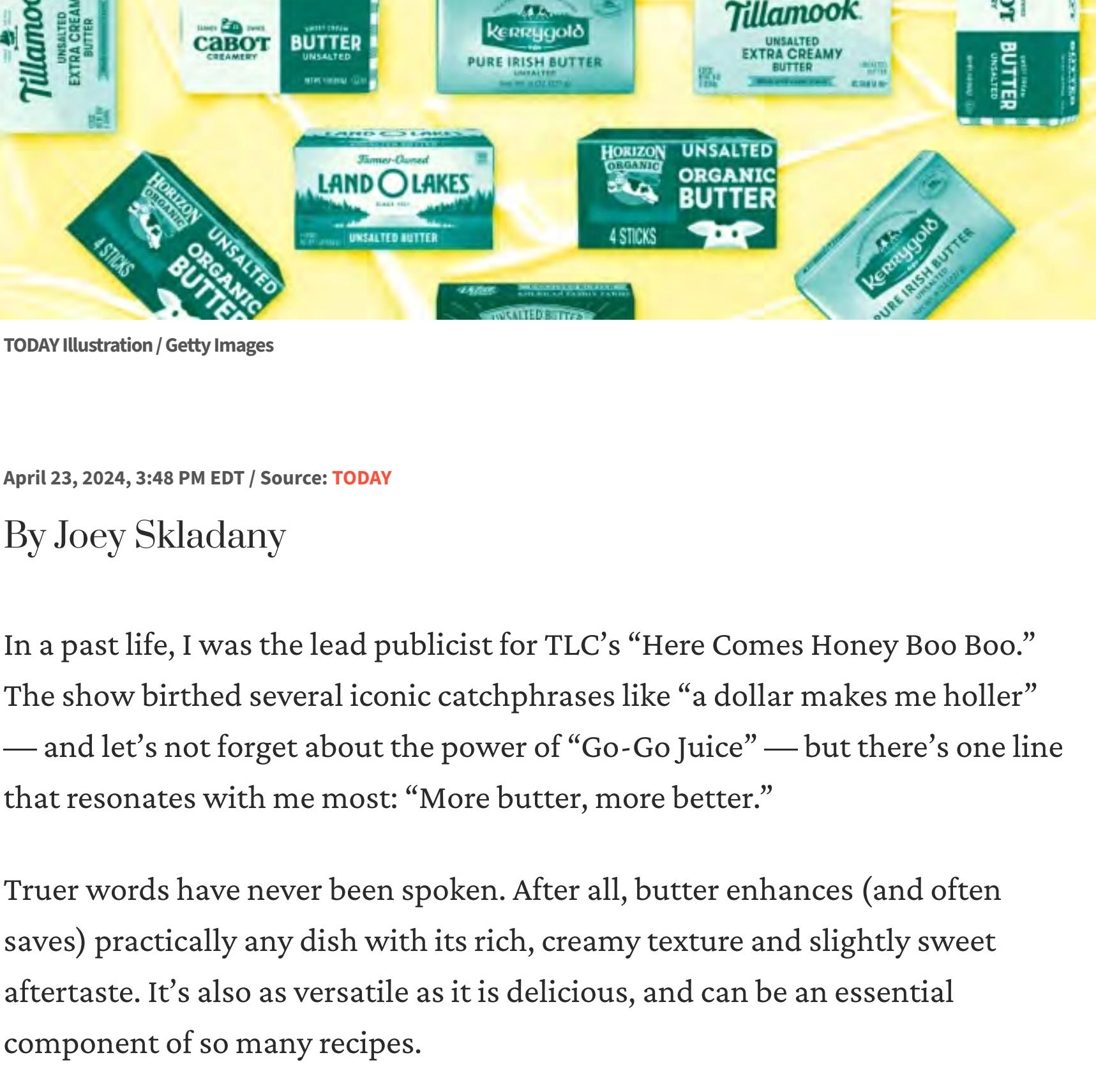


GROCERIES

I tried 7 butters and the winner made me melt

From classics like Land O’Lakes to Irish sweetheart Kerrygold, there wasn’t a bad butter in the bunch.



TODAY Illustration / Getty Images

April 23, 2024, 3:48 PM EDT / Source: **TODAY**

By **Joey Skladany**

In a past life, I was the lead publicist for TLC’s “Here Comes Honey Boo Boo.” The show birthed several iconic catchphrases like “a dollar makes me holler” — and let’s not forget about the power of “Go-Go Juice” — but there’s one line that resonates with me most: “More butter, more better.”

Truer words have never been spoken. After all, butter enhances (and often saves) practically any dish with its rich, creamy texture and slightly sweet aftertaste. It’s also as versatile as it is delicious, and can be an essential component of so many recipes.

Of course, no culture has perfected butter better than the French — it is a staple in most iconic dishes, from escargot and quiche Lorraine to croissants and éclairs. So it only made sense to tap into the expertise of Arnaud Bloquel, who was named 2018’s Best Master Restaurateur in France. Bloquel is now the executive chef of Lucie in Toronto, where I dined on some of the richest and most decadent foods in recent memory. The meal, unsurprisingly, started with freshly baked bread and heaps of artisanal butter.

“High fat content makes a huge difference in terms of quality,” Bloquel told me. “Often, butter manufacturers add too much water, which creates a lesser product.”

“A good way to test your butter is to melt it in a pan,” he adds. “If it melts right away and becomes dark brown, you know you are dealing with the good stuff.”

While Bloquel, like many professional chefs, recommends using “artisanal butter where human intervention is required,” his top two tips for store-bought varieties are to look for a high fat content and a high-quality milk. He also exclusively uses salted varieties as it “brings all the flavors and characteristics out of the butter.” This includes what he dubs “the most important [technique] in French cooking”: *monter au beurre* (incorporating butter into a sauce at the end of its preparation).

“It adds intensity, texture and a lovely shine to the sauce,” he says, noting that French chefs aim for it to have a reflective sheen almost like a mirror.

So I heeded his advice and bought seven of the most readily-available butters I could find, keeping fat content and milk quality in mind as I perused grocery store shelves and read way too many labels. And while Bloquel may recommend using only salted products, most amateur cooks and bakers simply can’t be trusted with balancing individual flavor components. So I opted for unsalted to really get a sense of how these butters could stand up on their own, without an assist from everyone’s favorite mineral.

Start spreading the news! Here’s how they each ranked.

7. Organic Valley Unsalted Butter



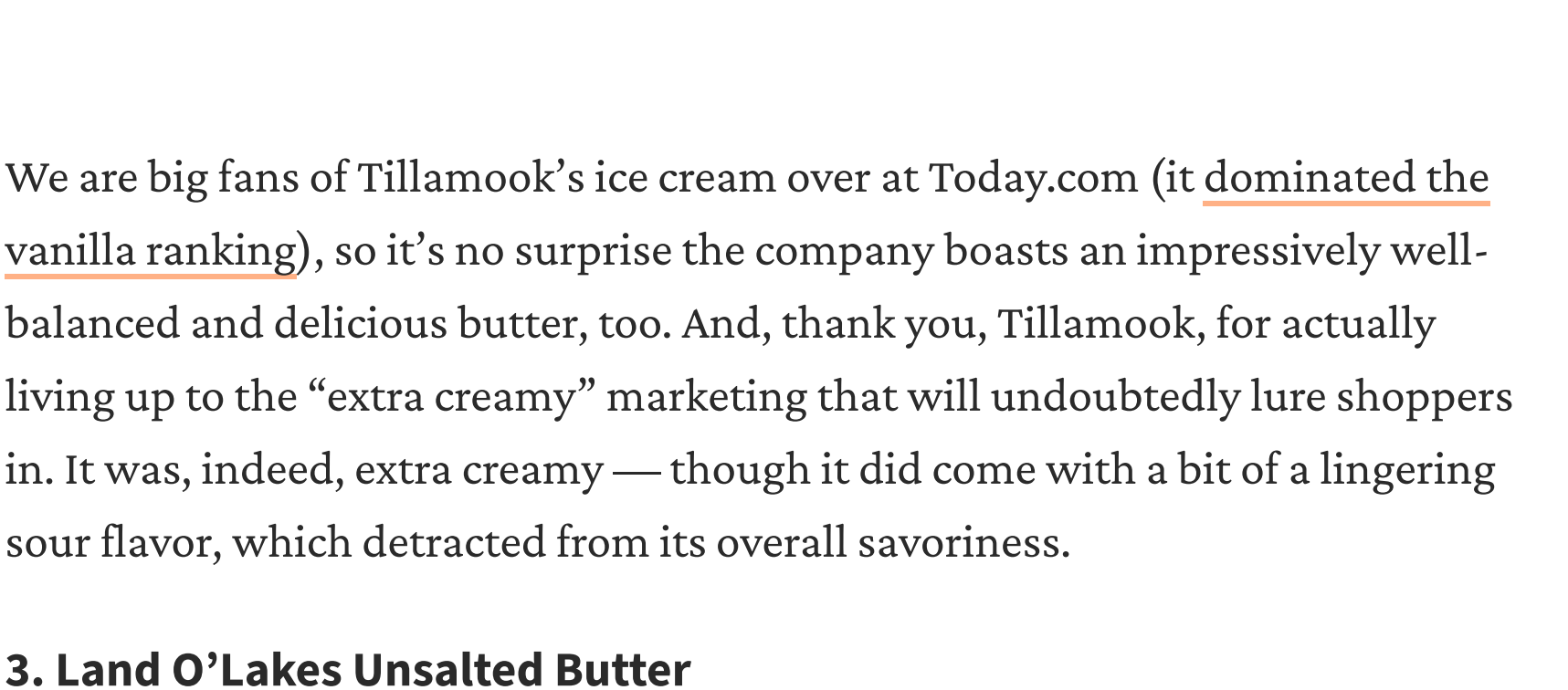
Organic Valley Unsalted Butter

\$7.98 AT WALMART

\$9.79 AT INSTACART

I was quite fond of Organic Valley’s creaminess, but found the flavor to be severely diluted and practically non-existent. This could have benefited from, well, salt (sorry, chef). I do think its rich texture would lend itself best to a slice of warm bread or a stack of pancakes. That said, no butter on this list was awful, and I was shocked to see such a beloved brand come in last place. But here we are, and I stand by this opinion.

6. Vital Farms Unsalted Butter



Vital Farms Unsalted Butter

\$4.99 AT INSTACART

\$4.99 AT THE FRESH GROCER

Like Organic Valley, this suffered from a lack of umami, which good butter usually brings to a dish. And while it had a bit of an unexpected tang that I didn’t mind, it wasn’t as memorable or bold as the higher-ranking sticks. I did enjoy the adorable packaging, though, so kudos to the design team for an eye-catching cow and flower label.

5. Cabot Creamery Unsalted Sweet Cream Butter



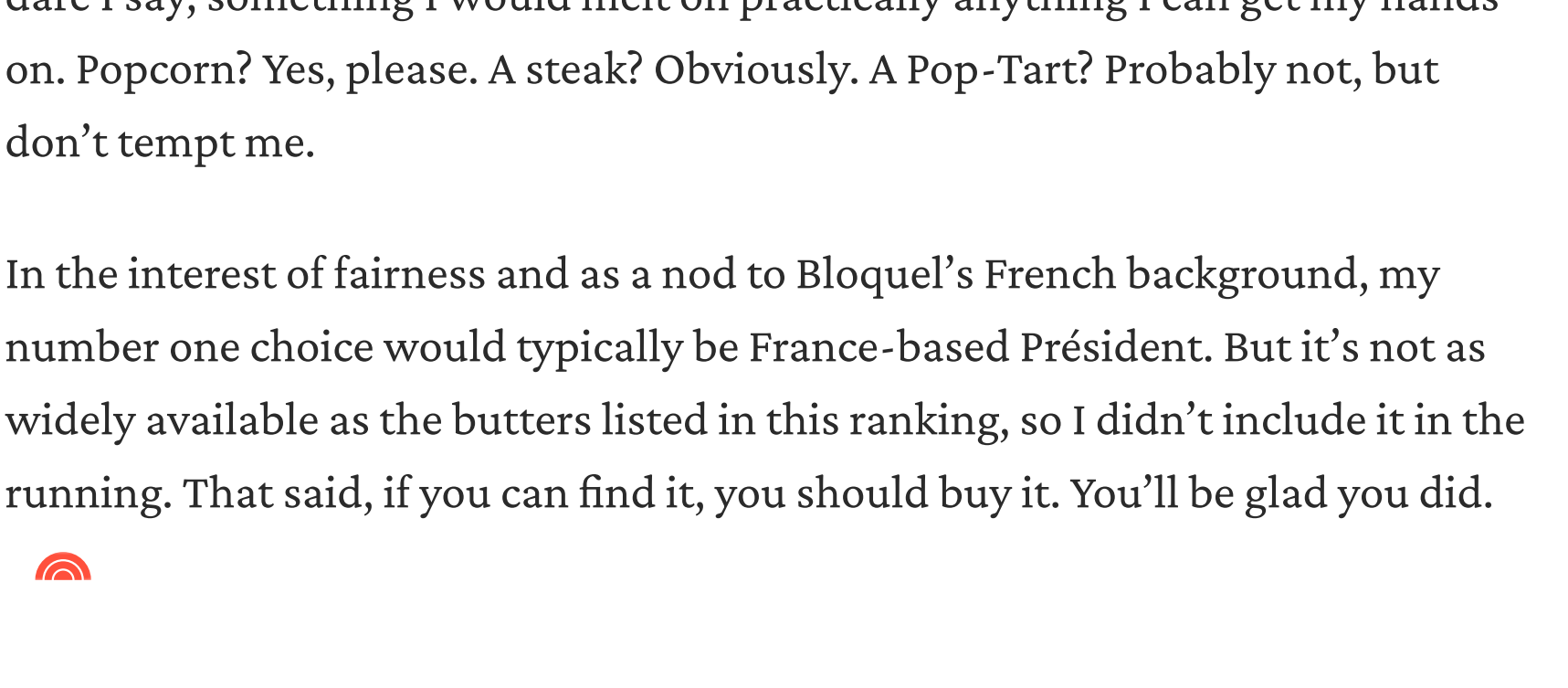
Cabot Creamery Unsalted Sweet Cream Butter

\$4.68 AT WALMART

\$8.99 AT KINGS FOOD MARKETS

Admittedly, I couldn’t make up my mind with this one. There were moments when I thought, “Wow, good, rich butter!” And then there were moments when I thought, “Meh, just okay butter.” Either way, I wasn’t interested in putting my tongue through a taste bud Olympics, so this earned a well-deserved fifth place. It’s butter I would absolutely buy again, but I’d really need to sit down and spread it on a bunch of things before I come to a final conclusion. In the meantime, I’ll be noshing on the brand’s line of yummy cheeses.

4. Tillamook Extra Creamy Unsalted Butter



Tillamook Extra Creamy Unsalted Butter

\$5.28 AT WALMART

\$5.69 AT TARGET

\$5.28 AT INSTACART

We are big fans of Tillamook’s ice cream over at Today.com (it dominated the vanilla ranking), so it’s no surprise the company boasts an impressively well-balanced and delicious butter, too. And, thank you, Tillamook, for actually living up to the “extra creamy” marketing that will undoubtedly lure shoppers in. It was, indeed, extra creamy — though it did come with a bit of a lingering sour flavor, which detracted from its overall savoriness.

3. Land O’Lakes Unsalted Butter

Land O’Lakes Unsalted Butter

\$5.28 AT WALMART

\$5.79 AT TARGET

\$4.99 AT INSTACART

I know many of you were expecting me to pooh-pooh one of America’s most popular butter brands (because, let’s face it, there is no way on Earth this was going to hold a candle to international alternatives with higher fat contents), but Land O’Lakes held its own with an oh-so-sweet departure from the competition. And while familiarity can certainly sway a taste-test ranking, this was objectively good with a praiseworthy density and unmatched affordability. In a land full of buttery lakes, this one certainly reigns supreme.

2. Horizon Organic Unsalted Butter

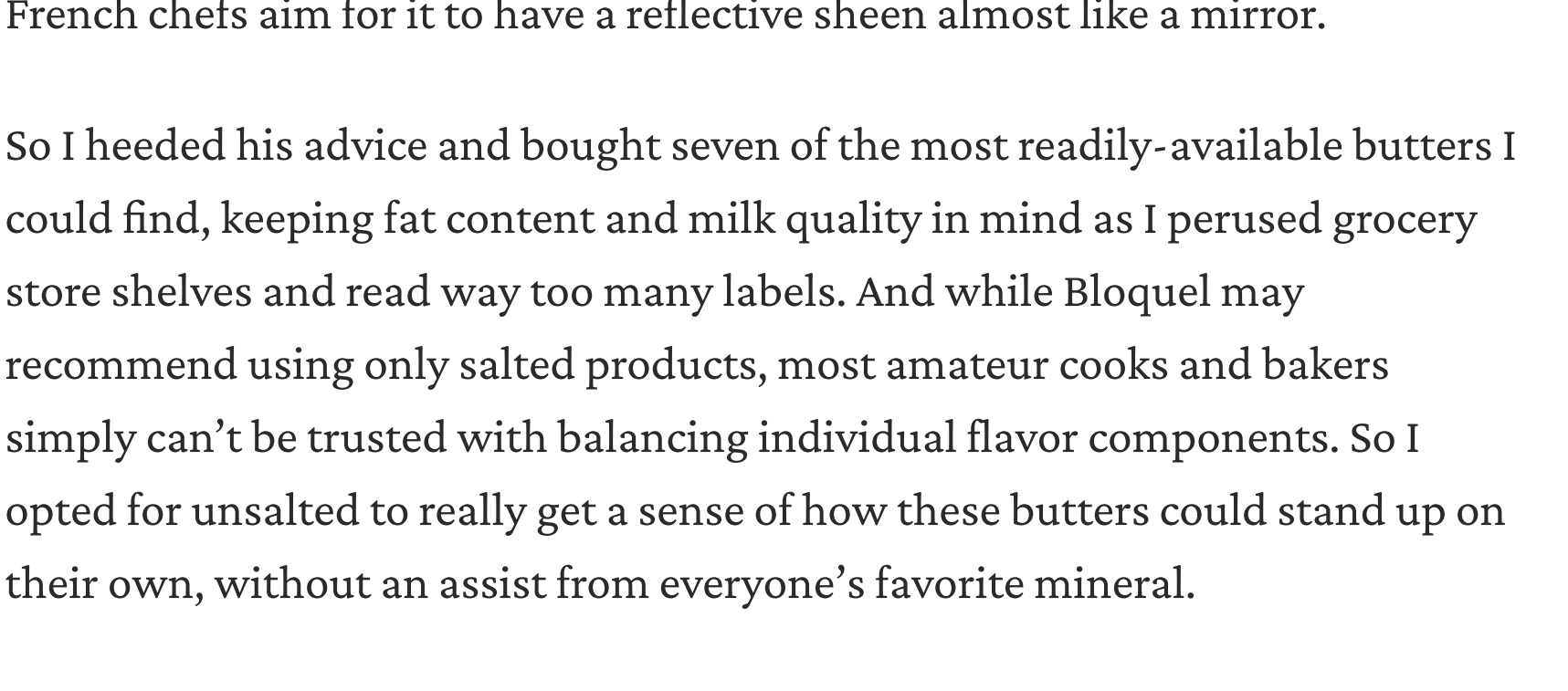
Horizon Organic Unsalted Butter

\$12.49 AT AMAZON

\$8.99 AT INSTACART

I’m not entirely sure what the farmers who work with this company are feeding their cows, but good on the Horizon team for giving them whatever they need to produce the high-quality milk that made this stick taste almost like imported olive oil. Unlike Land O’Lakes, there is practically zero sweetness, but that didn’t matter when I used it to finish steamed vegetables I would have otherwise gagged through (because, yes, I am a child who still can’t stomach certain foods I eat just because they’re healthy).

1. Kerrygold Pure Irish Unsalted Butter



Kerrygold Pure Irish Butter Unsalted Butter

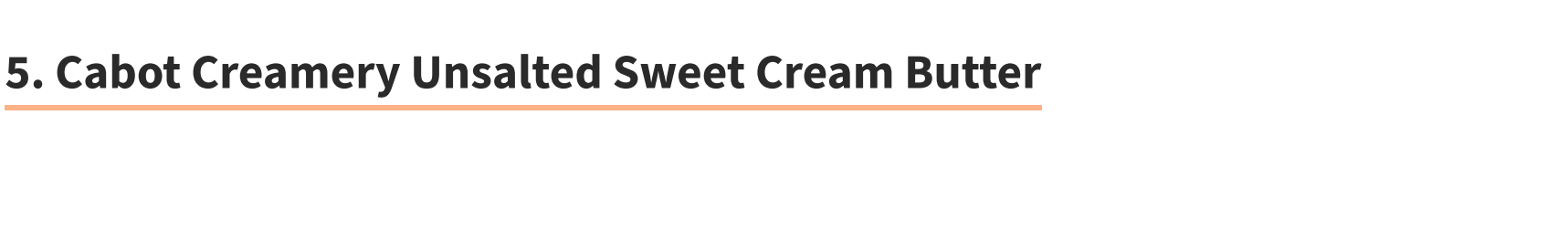
\$5.49 AT AMAZON

\$3.99 AT TARGET

\$3.98 AT WALMART

I think we all knew the butter in the silver packaging was going to take home top honors. This was its destiny, after all. Kerrygold may actually have one of the lower fat contents on this list (only 80% compared to some lower-ranking butters with 85%), but you would never know it — it’s rich, soft, velvety and, dare I say, something I would melt on practically anything I can get my hands on. Popcorn? Yes, please. A steak? Obviously. A Pop-Tart? Probably not, but don’t tempt me.

In the interest of fairness and as a nod to Bloquel’s French background, my number one choice would typically be France-based *Président*. But it’s not as widely available as the butters listed in this ranking, so I didn’t include it in the running. That said, if you can find it, you should buy it. You’ll be glad you did.



Joey Skladany

Joey is a writer/editor, TV/radio personality, lifestyle expert, former entertainment publicist and author of “Basic Bitchen.”

