

# The American Cheese Society

NEWSLETTER

2ND QUARTER 2000

## A Farmhouse View

by Judy Schad, Capriole Farms

*The article that was to appear on the front page was temporarily side tracked by a "blessed event." Olivia Gagnon was born to Jen and Ross Gagnon of Shelburne Farm on February 12, 2000. Ross is in love — again. It may be self promoting to devote a whole issue to "farmhouse" or "farmstead," but I'm free, this is what I know, and my concern is that the term continues to mean something. Diversity is a good thing, and there are many ways to get to the same place. This is but one of them. JS*

"Farmstead" is defined in the ACS bylaws as "cheeses and fermented milk products produced with:" 1. Milk from herds on the farm where the cheese is produced. This is the first and most recognized definition. It is also one of the oldest and most traditional descriptions of cheese production. But it is not the only form of production, and it is not always, and in every situation,

the best. Ultimately, the best way to make cheese is what produces the best cheese. What the best formulas and techniques might be will probably be even more aggressively addressed in the next issue where the subject is *terroir* (a topic that really seems to excite adamant opinions both ways). Wisely, however, the ACS description of "farmstead" goes beyond the basic and recognized definition mentioned above, and points out that these cheeses are ones accomplished with:

*"2. Care and attention are [sic] given to the purity, quality, and flavor of the milk.*

*3. Production primarily accomplished by hand.*

*4. Natural ripening, with emphasis on development of characteristic flavor and texture, without the use of processing, shortcuts, or*

*techniques employed to increase yield at the expense of quality.*

*5. Respect for the traditions and history of cheesemaking regardless of the size of the production."*

Several years ago in France, Sofia Solomon, Anne Topham, and I were inducted into La Guilde du Fromager in St. Remy, where we judged *fermier* goat cheeses in the Guilde's annual competition. We tasted some of the very best and the very worst chevres I've ever eaten. The worst were soapy, peppery, and decidedly unclear. It was August in Provence.

Farmstead is no guarantee of excellence, and it's true that much of its appeal is not what it actually denotes, but the romantic suggestion of rusticity, a simpler life, the noble farmer thing. I recently stood next to a salesperson at a food show who was praising a noteworthy cheese. As I half listened to the description of the beautiful countryside where the cheese was produced, the centuries of history and tradition behind the production of

the milking herd and the cheese style, the food philosophy behind the selection of the cheeses, and the exclusivity and frequent scarcity of their production, I found myself thinking, "Just let them taste it." The cheese stands alone and it speaks volumes — or not! As Mary Keehn said so well in the last newsletter, "we need more real food, real people, and real experiences in our lives." The line between the reality and the hype is often drawn on the tongue.

It's important not to trivialize in marketing what "farmstead" is all about. When I hear someone who knows nothing about farming speaking blithely in catch phrases, my adverse nature and sense of irony kicks in: "the innovative spirit" (duct tape and baling twine), the "beauty of birth" (and not-so-beautiful death), "made by hand" (with a bad back), "lambs cavorting on spring pasture" (grass tetany), a "silent, winter snowstorm" (no electricity to milk 300 animals). I arrived home from the food show and the "romance of cheese" to find

*continued on page 13*



# The American Cheese Society

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## EDITOR

Judy Schad, Capriole Cheese

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Kate Sander, Cheese Market News

GRAPHIC DESIGN/LAYOUT

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## COPY DEADLINES

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\*Member of Executive Committee

## From the President...

### Choose Your Cheese!



In March, the American Cheese Society and Oldways Preservation & Exchange Trust joined to assemble an international coalition that will fight to preserve the rights of individuals to choose cheeses made

from unpasteurized milks.

ACS and Oldways announced that the name of the new coalition is the "International Coalition to Preserve the Right to Choose Your Cheese," which will be abbreviated to the "Cheese of Choice Coalition" (or "CCC").

In letters sent to individuals, groups, associations, organizations and cheese lovers all over the world, American Cheese Society and Oldways invited them: "To join with us in the Cheese of Choice Coalition, because only an international non-governmental organization (NGO) possesses the power to stand up to the international governmental organizations that want to prohibit production and sale of cheeses made from unpasteurized milks. We need a countervailing force to stop this creeping globalization from taking away our choice about what kinds of cheeses we want to eat."

## The CCC endorses these three principles:

1. Support safe hygiene in cheesemaking through procedures such as HACCP, which are established and monitored by national governments.
2. Encourage all efforts to promote artisanal, farmstead, traditional and other locally-made cheeses crafted by skilled cheesemakers.
3. Oppose all efforts to require mandatory pasteurization of milks used in cheesemaking. Cheeses have been made from fresh unpasteurized milks for all of recorded human history, and there are no scientific reasons or health needs to compel the sacrifice of these cheeses on the altars of mass production and worldwide standardization.

Adoption of the three principles assures that individuals will not lose their freedom to choose among cheeses made with pasteurized milks or unpasteurized milks, and that both artisanal and industrial cheese producers can freely market their products so long as they adhere to procedures such as HACCP.

My sincere thanks and gratitude to Debra Dickerson, Daphne Zepos, John Eggena and Dun Gifford of Oldways who have brought us to this point and are dedicated to the future success of this coalition. Oldways is a non-profit educational organization that promotes healthy eating based on the "old ways," the traditional healthy cuisines of cultures around the world using foods grown and prepared in environmentally sustainable ways.

*Ruth Anne Flore*

## Calendar

### April 25-27

#### International Cheese Technology Exposition

Dane County Expo Center, Madison, Wis.

World Championship Cheese Contest Auction

Contact: 800-999-2454 or [www.wischeesemakersassn.org](http://www.wischeesemakersassn.org)

### May 12-14, 2000

#### Pasture to Palate

Shelburne, Vt.

Three-day program from Shelburne Farm that includes cheese tastings, visits to area farms, cheesemaking, and educational programs as well as dinner and a stay at the Inn at Shelburne Farms.

Contact: Hilary Sunderland, 802-985-8686.

### May 15-18

#### 7th International Conference on Goats

Contact: E-mail [sirdoc@acta.asso.fr](mailto:sirdoc@acta.asso.fr)

### July 9-11

#### Summer Fancy Food and Confection Show

Javits Convention Center, New York City

Contact: NASFT, 212-482-6440 or

[www.fancyfoodshows.com](http://www.fancyfoodshows.com)

### July 14-16 and July 21-23

#### Cheesemaking with Freddie Michiels

Mad River Valley/Ag-Innovations farmstead cheesemaking facility in East Warren, Vt.

Freddie Michiels. Two 3-day courses.

Contact: 802/496-3998, or fax 802-496-4096.

### August 10-13

#### American Cheese Society Conference

Sonoma County Doubletree in Rohnert Park, Calif.

Conference focus is *terroir* and the craft of cheesemaking.

Programs will include the preservation of artisanal cheeses, small family dairies, distribution strategies for artisan cheesemakers, cheese trends of the past decade, the recent growth of sheeps' milk cheeses, and pairing California wines and cheeses. The Festival of Cheeses, which is open to the public, will be held at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in Napa Valley. The conference also will offer tours to farmstead cheesemaking operations and wineries.

Contact: ACS office, 262-728-4458 or

[www.cheesesociety.org](http://www.cheesesociety.org)



## Let's Hear It!

### What Are Your Opinions on Major Issues Facing Us Today?

Hello! Hello! Anyone out there? I anxiously awaited comments on the last newsletter. We seem to have many issues that need attention. So again I invite you to use this as a forum to discuss them. Please observe deadlines. You can call or fax me at 812-923-9408 or call 812-923-1180. Or you can e-mail me at [judygoat@aol.com](mailto:judygoat@aol.com).

I expected to hear response to Matt Rubiner's suggestions that we create a committee of retailers within the American Cheese Society to look at ways "to improve communication between retailers and producers on issues of quality and marketability" and to "establish and fund an active panel of troubleshooting advisors to work closely with cheesemakers to improve quality." Cheesemakers, would we not have welcomed this when we began making cheese? While we've all grown, are we really so smug as to believe we can't improve?

countries that would be useful in helping us set our own guidelines? How do we begin this work? If FDA gets around to implementing stricter guidelines for raw milk cheeses here, it also will take a long look at small producers. The Society has always led the way. Now an active part of our promotion needs to go beyond sampling and selling good cheeses to establishing guidelines for their production. This is a logical "next" step in putting our energy where our mouth is — so to speak. At the ACS 2000 Conference in Rohnert Park, Calif., the cheesemaker program will address HACCPs and how to implement them. Felix Roth from Roth Käse will conduct the program. I met Felix for the first time in Chicago at the Fancy Food Show and learned more about HACCPs and quality control in 10 minutes than I have over the last several years. This program will be a "must" for all cheesemakers.

What are your opinions on John Eggena's reflections in this newsletter on safety and hygiene? These are huge concerns in this country. Our regulatory agencies are often responding to political pressures, food scares, and general public hysteria about some real, as well as not-so-real, issues. How do we respond to the concerns behind the regulations? Are there HACCP models from other

*Judy Schrad*  
**Bring Your Ideas and  
Comments to the Society —  
Let's Work Together!**

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## Upcoming Issues

### Speak Your Mind in Future Issues with Topics that Interest You

#### 3rd Quarter 2000: *Terroir*

*Terroir* is the idea that place, geology, genealogy, and geography all contribute to a finished product — a great peasant bread, a wine, a cheese.

*Terroir* will be the subject of our June/July newsletter. What does it mean to you? Is it hyperbole or is it real? Have some thoughts or facts that support or debunk the idea that territory contributes to flavor? We invite your input.

**Deadline for articles and photos: May 1, 2000**

#### 4th Quarter 2000: Post Conference Issue

Commentary on the conference is invited.

**Deadline for articles and photos: September 1, 2000**

**We invite you to participate in  
any or all of the upcoming issues.  
Editor 812-923-1180, or fax 812-923-9408.**

## The ACS Store

For Questions or to Place an Order,  
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# The American Cheese Society

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# The New American Cheese:

Profiles of America's Great Cheesemakers and Recipes for Cooking with Cheese

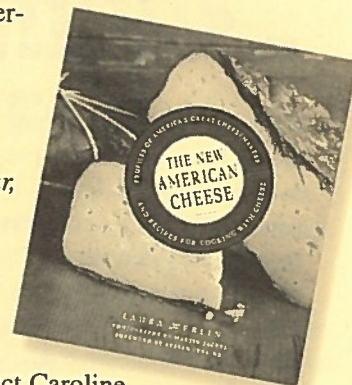
Author: Laura Werlin • Photographs by Martin Jacobs • Foreword by Steve Jenkins

*The New American Cheese* takes an in-depth look at the art and craft of cheesemaking and includes a history of cheese in this country. Author Laura Werlin profiles more than 50 of America's top cheesemakers and offers 80 inventive recipes showcasing the new cheeses available today. Also included are nutritional facts; information on how to buy, store, and taste cheese; a directory of sources; and an extensive glossary — all of which make this a very helpful guide for amateur cheese lovers and experienced epicures.

If you met Laura at the 1999 ACS Conference at Shelburne Farm you will

remember her effervescence and her enthusiasm for American cheese. Her articles have appeared in *Saveur*, *Self*, and *San Francisco Magazine*. For more information on publicity or serial rights, contact Caroline

Enright at Stewart, Tabori, and Chang, 212-519-1203, or [caroline@stcbooks.com](mailto:caroline@stcbooks.com).



## Mary's Crystal Ball

# Farmstead vs. Artisan Raw vs. Pasteurized Small vs. Large

by Mary Keehn, Cypress Grove Chevre

I have been hearing too much discussion about all these issues recently. What I see as the important things for the American Cheese Society to focus on are helping our cheesemakers make excellent cheeses, helping our chefs find exciting and innovative ways to use them, and helping our distributors and retailers handle them in the safest and best way possible so the end user will have a superior product. I realize this is a little simplistic, but really, we don't need to be too complex!

Malorie and I love making cheese, love coming to work every day, and enjoy spending time with our employees. We love the friends we have made in the business and the cheeses they make. It is exciting. We feel blessed that we can make a living doing what we love and have so much fun together. We made the decision about eight years ago to sell our herd of goats and focus on cheesemaking. We had a very difficult time finding good help with the animals and found that they were not getting proper care

when we were away at cheese tastings or other necessary business events. It was one of those things there was just no choice about. Quality has improved.

We have had time to add many ripened cheeses to our line and really focus on cheesemaking. Even though this means we are no longer farmstead cheesemakers, I think that we are better cheesemakers because of our decision. This was the right decision for us because of our location and our existing excellent milk producers who were eager to grow their herds. It may not mean it is the right choice for others. Other farmstead cheesemakers might not have a good local milk supply or may find themselves able to find dairy help but not cheesemaking help. They may be closer to a farmers' market where they can sell their cheeses at retail, or a metropolitan market where they can deliver their cheeses to their customers. Wonderful cheeses are available from so many wonderful sources. Let's not polarize our small group with a lot of concern about who is what and why, but enjoy our differences and our common cheese bond! ☺



# Sunset Acres

## Farm:

### The Story of a Diversified Farm

by Anne Bossi

Bob and I have been farming for 10 years now, and during that time we have managed to survive and in fact, prosper, because we practice total diversification — not only in our farming practices and items produced, but in our markets as well. It wasn't always that way, believe me, and we have learned our lessons the hard way (another story)!

Before we got together in 1989, I had been raising a lot of sheep and goats (and four human kids) for many years, gaining much happiness, plenty of good food, but no income (never mind the dirty word "profit"). Bob had tried beef cattle and rabbits and settled on agribusiness-scale hog raising, which eventually sent him into bankruptcy (but that's also another story).

Suffice it to say that in 1989 Bob moved to my 10-acre, heavily wooded, mini-farm bringing 100 pigs and a hog barn transplanted from the old place he had just lost back to the bank. To make a long story short, we kept his hogs and the few sheep and goats I still had (having wised up and cut way back on numbers) and decided to try meat chickens.

That decision was the beginning of our now successful diversified farm. Many ideas and critters have come and

gone since then; I think we tried most every farm critter, with varying degrees of success. In fact, we build our barns with screws because it's so much easier to take things apart and change them around that way. Even my beloved goats (I had been the local "goat lady" for years) finally went (and with it, I thought, my identity, but I survived) because I no longer had the time or interest to milk, with children grown and gone.

However, not two years later, Bob was wanting goats back because he had persuaded his farmers' market customers that they really wanted goat meat. So we bought a few backyard-variety does that we thought could at least produce and feed a couple of kids a year — no registration papers, no production records, just plain vanilla goats. They produced kids alright, but it soon became apparent that they also produced milk. Lots of milk. So we had to milk them.

However, since we're not milk drinkers, we thought we should make cheese, which we love.

And since there was extra cheese, and Bob is a natural-born marketer, we started to sell it to our chicken and pork customers at farmers' markets. And since they really liked it, we added a few more goats, and, well, you can imagine.

In Maine it is legal to sell

unpasteurized milk direct from the farm, but nowhere else unless you are licensed. All cheese must be made from pasteurized milk unless aged for 60 days. Although we heat treated the milk for our cheeses, we still couldn't market our dairy products anywhere except from the farm, and we don't have many customers who come here. Since our goal was to have a dairy just large enough to sell milk and cheese at our farmers' markets, with the support of our legislators we almost passed a bill that would have allowed that to happen. Unfortunately, at the last minute it failed, so our choices were either to downsize and sell only at the farm or bite the bullet and buy a megabucks pasteurizer which would require us to become bigger than we wanted in order to make payments.

At this point fate stepped in, in the form of used equipment at a good price, and we jumped in with both feet, soon becoming a licensed cheese plant and raw milk dairy. Happily, this has turned out to be a good decision even though we have had to expand beyond just our farmers' market.

While the dairy business won't make us rich by itself — we are only milking 34 does — it does play a financially significant part of the whole: chickens, eggs, pork, garden and seedlings (another story). A large part of what has helped to make this work is that our philosophy on the dairy is the same as for the rest of the farm: diversification!

We make many different kinds and styles of cheeses from our current herd of 34 does (up from seven in 1998) and two

Jersey cows. We also sell about 50 gallons of unpasteurized, bottled cow and goat milk a month. Another piece to the dairy is breeding our lower producing does to a Boer buck and the cows to a beef breed. In this way, we raise veal calves and beautiful meaty goats that are finished and cut like lamb. These crossbreds cut out as tender and pretty as any lambs we have raised!

We market all of our products ourselves directly to stores, restaurants, and at several farmers' markets. Bob has been able to promote chevon (goat meat), which most people in this neck of the woods are unfamiliar with. But when you describe its qualities to them, most are eager to give it a try. This is still a fledgling market and probably won't ever be a large one, but at least it will take care of our surplus kids.

Even though (or maybe because) we don't have enough land to graze our goats and have to buy hay for them year round, we try to use everything around here to its best possible (cheapest) use and to be as sustainable as we can. With that in mind we raise our kids in the hoop house where we store hay in the winter, which gives us use of that structure all year. It's cheaper than building a barn, too.

We feed all of our whey back to the does, so we don't have to worry about how to get rid of it, and we think this is maybe one reason they have kept up their production so well this winter. You should see them fight over it when we fill their buckets. We could feed it to the pigs, but they slop stuff around so much it tends to make a stinking mess.

*continued on page 13*



## NEW ACS MEMBERS

*continued*

**Jeffrey Heindel**  
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## ACS WEBSITE

The ACS web site has moved and is currently under construction! Ricki Carroll, current Web Committee Chairperson, has been working with a new webmaster and service provider to update our look, and help to make our site more efficient. The new look should be unveiled soon, and we will keep the membership up-to-date on any changes.

# Defining Farmstead

## Using the Same Label for Any Group of Cheesemakers is Nearly Impossible

*by Bill Wendorff, Department of Food Science,  
University of Wisconsin*

Over the past several years, there has been a major struggle over trying to define "organic." In the past several months, we have read about critical aspects dealing with practices and ingredients that impact the acceptability of products under organic standards. Recently, we had the same problem in the state of Wisconsin in trying to define "farmstead."

**I would suspect that the term "farmstead" may be as difficult as the term "organic." I look forward to this issue of the ACS newsletter and to future dialog within the Society to get a better feel for what are "farmstead cheeses."**

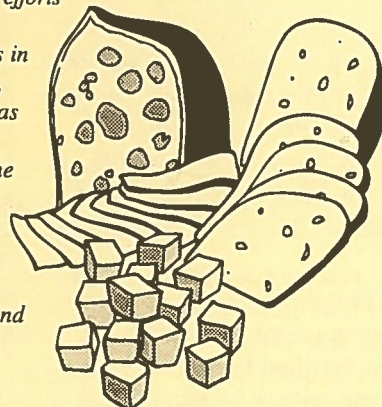
The state of Wisconsin is unique in that there is a requirement that all cheese produced for sale must be produced in a licensed dairy plant by a licensed cheesemaker. To obtain a Wisconsin cheesemaker's license, an individual is required to work as an apprentice under a licensed cheesemaker for 18 months before taking the state cheesemaker's license exam. This obviously has limited potential for farm producers to enter into production of farmstead cheeses. Six producers have overcome the hurdle to establish farmstead dairy plants in Wisconsin. At the current time, the state regulatory officials are looking at the easing of the apprenticeship requirement to establish a farmstead cheesemaker's license to assist producers in establishing farm-based cheese plants.

To aid in the discussion for establishing the new license procedure, I took a survey of the six farmstead cheesemakers in Wisconsin and nine farmstead operations in other areas of the United States. One question in the survey involved the definition of "farmstead." About 53 percent defined a farmstead cheese operation as producing cheese from milk from that farm only. About 33 percent indicated farmstead should mean that the majority (more

than 50 percent) of milk used should come from that farm, and 13 percent stated that farmstead should mean cheese produced at the farm where some of the milk comes from the farm. Responses from various geographic areas were mixed. With this information, the advisory committee working on the cheesemaker license revision decided to avoid calling the new licensing option a farmstead cheesemaker license. Instead the committee decided to offer this new combination of short courses and 30-day apprenticeship to both potential farmstead cheesemakers and dairy plant personnel as a second option to the regular cheesemaker license procedure.

I would suspect that the term "farmstead" may be as difficult as the term "organic." I look forward to this issue of the ACS newsletter and to future dialog within the Society to get a better feel for what are "farmstead cheeses." However, it probably doesn't matter if cheeses are defined as "farmstead," "artisan," "traditional," or "organic." The outstanding appearance and quality of many of the unique cheeses that I have seen in the ACS Cheese Contest the past several years cannot be mistaken for product from commercial or specialty cheese plants. The quality and workmanship that is displayed in many of these cheeses indicates to the consumer that a true artisan with quality milk produced this cheese, and it doesn't get any better than that.

*Bill Wendorff is a respected food scientist from University of Wisconsin-Madison, who has tangibly supported the efforts of farmstead cheesemakers in his own state, serving both as an active resource in the development of their cheeses, investigating their needs, and proposing realistic directions.*





# The Boucher Family Farm

## THEN & NOW



by Dawn Boucher

The Boucher Family Farm is located in Highgate Center, Vt., near the Canadian border on the east coast. Our county celebrates the fact it has the largest concentration of dairy farms in the state, but at our farm we celebrate our own extensive agricultural lineage.

In 1634, the first Bouchers arrived to settle New France, which would become the Eastern Canadian Townships. For 12 generations they have farmed the region, passing the farm from father to son as a family tradition. Pioneer farms provided vital food for the needs of the community, ensuring colonial success. In addition to vegetable crops, they grew oats and wheat, raised every sort of meat and work animal, and made milk, butter, and soap, as well as their own linen and wool clothing. The legacy of these settlers is a unique French cultural heritage that is embraced on both sides of the border.

In the last 40 years the focus of farming has shifted. Food products are now shipped globally and anonymously. No one knows the name of the place their food really comes from. Economically diverse farms evolved into monoculture businesses that produce only wheat or oats or vegetables. Our farm produced only fluid milk. In the last five years, the face of Vermont dairying has changed dramatically; family farms are decreasing in number, and the first industrial farms

(500 to 1000 cows) have appeared to take their place. Our Holstein dairy currently has 175 cows that make 10,000 pounds (1,250 gallons) of milk per day. In my lifetime, I have known a farmer to milk more cows to cover the expenses of a child's birth or education. Now they milk more cows just to make ends meet. Our generation decided that we would look at alternatives just to keep our fannies in farming.

In 1999, we started making blue cheese, and we have recently opened our farm to agri-tourism. Two brothers, Daniel and Denis, live on the farm with their wives and children. I am Daniel's wife, and I learned to make cheese at home from books. I designed the plant and the labels, developed the recipe, and have become cheesemaker, marketer, sales associate, packer, shipper and delivery person. This is still a family business.

One day a week, 1,000 to 2,000 pounds of milk are sent directly from the milking parlor into the waiting cheese vat. The milk is still warm from the cows; it is neither heated nor pasteurized and it cools according to the ambient temperature of the time of year. No additional treatments are made: milk + rennet = curds + whey, for 100 to 200 pounds of cheese. It doesn't happen that quickly, of course. It takes 27

hours to make the curd, a week to cure in the moulds and at least four months to age it in the cellar below the building. I am obsessed with making a cheese reflective of the farm and the season in which it is made.

Farming is not easy, but we chose this life. Days begin at 4:30 AM and end when the job is done — usually 7:00 PM each day. Many have told us that blue cheese is one of the hardest to make. We say that compared to farming, cheese is easy.

We sell Green Mountain Blue Cheese nationwide, but the majority is consumed in surrounding communities. Our farm provides food for local people...again.





# The Marketing of Farmhouse

## Differentiating Your Product is the Key to Increased Sales

by John Loomis, Zingerman's

At Zingerman's we define marketing and merchandising as the "craft of selling." This entails creating a retail theater including the sum total of messages (both overt and covert) sent to the customer. The single most important quality in those messages is that they clearly differentiate our product.

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**At least once a week we have a customer who asks for a half pound of farmhouse cheese. It creates a different sort of problem when customers remember the distinguisher, but forget not only the name of the cheese, but the type of cheese altogether. At least you know you have a descriptor which resonates with the public.**

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we sell Farmhouse Cheddar. It is not necessarily important that customers know exactly what Green Label Comte is, only that they know it's a distinction and the quality of the product backs up that distinction with a clear, recognizable difference.

So, how important is "farmhouse" in this role as a distinguisher? I would take the coward's way out and say that it depends on the cheese. In some instances it is the most successful marketing tool we have. At least once a week we have a customer who asks for a half pound of farmhouse cheese. It creates a different sort of problem when customers remember the distinguisher, but forget not only the name of the cheese, but the type of cheese altogether. At least you know you have a descriptor which resonates with the public.

I recently asked the cheesemongers at Zingerman's to list some of the farmhouse cheeses that we offer. Later, I asked them to define what was meant by farmhouse. Most defined it as a cheese produced from a single source of milk at the location where the animals are housed. When I looked at their lists of cheeses they selected as "farmhouse," not one listed a pasteurized product or a goat cheese. With no instruction or direction from the managers, the staff has independently determined qualities and characteristics which they associate with "farmhouse." Any attempt to broaden the use of the descriptor to other cheeses which do not conform to their expectations would at best be ignored, and at worst dilute the term altogether.

In determining whether or not a cheese should be marketed as a farmhouse product, I would ask: Does it conform to the expectations of a farmhouse cheese? Does it matter to the consumer? Is it my best distinguisher?

### **Does it conform to expectations of a farmhouse cheese?**

This is clearly subjective and varies from retailer to retailer, but the staff at Zingerman's seemed to lean towards those cheeses with pronounced feed flavors especially grassy and musty tones. I would characterize them as cheeses that literally tasted of the farm. When a customer then tastes the cheese, the flavor reinforces the description and gives them a clear direction and reference point.

### **Does it matter to the consumer?**

Yes. Clearly if we put out Shelburne Cheddar and Shelburne Farmhouse Cheddar, I don't think there's much doubt which would sell more. There are a number of covert messages attached to farmhouse which will always resonate with the public. The "Farmhouse" Cheddar is more natural, more wholesome, and the money is going directly to the farmer. There is also the romantic vision of the uncomplicated, simple and satisfying life on the farm conjured up for the customer who has never experienced the "joy" of getting up at 5 AM on a Michigan January day. I suspect that it won't be long before we see "Individually Wrapped Farmhouse Style American Singles."

### **Is it my best distinguisher?**

The best way to determine this is to get your story to the retailers. When I made cheese, a number of retailers listened to our mundane beginnings and turned that story into effective marketing campaigns. They were able to create "retailing theater," grabbing onto facts that I thought were unimportant and irrelevant. As a producer, it is impossible to know how your product might best fit an individual retailer's theater. Any and all details could help your product stand out. "Farmhouse" may have reached the saturation point at one store, but "Organic," "Jersey Milk," or "Vermont" might resonate well with consumers.

At Zingerman's, we carry anywhere from 90 to 125 cheeses and we spend a great deal of time developing our look and feel. It is our job to explain to consumers why we carry this cheese and what distinguishes it from the sea of others. Sometimes "farmhouse" is the key, and other times it risks overuse and banality. There are a number of distinguishers that we have dropped from our lexicon due to overuse, and I would hate to see "farmhouse" go in that direction. ☺



# Milkers & Makers

by Denny Bolton, Pure Luck Dairy

In the January 2000 ACS Newsletter, input was invited on the topic of farmstead cheesemaking, and the following question was asked: "What is the place for farmstead cheese in the industry as a whole?"

The trend in the cheesemaking industry has been to move away from the milking our own goats, cows, and sheep, and toward buying milk, thus creating two separate industries: milkers and makers. Departmentalizing. Specializing. Streamlining. If we as business people are at all concerned about the bottom line, this has got to be the way to go. Right?

Maybe so. Maybe not. Instead of asking, "Do we, the farmhouse cheese people, small producers, specialty cheesemakers, have a place in the industry?" We feel a better question may be, "What is everybody else missing by not including their own animals in their business?" There are at least two very important elements missing by being a maker only.

## The Love Thing

By not taking the holistic, sustainable, farmstead approach, one missing element is the animal interaction itself. Pure Luck is a goat cheese dairy, and we got into it because of our love for goats. It's a heartfelt thing. Sara

Bolton, my wife and founder of our company, has been working on her cheese recipes for almost as long. As well as being members of ACS, we belong to the American Dairy Goat Association and various clubs where we show our goats. Our income includes buck breeding and dairy goat sales in addition to cheese.

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**Instead of asking, "Do we, the farmhouse cheese people, small producers, specialty cheesemakers, have a place in the industry?" We feel a better question is, "What is everybody else missing by not including their own animals in their business?"**

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Sara first discovered her love for goats when she temporarily cared for a friend's goats. She fed and milked them, and when the friend picked them up, she found she missed them and wanted her own. She began her own herd and named it Pure Luck Dairy Goats. One of our goats, Molasses, was in our wedding pictures. Her granddaughters are on our milk stand today. That was in 1984. We should mention, we had a country wedding. Goats are as much a part of our company as we are.

Goats love to climb and enjoy their elbow room. Simply put, if they feel free, they'll be happy, and if they're happy, they give you the best possible milk and lots of it, which will

make the best, highest quality cheese. Where do you punch in the happiness factor to the bottom line?

## The Quality Thing

The other missing element is quality. When you buy milk by the tank load, it's a commodity. It's a pig in a poke. What do you know about the quality? Or as my wife Sara always says, "How do you know where that's been?"

Our goats are so pampered, loved and taken care of, we don't even close our gate. I don't know if you know goats, but they have a justified reputation for getting into everything. But our gals wouldn't leave if you paid them. They are fed a high-quality high-protein diet of alfalfa hay, sunflower seeds, whole oats and whole corn, soy and bran. They rarely get sick, and if they do, we use homeopathic and herbal remedies first.

Since we raise and milk our own goats exclusively, quality for us doesn't begin with a chemical analysis of a tank load of milk. Quality is a continuing event. We are always looking, always monitoring. Checks are made at the udder, at the milk pail, at the bulk tank. All our goats have names and are individuals. Our cheeses come not from the factory floor, but from much loved goats, fed an incredibly rich diet. It's an intangible that we in the industry should not underestimate. ☺

## USDA Guidelines for Organic

On March 7, 2000, USDA announced new guidelines for national standards for organic foods. According to an article in the March 10 *Cheese Reporter*, the new proposal prohibits the use of genetic engineering, antibiotics in dairy animals, irradiation in the production of food products labeled "organic." USDA will accredit state, private, and foreign organizations or persons to become certifying agents, and these agents will certify that production and handling practices meet the national standards. Under USDA's new proposal, organic milk and milk products must be from animals that have been under continuous organic management for at least one year prior to the production of the milk products that are to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic. All animals must have a feed ration, including pasture and forage, that is totally organically produced and handled, and producers must maintain records that preserve the identity of all organically managed animals and edible and non-edible products produced in their operation. When preventive management and veterinary biologics are insufficient to prevent illness, a producer may administer synthetic medications. Parasticides may be administered not less than 90 days prior to the production of milk products that are represented as organic. Living conditions for dairy animals must accommodate the natural behavior and living conditions of the animals, including access to shade, shelter, fresh air, exercise, sunlight and pasture. A certified organic operation may label its products or ingredients as organic and use the "USDA Certified Organic" seal. Products may be labeled "100% organic," "organic" (95% organic ingredients), or "made with organic ingredients" (50-95% organic ingredients).

USDA is accepting comments on this proposal for 90 days after it is published in the Federal Register. Comments should be sent to Keith Jones, program manager, National Organic Program, USDA-AMS-TMP-NOP, Room 2495-So., Ag Stop 0275, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456. ☺



# Time to Specialize and Redefine Farmstead?

by Ken Kleinpeter, Old Chatham Sheepherding Company

As a founding partner of Hollow Road Farm, and now as manager of The Old Chatham Sheepherding Company, I have had the opportunity to see the farmstead cheese industry from the perspective of a small, and now relatively large, producer. I say relatively large, because even the largest farmstead operations in the United States would rarely produce in a year what even modestly sized commodity cheese operations would turn out in a day.

While there has been a great surge of interest in farmstead cheeses from both consumers and producers since I first started in 1987, it is interesting how little the issues for individual producers have changed. In the January issue, Matthew Rubiner succinctly outlined from the point of view of a retailer some of the problems he believes limits sales of American farmstead cheese. Highest on his list was inconsistent quality and high costs. He said that his goal was to "provoke a serious discussion among the members of our Society about ways to lower the retail cost and increase the overall quality and marketability of American cheeses."

In that spirit, I want to suggest that perhaps it is time for our industry to specialize more between farmers and cheesemakers. This might mean a slight redefinition of "farmstead," but I am convinced that a system in which a number of excellent small farmers sell their milk to a

centrally located cheesemaker would ultimately pay off in better products and a better lifestyle for the producers. I would also suggest that the relatively large producers among us are in a better position toward producing consistently high-quality products.

After all, many farmstead cheese producers get into the business originally because they want a rural lifestyle, and because they want to work with animals on a farm. Many of them sort of back into processing their milk, because that is the only way they can sell it. If they had an assured, consistent market for their milk, many small farmers would probably not decide to process their own. Let's face it, the skills and talents required to run an excellent farm, with healthy, high-producing animals, have almost nothing in common with the skills and talents required to be a master cheesemaker. And even those unique individuals who do possess the skills to do both well will find the demands on their time almost unbearable.

How well I remember the choices we had to make on a daily basis as a small producer. Is it a perfect day to cut your hay to get the maximum quality? Too bad, today's the day you have to take your product to the city. Do the cheeses need to be turned right now? You are out in the barn delivering a lamb. I could go on and on about this, but you get the point. Quality and consistency are bound to

suffer in this situation.

In larger farmstead operations, once a certain economy of scale is realized, the work can be divided and specialized. In our operation, the cheese production staff is entirely different from the farm staff and the marketing staff. Thus, our cheesemakers can concentrate on turning out a high quality, consistent product, and the farm staff can concentrate on producing excellent milk from healthy animals and healthy land. The marketing staff can focus on developing an appropriate mix of retailers, restaurants and distribution networks so that our products make it to the market in a timely fashion and are hopefully presented to the consumer in optimal condition. Larger cheesemaking operations can also afford to invest in better equipment, systems and talent to ensure consistently excellent products. For example, the quality and consistency of our products improved dramatically a couple of years ago when we moved into our new creamery. However, designing and building a great processing facility is quite expensive, and smaller producers would not have adequate production to pay for such a facility.

We also sized our creamery to be able to process considerably more milk than we produce on our farm. As a result, we are now able to buy milk from several small farms in our area, operations that have neither the desire nor the resources to process their own milk.

I am not saying that any farmstead product should be exactly the same all the time. The milk changes with the season, and so do the products. However, the quality should always be "within a range." We know what that means in

our operation, and it is a question each producer must answer for themselves.

I also don't mean to say that there is no place for small-scale farmstead producers who choose to limit the scale of their operations so they are able to control the quality of their products and have a manageable lifestyle. For example, Karl and Jane North at Northland Sheep Dairy in Marathon, N.Y., milk a small number of ewes seasonally and produce a couple of exquisite cheeses that they sell almost entirely at the Ithaca Farmers' Market.

I know of several larger operations out there besides our own that are producing excellent quality "farmstead cheese" with milk that is not entirely produced at their facility. Some, like Vermont Butter and Cheese, don't milk any of their own animals, but support a network of small farms that sell milk to them. Others, like the Majors at Vermont Shepherd Farm, are exploring different ways of working with suppliers. The Majors, who do milk their own sheep, also buy "green cheese" from a network of smaller producers, and then age and finish the cheeses in a cave at their farm.

I believe the next step for those producers who are buying milk from other farms is to find creative ways to structure the relationships with their milk suppliers so that those suppliers feel invested in the final product. We also need to explore ways in which milk suppliers might share in both the risks and rewards of the cheesemakers.

In addition to the excellent suggestions made by Mr. Rubiner, maybe the ACS can play a role in facilitating communication on this issue. ☞



## News & Notes

**Heifer Project International in Little Rock, Ark., works to fight world hunger** by offering, not food, but a means of producing it. HPI donates to those who need it around the world, both livestock and training in practices that will sustain the animals and the people. Called the "gift that keeps on giving," the agreement is that each recipient agrees to pass on the gift by giving a female offspring to another family or by sharing knowledge and training others. The project began in the 1930s when Midwest farmer Dan West went to Spain and handed out cups of milk to hungry children victimized by the Spanish Civil War. He realized that what people needed was not milk but a cow, and today HPI operates in the United States and more than 100 countries around the world.

**On March 7, 2000 the town of Warren, Vt., passed a resolution urging the USDA** to lift their quarantine on the sheep flocks of Linda and Larry Faillace and Houghton Freeman. The Vermont House of Representatives also has passed a resolution urging USDA to both lift the quarantine and to help the affected families recover from hardships caused by this situation. At this time — March 16, 2000 — the resolution has yet to pass the Senate. Meanwhile the cheeses are selling well throughout Vermont and also in California, New Jersey, and New York.

**George Haenlein sends us the following information on foreign language publications** that may be of interest to ACS members. Note that these are published in French or Italian, but if enough interest is expressed it is possible that *Caseus*, an excellent publication, might be translated into English. If you would be interested in receiving *Caseus*, please contact Dr. Haenlein, 040 Townsend Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, 19717-1303 or call 302-831-2524.

### CASEUS

Colorful bi-monthly Italian magazine for cheesemakers. Subscription to USA per year: 100,000 Italian Lire, or US \$70. Payable by Visa, Mastercard, or AmEx. Fax: 331-4004-5280, or e-mail: [anfosc@memex.it](mailto:anfosc@memex.it)

### CAPRICORNE

Quarterly French information bulletin for goat farmers. Subscription per year: 150 FF or US \$25. Fax 14004-4955 or e-mail: [ucardec@acta.asso.fr](mailto:ucardec@acta.asso.fr)

### CIRVAL

Quarterly French information bulletin for goat and sheep cheese farmers. Subscription per year: 100 FF or US \$20. Fax: 33-0495-452-220 or e-mail: [cirval@cirval.asso.fr](mailto:cirval@cirval.asso.fr)

### LA CHEVRE

Bi-monthly French magazine for goat cheese farmers. Subscription per year: 355 French FF or US \$65. Fax: 14004-5275

## WANTED: SPECIALTY CHEESE ENTHUSIAST

The Cheese Course is a new and unique-unit retail store/cafe concept opening in South Florida in mid-2000.

Our goal is to popularize a new, higher standard for cheese and for each of our stores to become widely recognized as the single most unique, inspirational, comprehensive, service-oriented and educational specialty cheese resource in its market, the place to buy specialty cheese and anything associated with serving and eating cheese.

We are looking for **General Managers** who love cheese and are passionate about sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm with staff and customers.

Please contact Sara Petri at 954-389-7195, [SFLAT@aol.com](mailto:SFLAT@aol.com) for more information.

**Farmer Bob Bowen decided that he had nothing to lose** by dialing a federally funded national sustainable agriculture information center known as Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA). All of ATTRA's services and even the phone call were free. The information which he received helped him launch a novel poultry business that a year after implementation grossed \$86,000.

A growing number of farmers and other professional agriculturalists each week call ATTRA for information on ways to diversify farm operations with new crop and livestock enterprises, explore new marketing methods, become organic producers, incorporate value-added and farm-processed products, curb use of costly commercial inputs and farm more environmentally. Each week, ATTRA's staff of 25 specialists receive an average of 350 requests for sustainable agriculture information. Located in the Ozark Mountains at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, ATTRA is funded by the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service. "Most of our clients are part- and full-time farmers and extension agents, but ATTRA also welcomes calls from agricultural scientists, agribusinesses, information providers and people who work at farming organizations and federal agencies," says ATTRA Project Manager Teresa Maurer. Since its founding in 1987, ATTRA specialists have prepared more than 130,000 reports on sustainable farming topics for callers. And annual requests for information have increased from 2,900 in 1987 to more than 18,000 in 1999. Maurer says ATTRA expects demand for these services to rise even more dramatically as farmers face "elimination of federal subsidies, stiffer environmental laws, and tightening U.S. and world markets." ATTRA subscribes to over 450 agricultural and environmental periodicals and the Resource Center contains over 3,500 holdings, many of which concern actual research done by farmers in sustainable agriculture.

**For a free brochure and/or other introductory information, contact ATTRA staff members Monday through Friday, from 8:30-4:30 CST at 1-800-346-9140, or visit the ATTRA website at [www.attra.org](http://www.attra.org).**



# Some Personal Reflections on the ACS Task Force

*John Eggena, Fromagerie Tournevent*

As a member of the ACS Codex Task Force Committee, I had the opportunity to monitor the development of the "raw milk vs. pasteurization issue" first hand over the last two years. When we first took note of the fact that an international ruling against raw milk cheeses seemed to be imminent, we mobilized and took on this issue with a sense of emergency. The task force set out to define a strategy of action and initiated several actions to raise awareness as well as to gather statistics and scientific data to support our public stance. We sent out surveys, wrote articles, held information sessions, sought allies and consulted experts in the field. After two years, this is a personal reflection, and not necessarily the view point of the task force.

## **On the cheesemakers' survey:**

Addressed to those that we felt had most at stake, our member cheesemakers. The response rate wasn't what we'd hoped for. We counted on at least an 80-percent return to claim membership backing in our lobbying effort, but received close to 40 percent. Many thanks to those who responded and helped. But what does this response tell us about our members and these issues? Has our work become too "esoteric" to follow? Have we lost our dialogue with our membership? Should we go ahead and execute our mandate to pursue these issues or is an entire redefinition of our task from a membership level in order?

## **On mandatory pasteurization:**

We all agree to giving ourselves choices in cheesemaking as long as they respect some basics: that the cheeses are exempt from any harmful contamination and that they can be certified safe for all consumers. Remember, existing laws do

permit raw milk cheeses as long as they are aged a minimum of 60 days. To date, ACS efforts concentrate on assuring that this law remains on the books and supporting standards of sanitary practices as proposed by the Vermont Cheese Council and HACCP certification for small cheesemakers. Should our mandate concentrate on raising funds to lobby in Washington for the 60-day rule, and/or should our role be to inform and educate only? Should we play politics, or can we look at this problem from another perspective closer to our membership base?

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**...The ability to produce raw milk cheeses was not specifically excluded in the hygiene section of Codex Alimentarius...I feel that we have "won" the first battle...perhaps not yet the war. The issue of raw milk vs. mandatory pasteurization has moved from a blanket issue to one of measurable safety and control standards...Since it's the FDA that will ultimately rule for our domestic market and the 60-day rule, let us take the first step to show them that our artisanal products are safe...This is something concrete we can roll our sleeves up and get to work on, it's not back-room politics.**

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## **On Codex negotiations:**

Whereas a year ago we were almost sure that mandatory pasteurization would be the international standard, the French dairy journal, RSL (Sept. 99) just claimed "victory" for the raw milk producers of Europe. Based on third-party inspection and microbiological contamination norms, as well as a HACCP program for small producers, the ability to produce raw milk cheeses was not specifically excluded in the hygiene section of Codex Alimentarius. The Europeans have a lot more to lose in this — 20 percent of French produc-

tion is raw milk cheeses. I feel that we have "won" the first battle...perhaps not yet the war. The issue of raw milk vs. mandatory pasteurization has moved from a blanket issue to one of measurable safety and control standards. I think it's a victory for the affirmation of traditional and artisanal cheesemaking. It also brings resolution on this debate back to the individual production unit, and it begins with us implementing rigorous standards of sanitary practices. Since it's the FDA that will ultimately rule for our domestic market and the 60-day rule, let us take the first step to show them that our artisanal products are safe. Let's make the effort to coordinate a national Standards of Practice Code based on a HACCP certification program for small cheesemakers. This is something concrete we can roll our sleeves up and get to work on, it's not back-room politics.

## **ACS role:**

Perhaps the mitigated response to our cheesemakers' survey was a hidden blessing — it forced us to come back home to the everyday practice of artisanal cheesemaking, right there in the milieu where creativity, traditions, and good taste mixes and promote uniform safety standards recognized by the industry and consumers. It is helping us get away from polarizing the issue of raw vs. pasteurized and instead helping us present our case within the larger framework of protecting/promoting traditional cheesemaking, which will permit us to ally ourselves with other consumer groups like the Slow Food and Oldways organizations. For sure, we should continue to monitor FDA and Codex proceedings, but let's work on applying those uniform safety standards and an applicable, small cheesemakers' HACCP program, and get this message out through our newsletter, web site, media, and the upcoming conference. ☺



*continued from front page*

two of my lovely Saanen yearlings dead and another dying. It was important to get them posted quickly, just in case it was the beginning of something dreadful, instead of the end of it. When we lose animals to something we can't account for, and we don't lose many except to old age, it's an hour's drive to an unlikely place called French Lick, Ind., where Purdue has a diagnostic lab. It is such a remote drive, and never a happy one, through beautiful, heartbreaking hills. That morning it was 72°, the sun was coming up, and a creek toppled along the side of the road. The world was new and fresh. I could hardly drive for the tears, angry at myself for not being home taking care of the goats. As the deaths turned out to be a preventable metabolic problem of late pregnancy, I was not being too hard on myself. I suppose everyone's reality is different, but at that moment the reality of farm life seemed much more than a marketing tool.

Mary Keehn at Cypress Grove had the most beautiful goats I've ever seen. The goat on our label is her Shahena'ko Tea Rose, our foundation doe. When I met Mary for the first time in 1983 at a goat show in Oklahoma, she was a single mother with four daughters still at home, and she was making cheese, milking her own goats, and exhibiting them. Luckily, she had a milk supplier nearby who worked with the same bloodlines, so that when she decided she could no longer do it all, she was still able to buy milk very similar to her own.

Cypress Grove's wonderful cheeses are totally distinctive, with a flavor profile different

than mine or anyone else's. So I'm not sure that "farmstead" is only about flavor or goodness or better or worse, but I know that it does represent something worth preserving — a way of life, a level of hardness or difficulty, a personal way of seeing the possible in small things, and most of all, a connection with and dedication to the land and the animal. It's Miles Cahn putting his land in Farm Trust, Laura Chenel re-establishing her herd when she didn't need to, Allison Hooper wanting her own farm, Greg Sava and Mary Doerr making the decision to stay small. And, after eight years, it's that Mary Keehn has never erased the numbers of her does from the chalk board in her barn.

Farmstead cannot make a good cheese a bad one, it cannot even make a good cheese a great one, and there are lots of great cheeses that are made beautifully with blended milks. But farmstead is a simple, weighty word, and if it's to stay that way, it should be used only where it applies and not become just another "sell." It would be sad to see it go the way of "organic," which used to mean a sustainable, diversified, and integrated way of life, and now includes certification for those who haul Wisconsin milk to Colorado and send antibiotic cows to a non-organic farm down the road.

When it gets too basic and too bad here, we all remind ourselves that we truly love what we do. But farms are life and death every day in your face, a world of extremes. In Ross Gagnon's words, "we need to keep the 'farm' in 'farmstead,'" and this is more than verbage or a hand-drawn barn on a supermarket label. ☞

*continued from page 5*

In the spring we put a few big sows in the goat pen and let them root through the packed bedding and accumulated manure pack. Before long, it becomes beautiful, friable compost that is easy to shovel out for use on our gardens and also to sell to local gardeners, who wait in line to get it. We sell it either by the truckload or packaged in old feed sacks, and that income sure helps out the bottom line, along with everything else.

As we all know, goats are real wasteful with hay, which is another reason to have a beef or dairy cow around; they aren't nearly as fussy as goats and are happy to clean up the waste. Sheep will do the same thing. We find we can provide 25 percent of our cow's hay by recycling this way. Lastly we recycle the water from our pasteurizer. The water comes out of there at 165 degrees and is fine for washing up milk and cheese dishes. The cooling water that drains out goes directly to the garden via a hose to irrigate the crops there. And we're not done yet: hot soapy water and sanitizer water is scooped from the sinks and thrown on the floor to be used to clean up there. We're still looking for ways to recycle all of our water and would love to hear your ideas.

We feel strongly that to be

successful, you have to try to lower your inputs, partly by recycling as much as possible, increase your diversity so you don't have all your eggs in one basket, use and market every single product that your farm produces (that reminds me, we have to start doing something with our goat skins) and market your product yourself direct to the consumer so you're not paying a middle person and can capture the highest return. Farming this way, you can remain a small family farm without having to grow BIG and inherit the debt load and other problems associated with bigness.

**Want to know more?** Anne Bossi and Bob Bowen, Sunset Acres Farm, 769 Bagaduce Rd., Brooksville, ME 045617, [sunsetacres@acadia.net](mailto:sunsetacres@acadia.net)

*A few years ago, I taught a farmstead cheese class on the farm and Anne Bossi and Bob Bowen attended. Anne is the Northeast field representative for Heifer Project International, and "Farmer Bob" is a former insurance agent. "Selling insurance to farmers was sort of like an alcoholic selling beer," he says. "Each farm I went to, I fell in love with. I wanted to milk the farmer's cows instead of selling him insurance." Anne and Bob have great senses of humor, and great, warm hearts. I learned more from them than I think they did from me. I learned there are hundreds of small cheesemakers making wonderful cheese that we never hear about. These cheesemakers sell at farmers' markets and in local stores and restaurants. Every day they see the pleasure on their customers' faces, talk with them about what they like and don't like, and inquire about each other's families and lives. When Anne and Bob wanted to raise money to build a new barn, Bob sold "Barn Bucks" to some of their customers. A customer was entitled to purchase a \$10 "Barn Buck" and redeem it three months later for \$10 plus 10% value interest. \$100 in "Barn Bucks" bought the customer \$110 in vegetables, pork, eggs, or chicken. JS ☞*

## CODEX Task Force Update

The CODEX task force was established in 1998 to protect the right of cheesemakers to use raw milk as an ingredient in cheesemaking.

The task force has finished its work and has disbanded. The ruling of the CODEX committee in the spring of 1999 did not prohibit mandatory pasteurization, but left it up to individual nations to determine the control measures used to achieve the appropriate level of public health protection.

The CODEX hygiene committee continues to work on defining what those measures are.