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For the record, crème fraiche and sour cream are completely different. First, sour cream generally contains about 18 percent butterfat, whereas crème fraiche can contain up to 45 percent butterfat. Second, sour cream is made by adding milk solids to obtain the desired texture. And third, sour cream is acidified by adding an acidulant to drop the pH ? that doesn't happen with crème fraiche.

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We talked to the folks at Vermont Creamery, who make some great crème fraiche that's available stateside. This is how Allison Hooper, the company's CEO, describes the process:

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"At Vermont Creamery we pasteurize fresh cream that is 42 percent butterfat. Most heavy cream that you buy in the store is 36 percent fat. We add a bacterial starter culture to the cream and let the cream ferment overnight between 55-70 degrees F. The bacterial culture eats the lactose in the cream and leaves enzymes behind that produce wonderful rich flavor. In the morning the cream is still liquid and we package it in cups. once it is in the cooler for several days it thickens and 'sets.'"

"????????????????????42%????????????????????36%????????????????55-70????????????????
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Here's the rub: when you find this creamy, thick stuff at a gourmet market it can be kind of expensive.

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The good news is it's really easy to make, and not expensive to make either. Sure, it's not exactly the same thing that you buy at the store, but it's better than nothing. All you need is one tablespoon of buttermilk and one cup of heavy cream. Mix the two together and leave it out on the counter overnight ? or for roughly 12 hours ? and then voila, your own homemade version of crème fraiche. Try this solid recipe from Serious Eats.

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