



Wake Robin

A Family Farm

May 2009

It's time for curds and hay, unrelated except by the fact that we'll be making both of them this week on our farm!

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Interview with our Cheesemaker



We do everything start to finish on our dairy farm, from baling hay to making cheese. The quality of our milk begins with the feed we grow for our cows, and the care with which we handle our milk affects the flavor of all of our products. My husband, Bruce, is the "artisan" cheesemaker on our farm, but he considers himself, "just a farmer who makes cheese".

Bruce is a humble cheesemaker, but I'm pretty impressed with what he's accomplished in a little over a year of experience! We've learned a lot from books and classes, but whether a cheese is successful for us comes down to a lot of trial and error, and a few key factors; first, it has to be a cheese that will highlight the rich whole milk from our Jersey cows. Second, it has to work with the basic equipment in our creamery. Third, the aging conditions have to be similar to other cheeses we make. Lastly, and most importantly, we have to like to eat it ourselves (which is why we will never make Limburger!).

So far, we have four cheeses in our repertoire: Mona Lisa, Bailiwick Cheddar, Caerffili, and Fresh Cheese Curds. We have dreams of Brie, Blue Cheese, and Gruyere, but those will probably have to wait until we build a bona fide cheese cave with separate rooms for aging different varieties. Bruce does not aspire to win any international cheese competitions -- instead, he judges the success of a cheese by whether our local customers like to eat it.

Cheese Curds

It's true - our family is addicted to our farm-fresh cheese curds. That's why we had to start making them a couple of weeks ago. We were on the fence about them this year, mostly because they are so perishable, but they're also irresistible!

We're making them on Fridays, so that we can sell them at their squeaky-freshest on Saturdays at the CNY Regional Market. We're also offering them at our farm stand, which is open 7 to 7 everyday. They sell out fast, so come up to the farm on Saturdays if you want to be sure they'll be here.

Hay Time



When we were vegetable farmers, we'd be wishing for rain about this time of year to water our transplants. Nowadays, we're looking for a nice long dry stretch to bale our first cutting of hay (with apologies to our veggie farming friends).

The haymow is literally empty right now, and the cows are out on the fresh pasture from May until November. While they are enjoying the bounty of the grazing season, we'll be working hard to preserve some of that grass for the winter months. Bruce remarked the other day that we'll be making half of our winter feed in the next two weeks, because the first cutting of hay is generally a lot heavier than those later in the season. I see high pressure and several very long days in the forecast - it's no wonder that Bruce's back is already bothering him.

We grow about 45 acres of pasture and hay for our small herd of cows, but our cows are not 100% grass fed. The vast majority of their diet this time of year is fresh grass, and the bulk of

their feed in the winter is high quality hay. We do not feed any silage, but we do feed a small amount (~6 lbs /day) of certified organic grain to our milking cows year round. This helps us to ensure that we are feeding enough protein to our cows, that we are getting them the minerals that they need to stay healthy, and it also provides incentive for them to come into the barn at milking time.

Economic Sustainability



One of the values articulated in our business plan is honest communication with our customers, which is one reason I started writing this newsletter. It provides a way for us to talk about how we farm, to describe our products, and to explain our business choices.

We recently decided to make a small increase in the wholesale price of our yogurt, which will cause a slight adjustment on the grocery store shelves in the next few weeks. One component of our farm sustainability is the financial viability of our business, and a few cents per quart of yogurt will become thousands of dollars to us over the course of a year. While we truly wish that we could just focus on making good, healthy food for people, the reality of mortgages and loan payments are never farther than a glance at my "Accounts Payable" drawer.

As a small farm (just 12 milking cows!), we do not have the buying power that larger yogurt companies do. We pay more for our yogurt cups and ingredients than Stonyfield Farm or Dannon, so we have to price our yogurt accordingly. We don't take your business for granted, and we hope that the superb quality and taste of our yogurt is worth the difference in price. Our family genuinely appreciates your decision to support our small local farm!

Your Farmers,

Bruce & Meg Schader
[Wake Robin Farm](#)

**\$1 off a bag of our
fresh cheese
curds**

Print this coupon and present it to us at the CNY Regional Market, from 7 am to 1 pm every Saturday, or right at our farm stand, open every day from 7 am to 7 pm.

See you then!

Good through Saturday, June 13. One coupon per family, please.

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