

## Quality specifications

Whole' unrefined 'virgin' butter has been proven as better for use in natural cosmetic products

Traditional butter has shelf-life up to one year but avoid UV, air, metal, humidity and high temperature during storage

Shelf-life longer when lower levels of free fatty acids (< 3%), peroxides (<10%) and water content (<0.2%)

Traditional butter is boiled before storage, destroying microorganisms and ensuring water content is low

Aim to source shea butter from experienced producers since post-harvest processing and selection of kernels effects butter quality

Filtering removes fine particles, but leaves the beneficial chemicals intact

Texture of shea butter can be made smoother by re-melting and stirring frequently while solidifying

Natural plant dyes added to color the butter, e.g. vibrant yellow-orange color from root material of *Cochlospermum tinctorium*

Soap-makers can use low-grade butter with high FFA but saponification reduces unsaponifiables, therefore best to "super-fat" with high-grade butter to ensure the beneficial properties are still present

Dry shea kernels contain 50% oil/fat. Main fractions are stearin (36-47%), olein (33-50%) and the unsaponifiable fraction (2-11%) includes:

- Phenols: tocopherols, triterpenes ( $\alpha$ -amyirin, lupeol, butyrospermol, parkeol); Steroids (campesterol, Stigmasterol,  $\beta$ -sitosterol,  $\alpha$ -spinasterol, delta-7-avenasterol); polyisoprenic hydrocarbon karitene (up to 2%) and cinnamic acids, catechins, etc.

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# West African Shea Butter

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## WHAT IS SHEA BUTTER?

*A Natural Product From African Trees*

**Names:** Sheanuts (karité)

**Scientific:** *Vitellaria paradoxa* (syn. *Butyrospermum paradoxum*)

**Production:** Harvesting and hand-crafted by rural African women

**Uses:** Skin-care and edible fat

## WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

☀ **Native to Africa in 3,500 mile-wide dry-land zone south of Sahara desert and north of tropical rainforest**

☀ **In twenty countries, notably Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Benin**

☀ **Traditionally managed and harvested in the farmlands of Africa**

☀ **Trade promotes sustainable production, therefore good option for organic and fair-trade certification**

## WHY IS SHEA BUTTER USED?

### *Traditionally in Africa*

- ☀ Used as a fat for frying, in sauces
- ☀ Skin cream, for hair care and soap making
- ☀ Medicinal uses
- ☀ Cultural uses e.g. at births
- ☀ Shea stearin (vegetable fat) is used as an additive in chocolates in Europe
- ☀ Used as a vegetable fat in biscuits, pastries

### *Personal Care Products*

- ☀ Soap manufacture – high 'saponifiable' content
- ☀ Skin and hair care cosmetics: lotions, creams, moisturizers

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?



Photos by Peter Lovett

- ☀ Protects skin against UV light, reduces inflammation, stretch marks, wrinkles and has moisturizing and regenerative properties
- ☀ Pharmaceutical products being developed with clinically proven trials for the treatment of eczema, arthritis, etc.

### *UEMOA (West Africa) Standards for Unrefined Shea*

Parameter	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade
Free fatty acid (%)	- to 1	1.1- 3	3.1 - 8
Peroxide value (mEq)	- to 10	11 - 15	15.1 - 50
Moisture content (%)	- to 0.05	0.06 - 0.2	0.3 - 2
Insoluble impurities (%)	- to 0.09	0.1 - 0.2	0.3 - 2

Source: [www.prokarite.org](http://www.prokarite.org). These were approved August 30, 2005 for unrefined shea butter, to be officially adopted by all eight UEMOA countries on January 1, 2006.