

Vermont Cheese Council

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Changing of the Guard

After two years at the helm as VCC President, Jamie Miller, cheesemaker from Shelburne Farms has opted to move onto other challenges. Vice-President Jon Wright of Taylor Farm has stepped into the breach.

The following questions were posed to both the Outgoing and Incoming VCC president:



Jamie Miller (left) and Jon Wright

the way down to St. Jon in the Virgin Islands. After a six month stint at a Yacht club on Martha's Vineyard I returned to Burlington knowing that I needed to get myself out from behind the stove. I started looking into some local breweries, bakeries, and cheese making operations. The cheesemaker at Shelburne Farm's had accepted a position down in Virginia to start a new cheese operation, so I interviewed,

and before you know it... I am the new cheesemaker for Shelburne Farms.

How/why did you start making cheese?

Jamie: I began cheesemaking in the spring of 2001. I had spent most of my time up to that point cooking in Restaurants from Burlington, Vermont all

Jon: We were struggling dairy farmers who wanted
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Lake's Edge, by Blue Ledge Farm

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Changing of the Guard

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to improve our farm profitability. We came to cheese out of necessity. We started making cheese in the fall of '99 and it has now become the real identity of Taylor Farm.

What is the best part of making an artisanal product? What is the worst part?

Jamie: The sweat. I really do love the physicality of what we do here. There is something to be said for making 500, 600, or 700 pounds of cheese by hand in a day. It is a nice feeling at the end of the day to see what you have accomplished and what it took out of you to do it. I suppose on the other hand this also constitutes what is probably one of the worst parts of the job. It is incredibly back breaking work. This is one of those Yin Yang sorts of jobs I guess.

Jon: I love being involved in the whole process. I love getting the cows out on the first spring pasture, I love milking in the morning and watching the sun rise, I love seeing a full cheese vat of our rich milk, I love singing in the cheese room as we make 400lbs of Gouda and I love sharing the cheese with visitors as they come to our farm to explore our lifestyle. I love knowing that we took it all the way. The worst thing is I never get enough sleep.

How would you categorize the state of cheesemaking today in Vermont?

Jamie: Bountiful. The amount of various cheeses being produced in the state right now is mind blowing. Attend any event put on by the VCC and you will see cow, goat and sheep's milk cheeses of all styles and tastes. It is incredible what comes out of Vermont.

Jon: I totally agree with Jamie, "Bountiful". We have a wonderful group of producers with outstanding cheeses. I'm optimistic that there is room for even more!

What is the greatest challenge facing Vermont cheesemakers?

Jamie: Education and consistency are our greatest challenges. Many cheesemakers, here and elsewhere, come to cheesemaking out of need. By this I mean that there are a lot of small dairy operations here in Vermont who, in order to stay in business, had to

transition from strictly a dairy operation into some sort of "value added" dairy processor. There are others who come from any long lines of cheesemaking lineage – any many who arrive at cheesemaking, as I did, quite by accident. Being educated as to what is happening while we are in our cheese rooms is important. Vitrally important. The more we understand our craft and trade, the better cheeses we will be making. We all win, from the producer to the consumer.

Jon: Maintaining HIGH quality products, which we are doing and, as Jamie said, moving cheese makers forward with education.

What's the most important thing consumers should know about cheeses that comes from Vermont?

Jamie: In my time working with the VCC and being involved in Vermont's cheesemaking scene, I have gotten to know quite a few people. Sometimes it's the cheesemaker alone who get all the credit for their cheeses. But in reality it is a group effort. The group consisting of the land, the food, the weather, the cows, sheep, goats, water buffalo, the milkers, the cheesemakers, the people we buy our equipment and supplies from, the UPS drivers, the shop owners and staff, the customer.... I think you get the idea. We cannot do this alone, it takes all of us together to get to where we are today. Not easy, but well worth the rewards.

Jon: Consumers need to have the utmost confidence that Vermont cheeses are made with the highest standards of quality. The number of awards that Vermont cheesemakers consistently receive speaks to that!

Jon added the following on this Changing of the Guard: "Jamie will be greatly missed in the Vermont Cheese Community (or maybe not, seems like we ought to be able to find a spot for him close by)! I first met Jamie in the winter of 2001 when, as the new cheesemaker at Shelburne, he made the effort to get out and visit most of the cheesemakers in Vermont. He showed up with a big grin on his face and a strong hand shake and followed me around as I gave him an overly wordy tour of our humble cheese facility. He has continued to be a vibrant spokesperson for all cheesemakers as well as turning out an outstanding product in his own right. As President of the Cheese Council he continually made efforts to bring us together as a cohesive group and focused on issues that are important to us all. His efforts, wisdom and humor will be remembered! Thanks, man!"

Welcome to the helm, Jon. Stay in touch, Jamie.



Vermont Cheeses Kick Bluegrass at American Cheese Society Contest in Kentucky

Cheesemakers from the Green Mountain State raced to victory in the legendary hometown of the Kentucky Derby where the American Cheese Society held its 22nd Annual Conference & Competition in July. Vermont cheesemakers earned twenty-eight (28) awards including eight (8) blue ribbons for cheesemaking

Awards were presented to twelve different members of the Vermont Cheese Council (VCC) for an impressive variety of specialty cheeses made from cow, goat, sheep and even water buffalo milk.



“Vermont continues to lead with excellent traditional cheeses as well as innovative new farmstead and artisanal cheeses,” noted VCC president and Shelburne Farms cheesemaker Jamie Miller. “These awards further advance Vermont’s strong reputation for quality with our key chefs and retailers, within our industry, and with the cheese-loving public in general.”

First-time ACS blue ribbon winners included Cobb Hill Cheese, Green Mountain Blue Cheese, and Jasper Hill Farm. Crowley Cheese, Shelburne Farms, Taylor Farm and dual blue-ribbon winner Cabot Creamery Cooperative rounded out

the first place awards. First-ever ACS ribbons went to Neighborly Farms of Vermont and The Woodstock Water Buffalo Company. Seven of the twelve Vermont winners earned multiple ribbons, including Grafton Village Cheese Company, Jasper Hill Farm, Neighborly Farms of Vermont, Shelburne Farms, Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, Willow Hill Farm, and Cabot, who led all winners with six ribbons. See complete list of winners, page

The ACS Annual Competition relied on ten teams of two judges each to select the finest American-made dairy products, based on both technical and aesthetic traits. The contest this year featured 23 categories with a record 749 entries submitted by 127 North American cheesemakers. For more information, visit www.cheesesociety.org.

Results of 2005 American Cheese Society Annual Competition

Award ribbons, listed alphabetically by Vermont cheesemaker

First-Place, Blue-Ribbon Winners

Cabot Creamery Cooperative; Cabot Five Peppercorn Cheddar
Cabot Creamery Cooperative; Cabot Unsalted Butter
Cobb Hill Cheese; Ascutney Mountain
Crowley Cheese, Inc.; Medium Sharp Colby
Green Mountain Blue Cheese; Gore-Dawn-Zola
Jasper Hill Farm; Constant Bliss
Shelburne Farms; Herb Spread
Taylor Farm; Maple Smoked Gouda

Second-Place, Red-Ribbon Winners

Cabot Creamery Cooperative; Cabot Vermont Cheddar Wheel
Cabot Creamery Cooperative; Cabot Light Cheddar
Cabot Creamery Cooperative; Cabot Smoked Cheddar
Jasper Hill Farm; Bailey Hazen Blue
Neighborly Farms of Vermont; Monterey Jack
Neighborly Farms of Vermont; Green Onion Cheddar
Shelburne Farms; Green Olive Spread
Vermont Butter & Cheese Company; Vermont Goat’s Milk Feta
Vermont Butter & Cheese Company; Vermont Cultured Butter Unsalted

Third-Place, White-Ribbon Winners

Cabot Creamery Cooperative; Cabot Salted Butter
Grafton Village Cheese Co., LLC; Stone House 6-Year Cheddar
Grafton Village Cheese Co., LLC; Vermont Maple Smoked Cheddar
Shelburne Farms; 2 Year Cheddar
Shelburne Farms; 6 Month Cheddar
Vermont Butter & Cheese Company; Vermont Creamy Goat Cheese Classic
Vermont Butter & Cheese Company; Vermont Fromage Blanc
Willow Hill Farm; Alderbrook
Willow Hill Farm; Summertomme
Willow Hill Farm; Vermont Brebis
The Woodstock Water Buffalo Co.; Mozzarella - Ovalini



New Cheeses



The newest cheese from **Willow Hill Farm** is called “Blue Moon.” This tangy and creamy blue sheep milk cheese is handmade from the farm’s own high butterfat unpasteurised sheep’s milk, once in a blue moon, according to cheesemaker Willow Smart . The cheese weighs approx one kilo and is available through distributors. Please call for its seasonal availability (802) 893-2963.

Greg Bernhardt and Hannah Sessions from **Blue Ledge Farm** have announced that they are producing two new goat cheeses this year. “Riley’s Coat” is a raw milk, washed rind cheese aged four months, and “Lake’s Edge” - a semi-fresh ash coated and mold ripened cheese aged 40 days. These have been sold at the Middlebury and the Rutland Farmers markets on Saturday mornings into the fall. As the fresh air market season winds down, Riley’s Coat to



Riley’s Coat

will become available in Burlington area stores and Middlebury Coop.

Mateo Kehler from **Jasper Hill Farm** report that they have a new vat and are milking more cows this fall in efforts to keep up with demand. They are also launching a new product, Winnemere, which should be available at press time. For availability, check out <http://www.jasperhillfarm.com/ourcheese.html>.

Cabot Creamery’s new flavored cheddar “Cabot Pesto Cheddar” was the winner of the national web poll entitled “Flavor Vote 2005”

announced at the 2005 Fancy Food Show in New York. Coming the Spring 2006 – a Cabot Creamery/Jasper Hill Farm collaboration: Cabot Clothbound Cheddar. Look for details in our next issue or on the Cabot web site: <http://www.cabotchese.com>.



From NYC to the Cheese Room

Trading an upscale retail job for a cheesemaking internship

Serendipity, thy name is cheese. When Angela Miller, owner of Consider Bardwell Farm in West Pawlett, brought her cheese in to sell at Murray’s Cheese Shop in New York City, she ended buying as well as selling.

What she bought was the labor of Heidi Exline who worked the upscale shop’s retail counter and mail order center. Angela mentioned she needed interns to help in her newly minted cheesemaking operation.

Heidi, a fledgling entrepreneur and cheese aficionado, expressed interest. One thing led to another and by May of 2005, Heidi had traded in her Manhattan commute for something a bit more rural.

Her exodus from the city also rated a mention in *The New York Times*. From May through July, Heidi lived and worked at Consider Bardwell. There she assisted Peggy Galloup in the make room, helped with the many new kids in the barn, and show Consider Bardwell whatever she could about setting up a mail order system.

“It’s been great,” says Heidi, a native of Iowa who has returned to NYC with dreams of someday opening her own cheese shop. “To be effective in retail, it helps to understand the process that brings cheese from the farm to the consumer.”

Internships like Heidi’s have launched more than one successful cheesemaker in Vermont. Allison Hooper of Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, Laini Fondiller from Lazy Lady Farm and Willow Smart from Willow Hill are just a few of the excellent and highly acclaimed cheese-makers that got their start in much the same way.



Along the Vermont Cheese Trail

Summer and early Fall represent the busiest season for visitors along the Vermont Cheese trail. Included in our last issue was a map indicating the 17 Vermont cheesemakers who welcome visitors to stop by – taste and buy wares or just sit a bit and watch the miracle of milk turning into cheese!

Reports from the Trail

- Jon Wright of Taylor Farm in Londonderry says that being a designated stop on the Cheese Trail makes a good launch point especially with their new Guest House. Their new retail shop at the farm offers for sale a number of Vermont cheeses as well as maple syrup, honey, books, prints, cutting boards, T-shirts, aprons, and more ...
- Taking the Trail on the Trail: Peter Mohn of Grafton Village Cheese has been gallivanting about the countryside doing talks and trainings pm cheesemaking at such places as Murray's in NYC and Wegman's in Rochester, NY.
- Canada's popular daily, *The Globe and Mail* ran a story of the Vermont Cheese Trail in their Saturday, May 14 edition. Some subsequent visitors to the Cabot Creamery Welcome Center mentioned seeing the article.
- Also dropping into the Cabot Welcome Center this summer was Julia Ruth Stevens, daughter of legendary slugger Babe Ruth who was born the year prior to when Cabot farmer's formed their cooperative.
- A film crew from Australia hit the Vermont Cheese Trail this summer as reportedly they have done in Italy, France, Spain, England and Ireland. They do a televised program called "Cheese Slices." The head of the "pack," Will Stubbs, gave a book he authored to those Vermont cheesemakers he visited and, according to Lazy Lady's Laini Fondiller, it is excellent. Along the Vermont Cheese Trail they visited Grafton Village Cheese, Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, Jasper Hill Farm, and Shelburne Farms, as well as visiting the Montpelier Farmers Market where they encountered Laini selling her wares.
- Just is time for fall foliage, the September 19 edition of *Business Week* online featured a story on the Vermont Cheese Trail under the heading of Personal Business. The article, entitled This Way To The Curds And Whey: A cheese lover's tour yields samples, classes, and only-at-the-farm finds featured farms included Peaked Mountain Farm, Taylor Farm, Woodcock Farm, Shelburne Farms, Grafton Village Cheese and Star Hill Dairy, home of Woodstock Water Buffalo cheese and yogurt. (visit: <http://www.businessweek.com/>)
- The September issue of *Country Magazine* included an article promoting great tours to take during the foliage season. Among the tours were the Vermont Cheese Trail and the 17 cheesemaking members who welcome visitors to their farms. The article included a photo of W. Townsend-based Peaked Mountain Farm.

Cheese and Beer: A Perfect Pairing

Carleton Yoder, owner/cheesemaker from Champlain Valley Creamery, Vergennes, presented a program entitled "Craft Beers and Artisan Cheese: Vermont's Perfect Pairing" at the Vermont Brew Fest on the shored of Lake Champlain in July. Carleton lectured on the general rules for pairing beer and cheese and reasons why pairings don't always work. He as offering the following five specific Vermont-made beers and cheese matches for those in attendance:

- Rock Art Whitetail Ale, Morrisville, VT with:
 - Old Fashion Organic Cream Cheese, Champlain Valley Creamery, Vergennes
- Otter Creek Middlebury Ale, Middlebury, VT with:
 - Pepper Chevre, Blue Ledge Farm, Leicester
- The Alchemist Heady Topper IPA, Waterbury, VT with:
 - Farmhouse Cheddar, 2-Year, Shelburne Farms, Shelburne
- American Flatbread Extra Stout, Burlington, VT with:
 - Cabot Creamery Smokey Bacon Cheddar, Cabot
- Shed Brewery Mountain Ale, Stowe, VT with:
 - Jasper Hill Farm Bayley Hazen Blue, Greensboro



USDA Rural Development Announces Two Funding Programs

9006 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RE or EE):

Applications invited anytime for RE or EE projects, with 2-4 funding cycles expected annually. Agricultural producers and rural small businesses may apply for 25% grant funds or a loan guarantee up to 50% of total eligible project costs (TEPC) for the purchase of renewable energy systems and installation of energy efficiency improvements. Grant applications must demonstrate financial need based on applicant resources or project's cash flow. Streamlined application process for TEPC less than \$200,000 with reduced technical requirements and no business level feasibility study requirement. Energy assessments not required for TEPC less than \$50,000. EE includes reduction in energy consumed per s.f. so expansion projects may be eligible. Applications for loan guarantees may include capital improvements to an existing RE system and land acquisition costs. All locations in VT are eligible. Scoring incentives for Small and Very Small Ag Producers, as well as Very Small Businesses.

Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG):

A Notice of Solicitation for Applications was expected to be published in mid-October, with a likely February deadline. 50% grant funding is available to help eligible Farmers, Ag Producer Groups, farmer/rancher cooperatives, or majority controlled producer-based business ventures develop feasibility studies, business plans, and marketing plans related to the establishment of a value-added

marketing opportunity for an agricultural product. Funds may also be available to pay certain working capital expenses related to operating a viable value-added business venture, subject to conditions. Funds may not be used to purchase or install processing equipment, or to plan, repair, acquire or construct a building or facility, or to pay any expenses related to the production

of the ag commodity to which value will be added. All locations in VT are eligible. All applicants, with the exception of independent producers, must propose entry into an emerging market for their product.

Information on both opportunities is available at www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm or contact Lyn Millhiser at (802) 828-6069 or by e-mail: lyn.milhiser@vt.usda.gov.

Small Dairy Pasteurizer Available

JayBee Precision, Inc., based in New Hampshire, is trying to increase penetration into the small cheesemaker market with two new, small pasteurizers. The company has been building Vat Type pasteurizers for the past ten years and has 60 units in the field and in 25 States along with Hawaii and Canada, mostly in small dairy and ice cream parlors. Now they have announced two new units, the 7 to 15 gallon (Model 15GA) and the 15 to 30 gallon (Model 30GA).

Wanda Thomas of Harmony Maine owns one of each model and says, "We can process 1600 pounds of product in one day. The smaller of the two we use as a cheese vat for soft cheese, cheese spread, cheddar, and small amounts of cream. The 30GA we use for fluid milk and cream. The TECH support is excellent."



The 7-15 gallon (Model 15GA, above) and the 15-30 gallon (Model 30GA), right.



In Vermont. Diane St.Clair makes fresh ricotta and butter at Animal Farm in Orwell and reports "The 15 gallon vat pasteurizer is easy to use. It has speeded up the entire process for me." To talk to Diane about her experience, diane@animalfarmvt.com.

The units have received approval from the Northeast Region Dairy Equipment Review Committee (NERDERC); 3A approval is expected this fall. For more information go to <http://www.jaybeeprecision.com> or call the manufacturer at 603-744-6644 and they will be happy to answer all your questions.

Cheesemaking Courses Offered

The Training Center for Farmstead Milk Processing will present a series of two-day workshops in making cheese on the farm, taught by Peter Dixon and special guests. Woodcock Farm Cheese Company, a licensed Vermont farmstead cheese business in Weston, Vermont, will host participants who will learn the fundamentals of farmstead cheese making and how to set up and improve their own farmstead cheese businesses.

There will be a strong focus on the technical aspects of cheese making and affinage, learning how to use starter cultures and making at least two varieties of cheese, as well as information on facilities, equipment, marketing, and operations.

Lunches and course materials will be provided. A pair of clean water-resistant boots or shoes is required.

2005-2006 Schedule

December 10-11 Beginners class about cheese making and business. Starting up; sheep, cow and goat milk: properties and use in cheese making; making lactic curd cheese, Tomme, and Romano; financial and marketing information.

January 7-8 Making and aging Bloomy-rind cheeses, including Camembert, Brie, and lactic curd goat and cow milk cheeses. Focus on cultures, affinage, packaging, facilities and equipment.

February 18-19 Making and aging Blue cheeses from cow milk, including Stilton and Gorgonzola

styles. Focus on cultures, affinage, packaging, facilities and equipment.

March 18-19 Making and aging Washed-rind cheeses, including Citeaux, St. Paulin, and Gruyere styles. Focus on cultures, affinage, packaging, facilities and equipment.

Cost is \$250 per class with a \$50 deposit required. Classes are from 9 am to 4 pm each day. Contact Peter Dixon (802) 387-4041 or email pdixon@sover.net.

The Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheeses at UVM is now offering a Certificate in Cheesemaking. Requirements to earn the certificate include completing 6 core courses and 1 elective. The following are offered for winter 2006:

January 9 Hygiene and Food Safety in Cheesemaking (core course)

January 10 Milk Chemistry. One day (core course)

January 11-13 Essentials Principles and Practices of Cheesemaking (core course)

March 20-21 Cheese Chemistry Short Course. Two days (core course)

March 22-24 Artisan Cheese Practices: Irish Cheeses. Three days (elective)

For information on costs or to register contact Jody Farnham, Program Coordinator for VIAC, www.uvm.edu/viac, 802-656-8300 e-mail: viac@uvm.edu

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS



Mateo and Andy Kehler of Jasper Hill Farm

Reporter Ellen Ruppel Shell put **Jasper Hill Farm** front and center in the September 4 edition of *The Boston Globe*, calling prizewinning brothers Mateo and Andy Kehler, the hottest cheese makers in the country. Nice get.

Cabot Creamery's recent media coverage included a story in the September 15 *San Francisco Chronicle* which featured Cabot Creamery's Vintage Choice Cheddar and whetted the appetite for a new cheese to come out in Spring 2006. Cabot also appeared in the September 23 edition of *The Charlotte Observer*.

The October 3rd edition of **Business Week's** small business website featured a profile of John Putnam at **Thistle Hill Farm**. The link is: www.businessweek.com/smallbiz

The Escape section in the October 8th edition of *The New York Times* featured a travel piece featuring **Vermont Shepherd, Taylor Farm and Grafton Village Cheese**.

Shelburne Farms, Cobb Hill Cheese, Grafton Village Cheese, Lazy Lady, Thistle Hill Farm, and Jasper Hill Farm were all featured in the November issue of *Ski Magazine*.



LET'S VISIT:

Twig Farm

From Twigs to Tomme: Making Cheese from Trees

By Carol Delaney (excerpted from UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture newsletter, Cultivating Connections, summer 2005)

Driving along an Addison County dirt road in Cornwall, VT, one would not assume that a driveway disappearing into the woods would take you to a farmstead cheese goat dairy. However, if you knew its name was “Twig Farm”, and that goats prefer eating woody and broad-leafed plants, your assumptions might change.

Addison County is a landscape of fertile fields and a leader in cow milk production across all of New England, yet this 40 acre property offers ledge and swamp and trees to its new owners, Michael Lee and Emily Sunderman. And while Addison County may very well claim to be the capital of commercial goat dairies in the state of Vermont, all the other goat dairies have open land to work with. “We bought it because it was very affordable due to its topography and because it was close to family”.

When asked what was the biggest challenge to starting a farmstead cheese operation, Emily smiles broadly and honestly admits that she was the main obstacle. She did not want live the life of a farmer yet Michael patiently kept reintroducing the idea over the years. Embracing their new life, Emily is intimate with the workings of all aspects of the enterprise, and is almost as well



Scenes around Twig Farm.



versed as Michael to answer any questions a visitor might have. There is a comfortable compromise between them as Emily still works a full time computer job at home and Michael farms and makes cheese full-time.

The new farm building encompasses the barn, milking parlor and cheesemaking room and garage. Starting at the West end, it opens with an area for winter goat housing and along one wall, side by side ramps stand where the goats enter and exit the milking parlor. They chose goats because they preferred them as animals to work with and they also like goat cheese. As of June 2005, they were milking just five young goats that Michael selected as

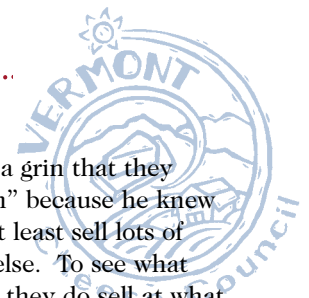
their foundation herd from healthy, productive stock. Keeping the herd closed, except for new bucks, will help them keep their herd insulated from the risk of diseases.

Next to the parlor with eight cascading locking stanchions, is a hallway that they cross to carry the buckets of milk to the milk room. Using a new thermostat and a small

water circulator, they converted a new chest freezer to a can cooler. Walking down the hall away from this milk room, is the windowed door to the cheese room built with a feeling of expanse that the windowed outside wall accentuates. The cheeses are made in 150 gallon vat that heats and cools the milk and curds with a

jacket of water.

Before their five goats started to produce, Michael started buying cows milk from a local organic dairy and it proved to help even out their cash flow this year. They make a few cheeses they call “tommes”, avoiding fanciful names, that are all cow milk, all goat milk or a mixture of both milks. Since they are raw milk cheeses, the ‘green’ cheese wheels move down to a brine and then aging racks in the basement ‘cave’ to ripen over the official 60 days required to bring the pH down to proper levels that help ensure the health and quality of the product. They have chosen to voluntarily enlist in a milk, cheese and environmental pathogen



testing program to help guide them in their practices.

Good cheese starts with good milk and the goats have been offered a variety of options for forage moving from maple and honeysuckle leaves to grasses and clovers. A learning experience for both Michael and the young goats was that the yearlings did not come from farms that grazed or browsed their herds. So far this year, the young milkers seem somewhat dumbfounded as what they should do outside even though they are no longer offered hay. This was a surprise to Michael but a common trial to farmers trying to put their

goats outside to forage for the first time. It can take a few years for the goats to learn to gather their own feed readily. Luckily, an additional 14 young kids being raised outside seem to have not preconceptions of having their feed carried to them and are doing well eating down the browse they are moved to with electric netting as fence. They will join the herd next year and help them toward their goal of 35 milkers.

As with other farmstead cheese businesses, they selected the farm name with the idea of location and an image to be easily held in the consumers' mind. With that, Michael

will tell you with a grin that they chose "Twig Farm" because he knew that they could at least sell lots of twigs, if nothing else. To see what delicious cheeses they do sell at what local outlets, go to www.twigfarm.com.

For more information about workshops or starting a goat dairy or farmstead cheese operation, contact Carol Delaney, Small Ruminant Dairy Specialist, University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture, 802.656.0915, email: carol.delaney@uvm.edu or visit www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture/smallrumi.html

SMALL BITES

On April 15th, a number of cheesemakers participated in a "Sodexo Day" held at the University of Vermont. Sodexo brought a team of sales people and buyers to present and explain their buying methods and requirements from vendors be they small or large: i.e. HACCP plans, insurance, and shipping. Representing the Vermont Cheese Council were **Willow Hill Farm, Green Mountain Blue Cheese, Champlain Valley Creamery, Neighborly Farms, Cabot Creamery, Star Hill Dairy, Shelburne Farms, and Vermont Butter & Cheese Company.**



Vermont Butter & Cheese Co., Willow Hill Farm, Neighborly Farm, and Jasper Hill Farm.

On June 5th, Willow Smart from **Willow Hill Farm** and Dawn Boucher from **Green Mountain Blue Cheese** braved the early June heat wave of 90+ degrees in an outside event at the Stowe Fine Wine Event. Rare, excellent wines were served and paired with Vermont cheeses with great response. Cheese companies participating in this rare event were **Willow Hill Farm, Green Mountain Blue Cheese, Cabot Creamery, Twig Farm, Shelburne Farms, and Vermont Butter & Cheese Company.**



Willow Smart and Dawn Boucher serve up cheese.

After a long and arduous battle, both chambers of the Vermont House passed H.540 on June 4th. This legislation recognizes all farmstead cheesemakers as "farmers" "engaged in the business" of farming by the Vermont Department of Taxes and thus providing such much welcome tax relief to our hard working Vermont cheesemakers.

At the American Cheese Society meeting in Louisville, KY in July, James Beard award winning Chef Kathy Cary from Lilly's & La Peche Restaurant in Louisville demonstrated her cooking skills using **Grafton Village Cheese Cheddar**. Cary not only uses the cheese in her restaurant now, but also has endorsed some of her recipes using Grafton Cheddar.

Over two hundred Vermont products came to New York City for the first-ever BEST OF VERMONT SHOWCASE on August 16-17. The Lois McClure, a replica canal schooner traveling from Vermont, arrived in Manhattan laden with Vermont goods and good

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Small Bites

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will. Sponsored by the Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing, the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum and the farm family owners of **Cabot Creamery**, the two-day extravaganza of demonstrations, free samplings, games, prizes, and raffles also featured **Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, Shelburne Farms** and **Franklin Foods**.

Shelburne Farms was the setting for the Vermont Fresh Network event on August 8th. The event entitled “Edible Possibilities: Conversations with Chefs and Farms,” brought together provider and purveyors of



The Lois McClure, sponsored by Cabot Cheese.

fresh foods from across the state. Vermont cheeses were featured during the cocktail portion of the evening as well as in selected recipes made for the event. Cheesemaking participants included: **Blue Ledge Farm, Blythedale Farm, Champlain Valley Creamery, Cabot Creamery, Cobb Hill Cheese, Consider Bardwell Farm, Green Mountain Blue Cheese, Hope Farm, Jasper**

Hill Farm, La Fromagerie du Royaume, Taylor Farm, Willow Hill, Shelburne Farms, Woodcock Farm, Twig Farm and Vermont Butter & Cheese Company

The Board of Trustees of the Northshire History Center held a Celebrate the Cheesemakers of Vermont with Wine and Music event held at the Oliver Rice House in Manchester on August 18. Participating farms and cheeses included: **Taylor Farm, Woodcock Farm, Consider Bardwell Farm, Thistle Hill Farm, Cobb Hill Farm, Blythedale Farm, Shelburne Farms** and **Crowley Cheese**.

The Annual Plymouth Cheese & Harvest Festival held on September 10th was reportedly the best ever. Perfect weather and lots of good cheeses greeted the crowd of 500 visitors. VCC cheesemakers who participated were: **Crowley Cheese, Shelburne Farms, Cobb Hill, Taylor Farm, Cabot Creamery** and **Frog City Cheese**.

Star Hill Dairy hosted a Tour and Taste on September 13 for The American Institute of Wine & Food, Vermont Chapter. The event showcased their Water Buffalo Mozzarella and Yogurt which foodie guru David Rosengarten touted as “...the best US produced yogurt I’ve ever tasted..” With higher butterfat content than cow’s milk, Star Hill Dairy, located in South Woodstock, promotes an artisanal philosophy in crafting its products which allows for natural seasonal variations in its water buffalo mozzarella and yogurt.

The University of Vermont hosted an evening event at the American Museum of Natural History on Central Park West in NYC on September 21. **Shelburne Farms** and **Grafton Village Cheese** both donated cheese for the cocktail hour. Another such event, also a Celebration for the Campaign for the University of



Sally McCarty, UVM Photography

The Big Apple serves Vermont cheese

Vermont is planned to take place in New York on December 1. The focus of this event will be to pair Vermont cheeses with New York wines.

On Sunday Oct. 2nd at 3:30 am, Mark Fischer from **Woodcock Farm**, and Dan Hewitt, **Three Owls Sheep Dairy**, headed to NYC bringing 35 different cheese products from 20 participating VCC members to participate in the Slow Food USA “New Amsterdam Market.” Held under the grand arcade of the NYC Municipal building, the event introduced some of Vermont’s finest cheeses to well over 1000 New Yorkers. Mark and Dan stayed busy handing out samples and selling cheese and cheese plates throughout the day and appreciated the additional help provided of three Slow Food volunteers.

Snow Farm Winery in South Hero, Vermont contacted invited Vermont cheesemakers to come share and sell cheese at their October 15 grape harvest event. The beautiful site along the shores of Lake Champlain drew participants including **Willow Hill Farm, Green Mountain Blue Cheese, Frog City Cheese**, and **Taylor Farm**.



The book, *American Farmstead Cheese: The Complete Guide to Making and Selling Artisan Cheeses*, authored by our own VCC honorary lifetime member and UVM Professor Paul Kindstedt PhD., has enjoyed brisk sales since its release in May. Alice Blackmer, Publicity Director for publisher Chelsea Green Publishing Co., says that a number of popular food magazines are including recommendations for the book in their year end issues as a Best of 2005. Proceeds from the sale of the book will benefit the VCC. If you would like to purchase the book, call Chelsea Green at 800-639-4099 or visit their web site: www.chelseagreen.com.



Vermont Cheese Council Member Cheesemakers

- Bingham's Farm, Middlebury
- Blue Ledge Farm, Salisbury
- Blythedale Farm, Corinth
- Bonnieview Farm, Craftsbury Common
- Cabot Creamery Cooperative, Cabot
- Champlain Valley Creamery, Vergennes
- Cobb Hill Cheese Co, Hartland.
- Consider Bardwell Farm, W. Pawlett
- Creek Road Cheese Company, Irasburg
- Crowley Cheese, Healdville
- Doe's Leap Farm, Bakersfield
- Frog City Cheese, Plymouth
- Grafton Village Cheese Company, Grafton
- Green Mountain Blue Cheese, Highgate
- Hope Farm Sheep Cheese, Charleston
- Jasper Hill Farm, Greensboro
- La Fromagerie du Royaume, Guildhall
- Lakes End Cheeses, Alburg
- Lazy Lady Farm, Westfield
- Maryella Farm, E. Corinth
- Neighborly Farm, Randolph
- Orb Weaver Farm, New Haven
- Peaked Mountain Farm, Townshend
- Shelburne Farm, Shelburne
- Star Hill Dairy, S. Woodstock
- Taylor Farm, Londonderry
- Thistle Hill Farm, N. Pomfret
- Three Owls Sheep Dairy, Granville
- Three Shepherds of the Mad River Valley, Warren
- Twig Farm, W. Cornwall
- Vermont Butter and Cheese, Websterville
- Vermont Shepherd, Putney
- Willow Hill Farm, Milton
- Woodcock Farm, Weston

Listeria: The Cheesemaker's Enemy

Whether novice or master cheesemaker, the very word *Listeria* can, and should, strike a chord of fear. Peter Dixon offers the following observations and advice:

Listeria is ubiquitous on farms; livestock, silage, and raw milk being sources of contamination and, without all necessary precautions, can become a source of contamination for the less than scrupulous cheesemaker.

How to keep it out of the cheese?

- Keep it out of your milk by milking no more animals that you feel you can keep clean and healthy and supervise adequately.
- Keep the barn well ventilated and clean of manures much as possible.
- Know the quality of your silage if you are going to feed it. Make sure that the pH is low enough and that the silage has been properly fermented. The best is to simply not feed any silage. This is a definite NO, NO with goats.
- Reject milk with suspiciously high raw bacteria and SCC counts.
- Wash the floors often.
- Use a separate pair of boots for cheesemaking that stays in the entry to the cheese make and aging rooms. Don't let others into the facility unless they have changed into clean footwear that you provide (boot covers will work).
- Develop the mantra of "dry is good" in the make room, meaning that you must have good ventilation in the make room to dry the walls, floors, and equipment between cheese makes. Avoid puddles, you need to squeegee the floor dry if the slope isn't right.
- Keep the equipment very clean. Make sure the water is hot enough when you use the caustic (detergent) and acid cleaners, it should be at least 125 F.
- Keep the cheese aging boards, mats, and shelving scrupulously clean. Remove these when there is a cheese residue build-up and clean them. After cleaning make sure these items are bone dry before using again.
- One tablespoon of Clorox per gallon of water will give you 200 PPM, which is suitable for sanitizing equipment. Immerse small items for at least 30 seconds before use. Larger equipment must be sanitized by brushing the solution on. Increase the dose to 800 PPM for drains.



VERMONT FARM BUREAU
Vermont Cheese Council
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Calendar of Upcoming Events

Artisan Cheese Practices: French Cheeses

The Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese, At the University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont
October 31, November 1 & 2
Additional courses offered
December - March
For information about this and other cheese courses, contact Jody Farnham, Program Coordinator for VIAC, (802) 656-8300 or e-mail: viac@uvm.edu

2005 Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium

Burlington, Vermont,
November 3-5.
The UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture is hosting the only conference that brings together researchers and farmers on the topic of farming with dairy sheep and making cheese. Includes at

least one invited international speaker as well as US researchers plus farmer talks. Co-sponsored by the Dairy Sheep Association of North America (www.dsana.org) For information contact Carol Delaney, Small Ruminant Dairy Specialist, University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture, (802) 656-0915, email: carol.delaney@uvm.edu

Cheesemaking Courses:

The Training Center for Farmstead Milk Processing:
Beginning Cheesemaking
December 10-11
additional two-day courses offered
December - March, 2006
Woodcock Farm, Weston, Vermont
Cost is \$250 per class with a \$50 deposit required.
Contact Peter Dixon (802) 387-4041 or email pdixon@sover.net

The Vermont Cheese Council

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With written permission, reprinting is encouraged.

Contact:

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The Vermont Cheese Council, whose goal is to advance the production and image of premier cheeses from Vermont, is a non-profit trade organization of more than three dozen Vermont cheesemakers. The Council operates to educate the general public on the high quality and diversity of Vermont cheeses. Visit Vermont cheesemakers on the web at www.vtcheese.com.



According to our friends and fellow cheesemakers from Wisconsin, here are the cheese making and eating trends to the watching in 2003.

- 1. Made in America:** The cheese-making industry in America is undergoing a renaissance much like California's wine industry began some 20 years ago. American-made cheeses today stand rind-to-rind with the best cheeses in the world and are recognized as equal or better in quality. Smaller, local cheesemakers offering specialty and signature varieties are coming into their own, as demand for domestic cheeses continues to grow.
- 2. Flavored Cheeses:** Several of the trends on the list this year have more flavor at their root, but this fast-growing segment takes the direct route: distinctly flavored ingredients blended in during the cheesemaking process.
- 3. Washed Rinds:** During the aging process, washed rind cheeses are regularly hand-washed or rubbed with brine, cider, wine, vinegar, or other liquid of the cheesemakers' choice. The liquid encourages surface bacteria growth, thus giving the cheese its distinctive aroma. As the liquid absorbs into the cheese, a rind forms. This keeps the cheese from drying out and helps it ripen from the outside in. In addition to boasting distinctive flavors, these cheeses also top the trend charts because of the skill, artistry and hands-on craftsmanship required to produce them.
- 4. Boutique Cheeses:** Small-batch, one-of-a-kind cheeses sporting catchy names will continue to create buzz in the cheese category this year.