

# DINER JOURNAL

THE STATE OF VERMONT

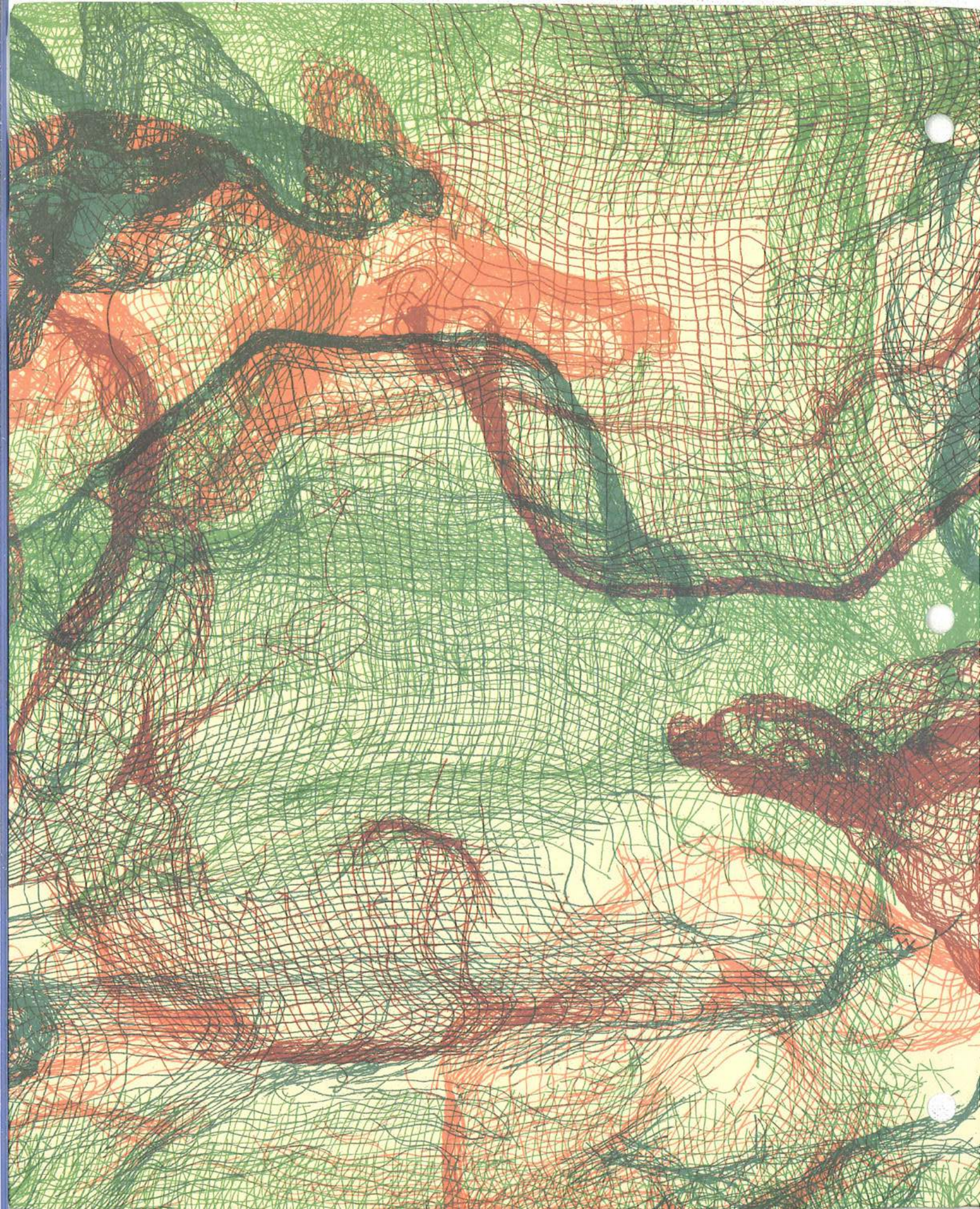
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# DINER JOURNAL



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# INTRODUCTION

*Anywhere That's Wild* - John Muir

When sitting down to write this introduction I found myself wordless. Perhaps it is that there are so many words inside this newest Journal that it seemed daunting to add any more. But I think it has more to do with how very much I am impressed by the people who are profiled in the following pages, the profilers, the artists, farmers and cooks.

This Journal is very simply about change. Deep, fundamental change. The kind of change that is so polemic it does something unexpected. It returns us to somewhere we have been before, before the mistakes, before the undoing, before the failure of our American food ways. These framers, writers, thinkers, and cheesemakers are working in chorus to grow healthy economies, food and, ultimately, happiness. They are leading us toward an optimistic future, one in which dairies stay open, and small towns create revenue, support communities and flourish from hard work and fair compensation. They are

not only making cheese but building a new American tradition, one that will showcase our land, our talents, our grass. Preserving our agriculture while bringing our people and our soil much needed prosperity.

The word green sprung from the Old English verb "growan," to grow. The word's evolution has been in some ways a rapid and fallowed one. At once, vicious jealousy or abundant wealth, inexperienced and young or conscience consumerism, a shade or grass or a hue of ocean, green is what I see when I conjure Vermont.

Driving out and around Greendboro, VT early this year I was enveloped by green. The mountains and hills of the Northeast Kingdom in some ways mirror the ocean for me, their great sloping crescents feel like the waves of a slower moving, more ancient creature. It was while climbing one of these emerald banks that I spotted a tiny red fox trotting slowly but persistently alongside the gravel road. She looked to me like a piece of fire on a loamy sea.

The fox, curious but alert, had something in her mouth. A field mouse or some other wild morsel it was painstakingly delivering home. I followed her, she followed me. Respectful and fearless we journeyed a ways down the road. She crossed the road behind me to get a better look then, again around the front, back to her mossy trail. The entire time the food held tight in her tiny mouth, careful not to gobble it up before she could share it with her family.

All food travels a little. By hook or by crook, the cage of razor sharp cuspids or a train full with ice blocks. It's how it travels that makes the difference. Vermont is maybe not the most fertile land and it may not be my back yard but Jasper Hill and all the farms aging at the Cellars are re-imagining our landscape in a way I find inspiring and enlightening. And they almost make it seem as simple as tending to something, anything. Rotating the pasture, feeding the pigs whey, turning a wheel. -AD



# LANDAFF

BY JOHNATHAN SHIPLEY

The day starts early. Village Pizza on Main Street is still shuttered. The Sugar Hill Community Church out on Route 117 is quiet. Kids are snug in their beds, the Landaff Blue School still locked up. The sun just now over the Atlantic arcs through the biting Northeast air. The pines rustle in the chill of early morning. Doug Erb, in this solitude, is awake, amongst his stock of registered Holstein cows. It's 4:30 a.m. and preparations are being made for the 5:30 milking. Doug would not have it any other way.

He and his wife, Debby, were raised on farms. Now, as owners of Springvale Farms, they've started creating artisanal, farmstead cheese with their own Landaff Creamery.

"We produce," Doug says, "an average of 5,500 pounds of milk per day." They milk once in the morning, again in the afternoon (the pizza place hot with customers, the choir practicing at church, the kids trudging home from school), to get the most out of their 90 milking cows. They care for 180 cattle in total, in Landaff, New Hampshire, creating rich milk and semi-hard Welsh style cheeses. "Our farm is a registered Holstein farm," Erb remarks, "and researching the milk component profile, we found out that it works well for Caerphilly-style cheese."

Caerphilly is far from Springvale Farm. Across the sun-dappled Atlantic Ocean in South Wales, Caerphilly sits. Located in the Rhymney Valley, industrialized, until it faded, for iron, steel and coal, its claims to fame are its castle, the second largest in all of Britain, its footballers and its summer festival, The Big Cheese. Caerphilly is where the cheese Doug and Debbie makes was born.

Cheddar was being made in Wales two hundred years ago. The aging process for cheddar is long though, so farmers, starting in the 1830s, were developing cheeses with shorter maturation periods as a way to use up the surplus milk. Farmstead cheese, cheese made by the same people who keep the animals that produce the milk, gained popularity with the coal miners in the area. Nearby Cardiff was, for a time, the largest coal port in the world. The salt and nutrient content of the cheese replenished the miners taxed bodies. It was believed that cheese was able to absorb toxins they were exposed to as they dug deep under the ground. The farmstead cheese movement in Wales waned significantly during WWII because of the costs associated with it, but it has since made a comeback there, in England and in Landaff, New Hampshire as well.

In the 1950s Dr. Frederick Erb purchased, with his wife, land in northwest New Hampshire, and started a small farm, a few cows to raise really, as he practiced veterinary sciences at his onsite clinic. His young son, Doug, helped.

Doug grew up, as Dougs do. He went to the University of New Hampshire wanting to climb the corporate ladder for a farm supply cooperative. The family farm kept pulling him back, though, as did his future wife, Debby, who was his father's veterinary assistant. "We both decided we'd rather work with cows," Doug remembers, "and so we moved back to Landaff in 1980." They worked with Doug's parents on the farm and then bought them out in 1989.

The dairy farming grew Springvale Farms. It now encompasses 400 acres, where they

pasture their cattle and grow corn. They also have a 110-acre woodlot of white pine. There used to be several dairy farms in the area. The Erbs farm is the only one remaining. The other farmers pulled up stakes or went into different types of agriculture. The alpaca farm down the road attests to it.

In 2006, wanting to diversify when future fluid milk prices looked shaky at best, the Erbs investigated cheese making. Doug, now a Certified Cheesemaker, began taking courses through the Vermont Institute of Artisan Cheese (VIAC) at the University of Vermont. He took courses like Cheese Defects: Origins and Troubleshooting, Starter Cultures and Risk Reduction Practices for Cheesemakers. Jody Farnham, director of VIAC, notes "I know the cheese production there [Landaff Creamery] has ramped up a lot over the past six months and continues to produce a high-quality cheese at a lower than standard artisan cheese price...all good for the industry."

Before they even made their first batch, however, the Erbs were unsure of what type of cheese they wanted to make. That was until they sampled a hunk of cheese from England. "Welsh people settled in Landaff," Doug says, "so in an effort to pick a cheese, Debby found that Caerphilly was made in the area of Wales that Landaff was named for. The more we researched Caerphilly, the better fit the cheese was for our milk and our operation."

The operation consists of the Erbs, Brian Tillotson, a cheesemaker's assistant, and high school kids working part-time to help with cropping and young-stock care. The creamery itself, which was Doug's dad's old

clinic that's been massively refurbished, is replete with a viewing hall and bedecked with paintings of Holsteins painted by a neighbor.

The cheese is white, mild but with a slight tang. Doug Erb travelled to southwest England to learn about it. "I learned how similar our style of farming was to Somerset, England – just across the bay from Wales – right down to using many of the same genetics in our breeding program." Erb learned the traditional Welsh Caerphilly process at Westcombe Dairy from the cheesemakers Jemima Cordle and Chris Duckett, took the recipe and went home with it.

The cheese is made at their farm and then sent to The Cellars at Jasper Hill, in Greensboro, Vermont (the state with the greatest number of artisan cheesemakers per capita) to age. The Cellars at Jasper Hill facility has been a boon for cheesemakers far and wide. The facility is massive – 22,000 square feet; seven underground vaults – where cutting edge technology meets centuries-old traditions. "Our relationship," Erb notes, "began when we looked at the vat." That was enough.

Now, Landaff Creamery cheese is being sold to anyone with internet access and can be

found in locations like Hen of the Wood Restaurant, White Barn Inn and the oldest continually running general store in America, The Brick Store. "I am pleased to report," says Nancy Lusby, the owner, "that Landaff Cheese has been a hit...Their passion and expertise is reflected in the care they take in crafting such a high quality product. I have no doubt that the Landaff Creamery will continue to build on its success as their exposure increases."

Interest continues to grow as cheese lovers take note of Landaff's product – it's local, it's created on a sustainable farm and it's good. "Landaff makes a fabulous homemade macaroni and cheese," Doug reveals. "We also like it with a cold Sam Adams."

Cold beer is what Doug drinks after another long day at the farm. The cows are back in the barn. The nearby river, the Ammonoosuc, originating at the Lakes of the Clouds in Mount Washington's saddle, flows quietly through their small valley. The valley land has provided the Erbs with a unique opportunity – to raise healthy cattle, to produce quality milk, to make fine rare Welsh cheeses and, most importantly, to live the lives they want. ☘

*The salt and nutrient content of the cheese replenished the miners' taxed bodies. It was believed that cheese was able to absorb toxins they were exposed to as they dug deep under the ground.*



# Von Trapp

WRITTEN BY DAN LANG

The stanchions are faded and worn, the paint on them nearly gone, like a memory lapsed by years. The bolts, corroded into the wood, are cloaked by the low light of the barn's interior. Were it not for the cows gingerly tucking their heads through the dividers one by one, you might think these were antiques awaiting dismantlement—they could be re-purposed as rustic barn wood picture frames or reassembled for a Smithsonian exhibit on the way we used to farm.

In 2006, milk prices sank especially low. For small dairy farmers like Kelly and Martin Von Trapp in Waitsfield, Vermont, production costs were outweighing profits. This is an all too typical occurrence for American farmers who aren't subsidized by the government—basically anyone who's not tending to a veritable sea of corn. That's why their sons Sebastian and Daniel made a very serious decision: they were going to make cheese. At 26 and 25, respectively, the brothers were both settling into careers away from the farm they grew up on. But now they were seeing the beginning of a reality they didn't want to watch unfold. "You got the feeling they were going to sell the farm at some point," Sebastian says. "That idea didn't sit well with us."

I visited the Von Trapp Farmstead in late January, to try and get a sense of how a small Vermont dairy farm might prosper in such difficult times. Kelly has brought the girls in from the icy cold outside, flurries beginning to fall as she walked the last stragglers in, speaking to them in a tone not unlike a kindergarten teacher calling kids from recess. She's small in stature, and extends her presence a bit with a walking stick. She's graceful with the animals, and at 51, she has a girlish quality, her long hair pulled back, her skin bright and reddened by the air.

"You know, we just thought we'll keep doing this while we can and then, you know," she seems hesitant to finish the thought: "it would just fizzle out."

Inside the barn the air is musky. Hooves knock on the wood as the cows eat, each one in her place under a small chalkboard sign with her name on it. Charlene, Phyllis, Krazi, Maybelle and 40 others, mostly Jersey cows, are lined up in two rows. "Everything is 1950s," Kelly says, referring to the barn and all of their equipment, including the milkers. Everything but the new cheese making facility.

When they decided to get started, Sebastian and Daniel knew very little about making cheese, but they knew they had to dive into it headlong if they were going to try at all. Once they convinced their skeptical parents to sign on, Daniel started building the cheese house while Sebastian went to work at Jasper Hill Farm, who were then constructing new, multi-million dollar caves for aging cheese. Over the next two years the brothers consulted and tasted and planned and tinkered, flying to England for research and putting their facility together with timber from their parents' acreage while holding down part time jobs to help cover expenses. Then, in January of 2009, they started with their first batch. But it would take a few more months of obsessive adjustments before they had something they could sell.

In the meantime, the family was learning how to do all of this together: Kelly and Martin focus on the milk, and Sebastian and Daniel focus on the cheese. "They're very frugal," Sebastian said referring to his parents. The generational shift is as plain to see as the lack of lines on his face. "The don't fix it till it's broke mentality—they take that to a whole new level. But we compromise." This compromise of experience and youth, of old and new, of value and risk, flows right into the cheese they make. Paying homage to the living past and appreciating what you know and love is discernible in the cheese's very name, Oma.

Oma is German for grandmother, and is named for Sebastian and Daniel's grandmother, Erika VonTrapp, who started the farm with her late husband Werner (of The Sound of Music fame) in 1959, when the two were in their forties. No stranger to trying her hand at a new venture, she was one of the main advocates of the boys' idea to try and make an artisanal cheese, even though she knew nothing about it. And her support has paid off.

Oma is the strong silent type. A soft, washed rind cheese, its smooth, earthy flavor is ubiquitous—it blankets the senses and stuns them into silence. The cheese smells a bit like hay, and its flavor is subtle and raw. In a way it's like a cloistered nun with a temptuous past. When I first tried it I was speechless; my tongue was in the ring with a giant.

Oma has been in production for not quite a year, and already the boys have been able to quit their part time jobs and see profits, which means they can focus on their cheese. This is thanks in large part to their co-branding effort with Jasper Hill Cellars. A section of the state-of-the-art caves at Jasper are reserved for aging Oma, for letting it develop in all of its memory-vested splendor until it's sold.

Cheesemaking is an art vatted with variables, a bold venture for any dairy farmer to undertake, especially for a 130 acre farm like the Von Trapps'. It means investing in and developing an entirely new system, and they risk ruining their product—raw organic cow's milk rich in the nutrients and flavors of the Mad River Valley's terroir. Listeria and other rogue bacteria can ruin a perfectly good batch. It's enough to focus on without the daily rigors of shipping, billing, packaging and merchandising to worry about. Add to that the size, time and labor requirements of aging the cheese and it's too much to handle. Their relationship with Jasper also helps the Von Trapp Farmstead see their profits faster, as they get paid 50% for their cheese when they deliver it and the other 50 comes once it's sold.

It's the kind of relationship that has the potential to transform the local sustainability trend into a long lasting movement. The American food industry is brought to the human level when more of us are able to support small

farms by buying the food we want to eat. Such systems have the ability to shorten the distance our food travels to get to our table, but they also improve local economies and increase general health and well being on both societal and personal levels. Not to mention the immediate effect: one more dairy farm stays open during a pandemic of closures.

Over the course of this venture the Von Trapps have come a long way, and though they're doing well, they're by no means coasting. Besides the four of them, their only worker is a retired friend named Wayne who comes to help so long as the skiing's not great on a given day. And they could use a new milking parlor, and pipes to run the milk in. And a loading system. For now, milk will be poured into bins by hand, 70 pound Tupperware containers of cheese will be lugged upstairs from the basement where they're brined, and 500 to 700 pounds of cheese will be driven to Jasper every week in Sebastian's Saab with lagging rear suspension.

Along with improving their systems, they're working on a cheese named for Scragg Mountain: a firm cheese that's rich and buttery with a natural nutty rind. They'd eventually like to make use of their whey, a byproduct of the cheesemaking process. Sebastian speculates about one day raising whey fed pork and grass fed beef. "But that's sort of out there on the horizon," he says, "we're not there yet." I look out the window to see what the horizon looks like. Scragg Mountain is out there, its slopes decidedly blue. The clouds blow and filter the faint white light of the fast winter sun. It looks far away and close. It looks like it's changing. 🌸





# BANKING MATEO ON KEHLER SUNSHINE

Jasper Hill Farm is first and foremost a commitment to a place. Our family has been spending summers in Greensboro for five generations. My great grandfather who was a traveling salesman discovered Caspian Lake in the very early 1900s and bought a fishing shanty on Winnimere (part of the eastern shore of the lake), where he would bring school superintendents fishing as a means of coaxing orders for school supplies. During those early years of the last century, what was once a vibrant farmstead butter industry was consolidating itself into a centralized system of village creameries. Local farmers would bring their separated cream to be churned by professional butter makers and packaged and sold in bulk to butter agents from Boston and Portland. Butter was shipped on express refrigerated dairy and poultry trains whose spurs had crept up into the Kingdom by the 1870s. Cow numbers in Vermont doubled between 1870 and 1900 and continued to grow throughout the 1910s and '20s. In the month of June 1914, the Lamoille Valley Cooperative Creamery in East Hardwick, Vermont produced 70,748 pounds of butter from the cream gathered from 3,500 cows on 246 dairy farms. Today we are down to fewer than twenty dairy farms in the same milkshed.

In the late autumn of 1999 I was lured to Delhi by the prospect of an internship working with Vandana Shiva, a world-renowned scientist and agricultural activist. The focus of Shiva's organization, Navdanya International, is food security and sustainability, working with seeds and the conservation of the world's agricultural genetic biodiversity. Vandana Shiva is a powerful and polemical voice, antagonistic and unmovable in her defense of the poor on whose behalf she purports to speak. But she stood me up, and I found myself on the far side of the planet high and dry, and so I traveled to Kathmandu, where I spent the next three weeks reflecting on my condition.

Though I have never succumbed to the dogma of the Chicago school, I have witnessed the power of markets to reorganize, enrich and bring prosperity and progress to communities that have cultivated and nurtured the spirit of entrepreneurship, ambition and innovation in their local sons and daughters. I visited and lived in Chile in the late '80s and early '90s and watched health-care, education and jobs, refrigerators and social change transform a society. But I have also watched greed and self-interest undermine and destroy the very bedrock that would support prosperity. The collapse of Chile's salmon industry serves as a perfect storyboard for blind greed's potential to push the natural limits of an environment beyond its capacity to sustain. Born and raised in Colombia, I have seen the violence and social destruction that

can be unleashed by the quest to satisfy the insatiable. I left in the early '80s as the country descended into bloodthirsty madness incited by America's quest for a good buzz. Capitalism is a powerful force. Through all this, I have learned two things. First, markets are a powerful tool capable of transforming societies for good or ill. Second, that markets are historical and social constructions. They are a sum of a political process. There is no invisible hand, only the Wizard of Oz, usually a political elite, organizing and lobbying opportunities for themselves and their class.

It would have been easy to mistake catharsis for catastrophe. Y2K didn't register on the Annapurna trail, and I returned to Kathmandu where I took on a couple of projects for the Center for Microfinance, a project funded by the Center for International Studies and Cooperation, a Canadian non-profit development organization. For the next few months I worked on the development of training tools for the trainers of trainers that would be used to teach neo-literate women how to calculate simple interest and manage revolving loan funds and worked with the Nepal Rastra Bank, India's central bank on the regulation and supervision of microfinance institutions. I visited iconic institutions like the Grameen Bank and innovators like Safesave in Daka whose 65 loan officers visit all of their nearly 14,000 clients at home every working day and process over 100,000 transactions a week using hand held computers, breaking their reliance on money lenders and creating a daily opportunity to build savings. I saw the power of capital, of finance (borrowing against future earnings) and saving to transform the lives of women and communities, to pay for education and healthcare, to provide food security and elevate families beyond the reaches of desperation.

I also recognized how sick and tired I was of living an oppositional life. Protest is crucial in a world that is so unjust that 60% of its inhabitants exist on less than two dollars per day, but the privilege of working along side people from all over the world that were quietly engineering and building solutions to address and mitigate the greatest challenges facing the world's poorest people changed me. Microfinance tickled in me the protestant work ethic that is the foundation of my genealogy. South Asia caused me to recognize and appreciate that to be born white and male in the West has predisposed me to succeed regardless of my vocation. After visiting SEWA (the Self-Employed Women's Association) in Gujarat I also recognized that the best thing I could possibly do for India was to go home. These empowered women had spine and there was nothing I had to offer but the distortion of a western middle class existence that could do nothing but undermine

their good work. I recognized instead the need and opportunity to build the self-reliance and infrastructure in my own community. I needed to be back home.

As a young girl, my grandmother, who grew up in Wakefield, Massachusetts would take the train to Greensboro Bend, where a horse drawn wagon would haul arriving passengers the three miles up the hill to Caspian Lake in the village of Greensboro. By this time, local butter production at the Caspian Lake Creamery and other local creameries was collapsing, replaced by railroad milk transfer stations. On the farms, herd sizes were growing as the market for fluid whole milk was generating better returns for farmers who had previously been able only to recover value from their butterfat, and butter production. Bottling and cheesemaking were taking place closer to urban centers. In 1925 there were nineteen exporting dairy plants in Orleans County, fifteen shipped milk and cream and the remaining four shipped butter. Only one of these businesses remains, Cabot Cooperative Creamery, now owned by Agrimark. This was the apogee of agricultural prosperity in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont.

The Great Depression halved the price Vermont farmers received for their milk and the Federal Milk Marketing Order, whose inadequacies govern the present fluid milk market, was created in 1933 to help stabilize prices. By the time my mother was a child summering on Caspian in the 40s and 50s, Rural Electrification was ushering in greater efficiency and production was increasing as was regulation. This forced hundreds of farms not able to transition to the use of refrigerated bulk tanks and unwilling to make the investment required to milk cows on impervious concrete floors out of business. In 1964 the interstate changed the way that milk was transported and altered dairy farming in Vermont forever.

The tale of the dairy industry in the Northeast is impossible to disentangle from the tale of global commerce. Ships and barges, then trains and then trucks opened up markets in Boston and New York and then the globe. Vermont farmers were early adopters and exploited these opportunities only to be repeatedly out-competed by mid-western producers whose soils were richer and deeper and whose scale and productive capacities dwarfed what our flinty soils, harsh winters and social and environmental sensibilities would allow. Yankee ingenuity is a euphemism for the ability to recover and reinvent a life on the land as opportunity migrates to less appealing and less beautiful places.

The stonewalls that crisscross a landscape turning back to forest are the bones of a more prosperous time when there were more people on this land. A hundred years ago, the population of Greensboro was twice what it is today. The real estate boom that has been occurring in our neighborhood for the last 40 years obscures the hard memories the landscape bears but the signs of past waves of land abandonment will persist. Empty root cellars punctuate the quiet echoes of lives almost forgotten and remind

us of the boom and bust that these marginal soils in this magical place are prone to.

Andy and I purchased four of seven lots slated for development totaling 223 acres on top of Garvin Hill in 1998 and then added another 40 acres last year. That initial purchase was compulsive and irrational, spurred by an understanding that the dot-com bubble of the mid '90s was pricing us out of paradise. Lake front real estate values increased by a factor of ten over ten years. I left for England and begged a job at Neal's Yard Dairy, Central London's premier retailer of farmhouse artisan cheese, whose foundational commitment to quality provided me with the philosophical underpinnings needed to succeed in business. Beginning in the 1980s, before Slow Food, Neal's Yard Dairy single handedly began the effort of conserving the production of Britain's great Territorial cheeses, which were facing extinction in the face of industrialization. The approach was simple; eat them. By creating a market for traditional cheeses with all the flavor of a real handmade cheese and all the character of their makers to boot, Neal's Yard Dairy built the architecture for what has become a movement of 'specialist cheesemakers.'

It was clear to us that the system of agricultural production we were facing in Vermont was broken. The political center had shifted west where industrial milk production was taking place in deserts (imagine 90,000 cows in one location in the Mojave with a 24 acre manure lagoon). The only thing our landscape was producing was anonymous commodity milk, and we couldn't compete against the subsidies and the weather out West, and honestly, who would want to? There wasn't any room in that market for upstarts. We were looking to reinvent opportunity in a way that would enable us to make a life in a place that we loved. Vermonters have been working this angle out for the past 250 years.

We didn't know a tit from a telephone pole when we purchased fifteen open heifers and began renovating the barn that had fallen into dereliction and we had never written a business plan. We built the cheesehouse ourselves through the winter of 2002 after struggling to put together a financing package that would enable us to start up. Andy and I worked eighteen months straight before our wives caved, quit their day jobs and joined us on the farm. That was a turning point for the business. Today we have 22 employees, will generate five million in sales this year, directly support around ten other cheesemakers and will grow between 50 and 100% a year for the next few years. Along the way we have invested and reinvested millions of dollars in infrastructure and in our community.

Our goal is to double the number of cheesemakers in Vermont over the next ten years. We will do this by building technical capacity, a professional staff and by providing a bundle of services to farmers interested in evolving. The Cellars is a bank, trading in cheese and banking on the future. Cheese is a store of value, an original form of capital that increases in value over time. We have





JULIA GILLARD

built the infrastructure, and are assembling the staff, the marketing and sales organization, the logistics and shipping mechanisms to get product to market so that farmers can concentrate on capturing the processors margin at the farm gate. We are throwbacks to the '70s, the 1870s, when farms were distilling the fat of the land into butter and money. We have a comparative advantage; it is not in the production of fluid milk, it is in the green, green grass, and we seek to create longevity and break the bust cycle by seeking out those aspects of our landscape that contribute to the uniqueness of our products, because those can never be co-opted and mass-produced on the far side. We are building a local economy that is an expression of the landscape.

In this micro-economy, we are leveraging cheese to build a future not so easily co-opted by the false derivative economies of Wall Street robber barons. At the end of the day, Jasper Hill is our response to globalization. It is in this spirit that we take cheese, a distillate of grass, the product of sunshine, and put it away, deep underground where it increases in value over time and becomes more delicious. In this underground economy, we are the multipliers who concentrate real wealth produced by real people from real places. In an age of synthetic collateralized debt obligations and a virtual economy divorced from natural laws and limits, at a time when the extractive efficiency of capitalism and its compounding capacity to concentrate wealth threatens to collapse the planets natural systems, it is totally appropriate to remember that all capital originates with sunshine and soil. ☘

In May of 2007 Roger and Patty Scholten sold the herd. Scholten Family Farm was on their way to becoming certified organic. This transformation came with the promise of a higher, more stable milk price necessary for the future of the family business. The dairy had been in business since 1995, and they knew it was time for change. For years they felt as if they were running in circles. The well-being of the farm and the family of six went hand in hand. The Scholten's switch to certified organic also satisfied a general philosophy Roger and Patty hold about respecting nature and creating a healthy lifestyle for themselves, their children and all the Northeasterners they provide milk for.

When speaking over the phone with Patty, it's hard to ignore her elated tone whenever her new cows are the topic of conversation. The breed is Dutch Belted. They have a truly iconic cow look, lumbering and black with one thick white belt

stretching across their bellies. Patty asked an artist friend and neighbor to use a photo she had taken of one of her cows as a template for the farm's logo. She also insists on the endearing charm and intelligence this breed has compared to any other she has known.

Roger comes from a long line of dairy farmers. Patty does not. Neither had ever worked with fully pastured cows. The first time one of the Dutch Belts was about to give birth there were a few conflicting opinions on how to handle the situation. Roger's experience and instincts told him to assist the cow as much as possible. It was the end of the work day and the mother was very close to giving birth but still far away from the safety of the barn. He wanted to at least lead her into the barn for overnight comfort and shelter. At this point, Patty will tell you her opinion may have been naive considering her lack of dairy farming expe-

rather do it herself to ensure a safe voyage.

Once at Jasper Hill the cheese is aged for 21 days. The result is a snowy white, bloomy rind cheese. Pierce that rind and find its creamy, pale yellow interior oozes out at just the right pace to enjoy without rushing. Its first impression is a salty-like-the-sea, gooey delight. It coats your mouth as the texture is rich and butter-like. When it dissipates you're left with a sharp zing that cuts through the fat and leaves your palate clean and happy.

Even though Patty does this all herself, she is not afraid to set very high goals for the future. She plans on one day turning all 150,000 pounds of milk each week into cheese. Luckily with the Scholten family behind her, this isn't a far fetched dream. Roger and Patty's four children, all well on the way down their own paths, have decided those journeys will eventually lead them back home, either directly

# SCHOLTEN

BY FAYE CLARICE PICHLER

rience but her actual hands on experience with this specific herd led her to believe that this mother would be okay all on her own. She had seen these cows act in ways she had not seen other cows act before. They were self-sufficient. They took care of themselves and others around them. Patty convinced Roger to trust her and they left the birthing cow to her own devices. Morning came and the Scholtens found the mother and her calf safe in the warm confines of the barn. This was the miraculous sign of a new beginning for the family farm.

The fat globules in the Dutch Belted milk are considerably small, making it easier to digest. If you've drank Organic Valley milk in New York or Vermont, you've most likely sampled the Scholten's milk without realizing it. Organic Valley is a national company that sources organic

dairy locally to provide for each region accordingly. Organic Valley milk in Vermont is Vermont milk. Organic Valley milk in California is California milk.

Soon after the purchase of the Dutch Belts, Roger and Patty attended a cheesemaking workshop in Warren, Vermont. This was the breeding ground for Patty's love of cheesemaking. Today we can enjoy her labor of love in the form of a cheese she has created and calls Weybridge after the town she lives in. She turns 500 pounds of pasteurized milk into 100 pounds of Weybridge every week. Her children assist and observe but it is for the most part a one woman job. Patty then packs it all into her Volvo and drives two hours to Greensboro to hand over her precious cargo to the Cellars at Jasper Hill. Someone else used to deliver it for her but she soon decided she'd

or indirectly, to the family business. Their oldest, Leanna, studies agri-business and science at University of Vermont. Abigail studies dairy management at Vermont Tech. Rachel and Daniel, still in high school, help with cheese production in their free time.

Most recently, the Scholtens have ventured into raising organic poultry. Patty doesn't mind bragging of this newest development which provides much needed nitrogen for her soil via the chicken excrement. More importantly, she has created another on farm food source for her family in the form of eggs and meat that she is unspeakably thankful for. The most compelling and strikingly obvious thing about Patty, her cows, her farm and her family is that they are all always willing and wanting to work harder to make better for everyone around them. ☘



WRITTEN BY ANNALIESE GRIFFIN

# SIZE MEDIUM

It takes about seven hours to drive from Brooklyn to Jasper Hill Farm in Greensboro, Vermont, so long as you don't take too many snack breaks and provided the traffic on I-95 in Connecticut is moving right along. As the last few miles of the trip wind up into the Northeast Kingdom's cow-dotted hills, Brooklyn feels a million miles distant. The geographical and aesthetic divide belies a shared philosophy between the two places, an emerging kinship that makes Brooklyn and northern Vermont more alike than any two places in between.

Jasper Hill, a working farm with a herd of about 45 Ayrshire cows, sits on around close to 300 acres of land. The farm produces a handful of cheeses with the milk from that herd, including Bayley Hazen Blue, Constant Bliss and Winnemere, all of which are made in the cheesehouse attached to the milking barn. The basic transaction of Jasper Hill Farm is this: Sunlight to grass to milk to cheese.

A two-minute walk from the cheesehouse there's a dirt parking lot in front of what looks like a villain's underground lair in a James Bond movie. The concrete face of The Cellars at Jasper Hill lies flush with the hillside above, and inside seven long caves full of cheese extend back into the hill. A loading dock juts out into the Subaru-filled parking area. Workers scurry about in white hairnets, rubber boots and white chefs/lab coats, larding cheddars, washing rinds and checking the temperature in humidity in each cave. The basic transaction of The Cellars at Jasper Hill is this: Cheese to money.

Brothers Andy and Mateo Kehler are the masterminds and life force behind the Cellars at Jasper Hill and what they are doing is a prime, perhaps the prime, example of what I've come to think of as the medium-sized business. They simultaneously encourage and support innovation and expansion in the Vermont cheesemaking industry and promote a philosophy that conserves the landscape and preserves rural culture. Their end goal is for farmers to have to milk fewer cows and make more money doing it. They have enough capital to take advantage of opportunities for smart growth and new projects when they come along, yet they're small enough to relate to workers on a human level and to respect the limits of the land they use to transform warm sunlight into cold, hard cash.

Medium-sized business, whether meat-packing, beer brewing, or tap and die manufacturers, used to define American work culture, particularly in small towns. They were the companies that paid good wages, threw company picnics in the summer and handed out Christmas hams during the holidays. They related to workers on a human level and though the owners took home higher wages

than their employees, their kids all went to the same elementary school. Over the past quarter century though, they've consolidated, expanded and been swallowed whole by behemoths like ConAgra, Armour and Archer Daniels Midland, corporations that politically conscious eaters have come to regard as the great Satan of our time.

Today, medium-sized businesses are the best hope for meaningful change to the food system. Though they vary in size depending on their surrounding ecosystems, medium being above all things a relative term, these businesses have a few crucial and identifiable shared traits. They're unrepentantly capitalist – they want to make money and see no reason to apologize for that. They shorten the distance between producer and purchaser, offering consumers the option to buy from their peers and neighbors – whether that means a geographical neighbor or a corporate kindred spirit sharing common values. And, they collaborate with other businesses and provide infrastructure, expertise and capital that smaller businesses lack. Call it a mind meld, a coincidence or a shared set of values, but food-based businesses that fit these criteria seem to be finding especially firm footholds in Brooklyn and in the Northeast Kingdom.

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When they conceptualized The Cellars, Mateo and Andy's vision included conventional and organic dairy farmers deciding to opt out of fluid milk production and start making cheese for Jasper Hill, under the Jasper Hill name. It also included partnering with existing cheese businesses to provide aging, sales, marketing, shipping and advice. The ideal works like so: A wide variety of cheesemakers and dairy-farmers-turned-cheesemakers make cheese, The Cellars buys that cheese and the farmers go and make some more, without having to worry about marketing, selling, aging or shipping that cheese. Cheese pays a lot more per pound than milk (milk is sold by the hundredweight on the commodity market even though it's sold by the pint, quart and gallon in the grocery store) and the infrastructure at The Cellars lowers the barrier to entry on the artisan cheese market.

In some ways The Cellars' system bears a marked resemblance to local Brooklyn institutions like the Brooklyn Flea, Marlow and Sons/Daughters and The Brooklyn Kitchen (full disclosure, my husband is part owner of the Meat Hook, part of the Brooklyn Kitchen) all businesses that make money by curating and promoting the best of Brooklyn's small vendors. The Flea has proven itself to be an invaluable incubator for businesses with no physical storefront, like Liddabit chocolates and SCRATCHBread. It capitalizes on the fact that there are loads of creative food entrepreneurs with products for sale and no way to directly interact



with their customers. Business owners get to talk to their fans, sell their wares in person and get out of the kitchen for awhile, without having to fork out for a physical space of their own – a crucial factor in city where rent is expensive. These markets provide space, foot traffic and marketing, the small businesses create a vibrant atmosphere full of lots of different good and services, which keeps the customers coming back. Everyone makes money.

In Vermont, the problem is framed somewhat differently. Dairy farmers have plenty of infrastructure for milk production. They have land and cows and barns and silos; on paper many of them are millionaires. There's a market for milk, but it's a commodity market and farmers have no say in how much they charge for their milk. Like pork bellies or corn, the price is set and the milk purchased by large co-operatives, Agri-Mark, which owns the Cabot Co-op, is the dominant milk buyer in the northeast. While a seller at the Flea can calculate her costs for a bag of bacon caramel popcorn, add on a percentage to pay herself and then charge \$7 a pop, dairy farmers cannot say, "My milk is cleaner and my animals healthier than the farm down the road, pay me a premium for my better product." That doesn't fly on the commodity market.

Artisan cheesemakers however, are free to set their own prices and see what the market will bear, just like someone selling a pupusa or a scone at The Flea. The Cellars' aim is to take farmers who are doing a great job of converting sunlight and grass into milk, and help them with the next step: Converting the milk to money.

While this system sounds brilliantly simple, now that the \$3.2 million cave is in place, the human reality has been more complicated. Dairy farmers have been reticent to build cheesehouses and learn cheesemaking, artisan cheesemakers have been less interested in working with the Kehlers than they had expected and both groups have balked at being told what to do.

At The Cellars, each batch of cheese is continually tasted, tracked and analyzed. The Kehlers don't just want to make great cheese, they want to crack the molecular code of why their cheese is so great. This requires meticulous record keeping on the part of the cheesemaker and a dedication to consistency and willingness to change the process in response to the success or failure of different batches. Over the past six months the Kehlers have developed a chart system that measures the pH levels, moisture



content and other attributes of each batch of cheese, creating a compositional fingerprint. Cheesemakers who are into this system stand to gain a great deal of knowledge about their craft from it and in fact, Doug and Debby Erb from Landaff Creamery, the only dairy farmers to hop on the Jasper Hill bus so far, helped develop the chart. "This is fucking cool as shit," Mateo said when showed me this chart on his battered laptop. "We have so many more tools now than we did a year ago. But, if you don't want to share this [data] with us, there's nothing we can do. If your attitude is, 'I'm an artisan, I'm an artisan,' our relationship is not going to work. We are about actually making really great cheese."

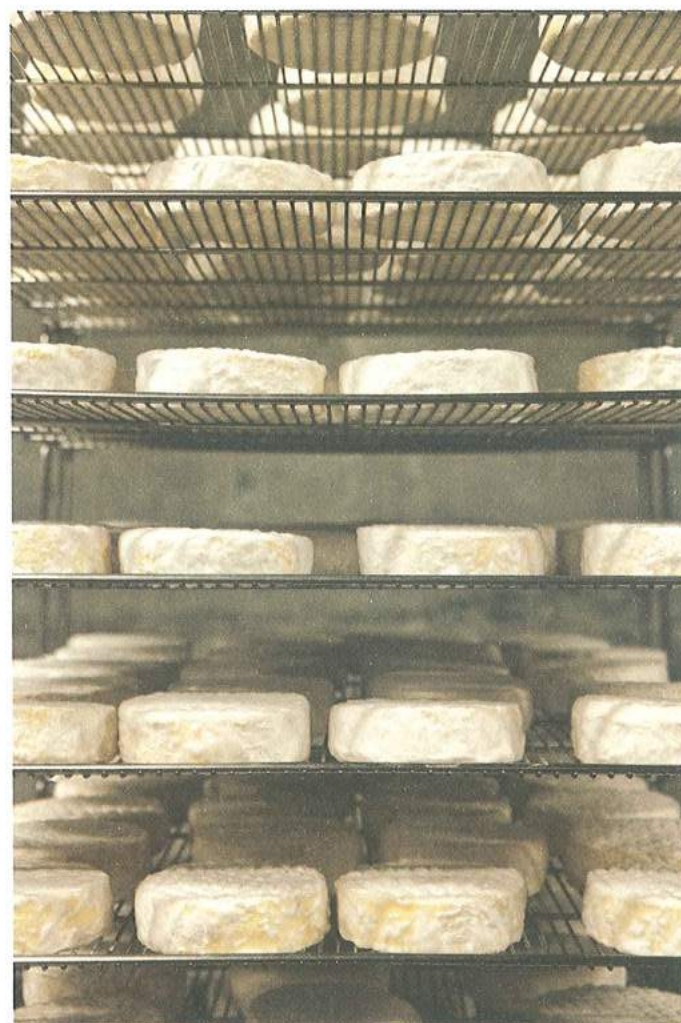
That may sound harsh and unromantic, and on some level it is. But that's the point. The commodity market is all about a lack of differentiation. No amount of monitoring, cleaning, innovation or care will earn you more per unit in this system. You might be able to produce milk more efficiently and raise your own profit margins, but you'll still get the same amount per hundred-weight as your less careful neighbor. Organic milk gets a higher price per hundredweight, but it's still commodity, farmers still have no control over the market. Mateo and Andy want to preserve the rural, agricultural landscape they love by offering farmers and cheesemakers the tools and opportunity to produce a superlative product – and to get paid accordingly.

The Willey's General Store, where you can fill your tank, buy a sandwich, a new pair of boots, a flannel t-shirt, a bottle of wine and a gallon of milk, is the physical and commercial center of the town of Greensboro. You can also buy Jasper Hill cheese there, along with Cabot, Grafton, and Kraft Singles. When I asked Mateo whether it bothered him to share shelf space with the ubiquitous orange slices he paused for a moment, a look crossing his face that said, "Do I really have to explain this again?" before donning his economist hat and saying, "Not at all. It provides us with an opportunity to distinguish ourselves in the market."

This, in a nutshell, is what the Kehlers are trying to do: Create an alternative system in which higher quality fetches a high price and rewards hard work and careful craftsmanship.

The popular argument against the Jasper Hill vision is that the

cheese that emerges from The Cellars sells for around \$20 a pound, a price that is out of reach for many consumers, especially local consumers in cash-strapped Northern Vermont. Feeding the people in your community has long been a tenet of whatever label you want to use to describe the organic-sustainable-local food movement. For those of us who buy grass-fed beef, local produce and raw milk (which is actually one way Vermont farmers have managed to engage in a better-than commodity market, many sell raw milk off their farms at a much higher price point, which is legal in the state) there's a moral calculus that figures into each shopping trip.



In Brooklyn in particular, that line of moral reasoning includes a certain amount of liberal guilt about the fact that we can afford food that our neighbors cannot, food we perceive as superior. Coupled with the general distrust of capitalism and discomfort with making money that accompanies the hippie, back-to-the-land ethos of a certain class of Vermont farmer, Jasper Hill has had to fight against a perception that they are overly corporate and elitist. The Town that Food Saved, a recent book by Ben Hewitt about Hardwick, Vermont which is just down the road from Greensboro, outlines this discomfort in detail. The Northeast Kingdom is home to farmers and consumers who strongly believe that locally produced food should be purchased and consumed locally. The Kehlers though, see us in New York as a pool of capital 350 miles south, still all part of the same food chain. Yes this chain is larger than the local grass, local cow, local refrigerator model, but it's also a lot smaller than the grain from Kansas-cows in California-refrigerator in Brooklyn system that currently dominates the market.

Right now, agricultural subsidies help to concentrate that value, our food dollars, in huge processors. This is a gross oversimplification of the subsidy and commodity systems, but essentially the government pays farmers to keep producing cheap calories, corn, soy, milk from 1000-cow dairies in Texas and California, that are then purchased at very low prices and turned into a wholly different class of value-added products: Pizza Craver Doritos, Sweet and Salty Bugles, Kraft Mac and Cheese. From a Jasper Hill perspective, those processors are stealing value from rural America. Instead of a farmer adding value to her own milk or being paid a

better price for great milk, she sells it at a loss and a food scientist at Kraft comes up with a way to make a spray-on cheese powder that allows consumers to cook macaroni and cheese in two minutes instead of three, for 50 cents cheaper than before.

While the Kehlers don't deny that there are class issues inherent to any discussion of food, they're setting out to connect smaller companies to big markets, and employ their neighbors, not necessarily feed them. There are enough calories available in the Northeast Kingdom – capital in the form of meaningful, well paying work is what's in short supply.

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Cabot Co-op is a 90-year-old creamery in Cabot, Vermont that started out as a collection of dairy farmers investing in a creamery and sharing the cost for processing and shipping milk, which lead to the production of value added products like butter and cheese – not so different from the basic idea of The Cellars. Cabot projects a wholesome, just folks image, and when I was growing up in Vermont farm kids would often make note of the big silver Cabot truck when it rumbled down the road saying, "There goes my dad's milk." In 1992, Cabot merged with Agri-Mark, a Massachusetts-based co-op, and the two combined now have around 1,300 farmer members with sales just south of \$400 million each year. Last year The Cellars had sales of \$3.1 million, though the Kehlers expect that number to nearly double in 2010.

Cabot also happens to be one of The Cellars' largest revenue streams, and the Kehlers' willingness to work with bigger companies as well as small cheesemakers sets them apart in a food community in which purity looms large and making a profit is often toward the end of the list of priorities. Cabot Clothbound Cheddar is aged at The Cellars. Cabot essentially extends a line of credit, paying a monthly, volume-based aging fee, which The Cellars pays back once the cheeses are sold. At that time they also pay for the cheese at a "green" price, the pre-aging value. Then The Cellars sell Cabot Clothbound to cheesemongers all over the country and keep that revenue. It's a unique situation designed to keep cash, and cheese, flowing and it helps finance the other cheesemakers whose cheese is aged at Jasper Hill. Cabot Clothbound wins awards left and right, and although the milk that it's made from is sourced from a single farm, the accolades and perception of value washes over every Cabot farmer and every Cabot product. In today's foodie-driven, artisanal-obsessed marketplace that perception is worth almost any amount of money.

It's also allowed the Kehlers to invest in other opportunities. The Vermont Food Venture Center, which is being built in Hardwick, will be a processing facility where small producers can use existing infrastructure to add value to their crops. Jasper Hill has invested heavily in the Center and will make cheese in one wing, through which they hope to create a whole new source of revenue for dairy farmers – selling Jasper Hill-grade milk for a premium over commodity and organic milk prices. You have to be of a certain size to cultivate and fund that kind of project.

Again, the challenges of this type of collaboration are different in Brooklyn than up north, but the collaborations exist. Brooklyn Brewery, which was the first of several breweries to open in the past decade or so in Brooklyn, revitalizing what was once an

important industry to the borough, is currently investing in a \$6.5 million expansion in Williamsburg (shored up by a NYS grant for \$800,000 designed to help keep businesses in the state). While they've been criticized for having a brewing facility upstate, and for not being micro enough, Brooklyn Brewery, like Jasper Hill, is a medium-sized business that has enough cash flow and leverage to help smaller businesses and they recognize that perception and marketing are worth investing in. The brewery continually collaborates on and sponsors events (including projects with my company, Brooklyn Based); teaches and promotes homebrewing classes at The Brooklyn Kitchen; sends their spent grains out to the Queens Country Farm Museum for their pigs to much on; and straight out gives away a ton of beer. Smaller businesses get a financial leg up from this, Brooklyn Brewery builds relationships with tastemakers and with customers, cultivating their image as pillars of the Brooklyn business community and all-around nice folks. They're not providing the same kind of framework to remake the system as Jasper Hill, but the emphasis on relationships and a shared commitment to improve your home is crucial to understanding what makes both businesses tick.

There's an argument, prominently articulated in The Town that Food Saved, that agriculture shouldn't be remade by business at all, that we should all dismantle capitalism and all live in a libertarian, subsistence, self-reliant economy. That vision would require that we also dismantle the city, empty Brooklyn and live simply from the land and it's a system that is just as rigid in its mindset as industrial agriculture.

One of the reasons that Brooklyn and the Northeast Kingdom have become such kindred spirits is that they're both so hospitable to the crazies and firebrands who want to live in places where hardship creates opportunity. Brooklyn has long been Manhattan's second city, but now is coming into its own, home to new businesses and endeavors that could never make it across the river, and more importantly, owned by people who reject that Manhattan scale and tone. As Mateo explains in his article, the Northeast Kingdom has been home to a boom and bust cycle of globalization, creating rural, agricultural poverty. At their core, the food scenes in Brooklyn and in northern Vermont are about a love of place and imperative to work to make your homebase better.

When he talks about the importance of buying cheese from The Cellars at Jasper Hill, what Mateo is really talking about is choice and power, both for consumer and producer. A medium sized business like his is invested in the surrounding community by definition, because it is small enough to be vulnerable to local economic, social and environmental changes. Instead of being too big to fail, it's too small not to notice when it's failing. Yet the infrastructure and capital it offers is a far more powerful mode of change than a small business. "You want cheap food or clean water? Where do you want to concentrate value? On Wall Street and the Chicago Commodities Exchange?" Mateo asks. "When you buy our cheese you are choosing to concentrate value in rural America." By supporting a robust medium-sized economy, we give farmers options that are better than growing cheap subsidized calories or selling their land to condo developers. And best of all, we can do it from Brooklyn, knowing that our dollars will support and inspire more and more medium momentum. 🌞



# CRAWFORD

WRITTEN BY ANNE ZIMMERMAN

San Francisco, where I live, is a long way from Vermont. I've never smelled real Vermont air or seen the soft, green hills of the Champlain Valley. But it is this goodness that nourishes the Ayrshire cows that produce the sweet milk that Crawford Family Farm makes into a farmstead cheese called Vermont Ayr, an Alpine-style cheese produced in concert with Jasper Hill Cellars.

Crawford Family Farm is a 330 acre dairy farm that has been in the Crawford family for four generations. Perhaps surprisingly, it is the Crawford women who have long been invested in dairy farming. A maternal grandmother spearheaded the family's move from Connecticut to Vermont in search of more agricultural space. She also organized the purchase of the family's first Ayrshire cows before passing leadership of the farm to her daughter, Bettelee, only a few years later. Today, Crawford Family Farm is operated by siblings Jim, Cindy and Sherry. Cindy is the "cow woman," and Sherry makes the cheese. The next Crawford generation is still young enough that their future in farming is uncertain. "They're still figuring it out," Sherry Crawford says.

The farm maintains a small line of Ayrshire cows, a heritage breed. Imported from Scotland, Ayrshires were once the most common breed in New England. Now they are on a North American watch list developed by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy and comprise only three percent of American cows. The number of Ayrshires has declined in recent decades due to the

livestock's inability to produce adequate quality milk in confinement. But Ayrshires are good grazers, and thrive on low-input, grass-based dairying, two factors that are spurring renewing interest in the hearty breed.

The Crawford's small scale cheese production began after the price of milk dropped and the family was forced to explore creative solutions to keep their dairy farm viable. Each one of the Ayrshire cows owned by Crawford Family Farm is known by name and is treated with tenderness and respect, as an integral part of a small farm ecosystem. The cows have access to 150 acres of pasture made up of timothy grass, clover, brome and alfalfa. Of the sixty milking cows, only two dozen provide milk that is deemed worthy of being made into cheese on-site. This determination is made monthly, and based on regular tests for components and quality of milk. The very best milk is siphoned off and used to make Crawford Family Farm's, Vermont Ayr. The remainder of the fluid milk from the farm is shipped to a processing plant to be bottled as milk or made into butter or yogurt.

Ayrshire cows were integral to the development of a relationship between Crawford Family Farm and Jasper Hill Cheese. Matteo and Andy Kehler of Jasper Hill began visiting the Crawford farm after becoming interested in, and ultimately purchasing, several

Ayrshire cows. The Kehlrs encouraged the Crawford's small scale cheese production, and soon the two families developed a partnership. Jasper Hill cellars and distributes a certain percentage of the Crawford Family's Vermont Ayr. Jasper Hill also ages the cheese allowing both parties to pay painstaking attention to the production of Vermont Ayr. Jasper Hill acquires about twenty-five percent of Vermont Ayr's total production while it is still green, less than a week old.

Finishing and aging practices differ slightly between the two; Jasper Hill washes the rind of the cheese, Crawford Family Farms does not. Washing the rind is a labor intensive process that involves coating the surface of the cheese with a cocktail of ingredients that help healthy bacteria develop and the surface of the cheese to ripen more quickly. The fresh Ayr that is cellared on the farm develops its rind through the natural ageing process. This takes longer, but is preferable to the Crawfords who have limited hours to devote to cheesemaking due to the wide-reaching demands of dairy farm ownership.

Because of the differences in ageing, Jasper Hill can begin selling and distributing Vermont Ayr when it is four months old. Crawford Family Farms prefers to wait un-

til the cheese has been aged for closer to six months. While the cheese from both outlets is essentially the same, there may be subtle differences in rind color and flavor because of the ageing method. This inconsistency can cause confusion if a consumer purchases a product that looks or tastes vaguely unfamiliar. As Vermont Ayr becomes increasingly sought after, both parties may need to work to address these subtle but nagging inconsistencies.

Jasper Hill is a larger enterprise with wider distribution, more space, and a marketing strategy that supports both Vermont Ayr and the small batch, Vermont cheese industry. Jasper Hill also employs a French cheese consultant. Recently, Crawford Family Farm benefited from technical consultations that will help contribute to a consistently fine finished product. The farm also benefits from receiving immediate income from the "green" cheese purchased by Jasper Hill; the remainder of the money arrives when the finished cheese is finally sold.


This symbiotic set-up allows Jim, Cindy and Sherry to be fully devoted to both their dairy

farm and their production of Vermont Ayr. The cheese is made with great care and aged in a majestic refurbished barn built in 1910. This attention to and affection for history and detail is an important part of the Crawford farming practices. The family is devoted to twin goals of preserving an agrarian way of life and the agricultural beauty of Vermont's rolling countryside.

Both Jasper Hill and Crawford Family Farm share characteristics that are important for any craft: a broad vision and the time, energy and patience necessary to invest in a business practice that is dedicated to the production of something meaningful. 🌸





 Jasper Hill farm

① Crawford family farm

② Twig farm

③ Scholten family farm

④ Cobb Hill cheese

⑤ Von Trapp farmstead

⑥ Landaff creamery

⑦ Ploughgate creamery

VERMONT

CHEESEMAKERS

*Cheeses Aged in the Caves at Jasper Hill*



# TWIG FARM

BY AMY VAN ARSDALE

When Justin and I drove up to West Cornwall, Vermont in mid-February, we didn't get lost until we got to Michael and Emily's street. We nervously pulled up to a man's house that was far from resembling a farm. "Can you tell me where Twig Farm is?" I asked. He semi-assuredly pointed us back down the dirt road past the pigs to, "a dairy farm, right?" Twig Farm doesn't really look like a farm, save the goats munching on hay in the front yard. The house and the barn look one in the same, both painted an eye-popping green amidst stark winter woods. We weren't sure which building was the house and which was the barn until we saw some heads and then hand-waves coming from one of the windows.

Michael Lee and Emily Sunderman along with their son, Carter, welcomed us into their kitchen. Introductions were made over flowering tea and I marveled at how their house, with its large windows, lent itself to goat gazing. The farm and their home seemed to effortlessly merge into one another. They cook, eat, sketch, and carry on with home life inside while checking up on their goats, two ducks and two cats roaming about the land outside.

It wasn't too cold outside and Michael suggested taking a walk. So we walked with the goats. While I struggled over rocky ridges, icy patches of snow and dead bushes the goats trotted over them with ease. Emily had come prepared with a pocketful of golden raisins and as soon as she had doled us each a handful we were bombarded by eager sniffing goat muzzles. I bent down to feed and felt the fuzzy lips moving at light speed against my palm. We stopped behind the goats, who had all saddled up to a huge dead bush to eat... well, twigs. I sensed some commotion next to me. One of the goats was rubbing her head ferociously into Emily's rear end. We looked at each other and burst out laughing.

"She's trying to dominate me," Emily explained of Esther. Esther is a beautiful auburn colored goat with a black stripe from her head all the way down her back..

Emily explained that it's good to get them out walking this time of year, "it moves the kids." This is the time of year that the ladies are dried off and very, very pregnant. Instead of swollen udders they have swollen bellies. Each goat belly stretched about eighteen inches across, almost bursting with kids. I felt a couple of bellies; they felt just like Jell-O. About a week after our visit the does would be ready to give birth in the garage of Twig Farm. And only then will their udders fill up and the cheesemaking can resume.

In 2005, Twig Farm started off with nine kids and five milkers. Today they have 30 does, two of which are left from the original crew. Joining the ladies is one enormous, excessively masculine and astoundingly quaffed buck named Larry. The mostly Alpine goats enjoy roaming on twenty acres at Twig Farm. During the winter they feed on organic hay that comes from down the road and, as we saw on our stroll, whatever remains on the land. The rest of the year Michael explained, "The goats eat a tremendous variety of things," and listed off almost 50 different things including rye grass, bull thistle, asparagus fronds, goldenrod, burdock leaves, red clover, alfalfa, and four different kinds of oak. This incredible variety lends to the flavor of the milk. And when it comes to the quality of the cheese, Michael said that it all really depends on the milk.

Michael started off in the cheese world managing South End Fornaggio in Boston, but then learned how to make cheese while apprenticing at Peaked Mountain Farm in Townsend, Vermont. At his own farm he employs traditional cheese making methods and rennet to make raw milk cheeses and then ages them in the family's basement. When I asked Michael how he decided what types of cheese to make, his answer was simple. "It was a function of what I would like to eat, what I perceived was missing in the market and what made sense given our scale and location."

He takes a similarly simple approach when naming his cheeses. Square is a semi-soft raw goat with a natural rind.

It's formed in a cloth and aged about eighty days. The finished product is in fact square-shaped and displays an indentation in the center from where the cloth was knotted. Tomme is another raw goat's milk with a natural rind and aged around eighty days. However, it is a semi-hard cheese resembling a miniature drum. Twig Farm's Washed is a raw goat cheese aged eighty days that is washed with whey brine throughout its aging. Michael and Emily also frequently buy cow's milk from some neighboring farms and add it to the Washed cheese or they make Fuzzy Wheel, a mixed cow and goat cheese produced in early spring.

After our stroll, Michael led us downstairs to see his cellar. It is in this cellar where he built a temperature and humidity controlled room about the size of my Brooklyn bedroom- not huge, as one would imagine. Scaly tommes and fuzzy squares sat on ash boards, each labeled with crumpled browning squares of paper bearing the names and production dates of the cheeses. Some freshly made cow's milk drums sat waiting to be washed with brine made from a bit of Michael's homemade cider. Michael tends to the cheeses three times a week in his aging room, which is at its fullest May through December. When the cheeses are just right, Michael and Emily sell them at the Middlebury farmer's market, send them directly to cheese retail shops, or send them to Jasper Hill for distribution.

When we finally got out of their hair, Michael had some work to tend to and walked us through the garage where the kids would be born in about seven days time. The room had all the typical tools that any garage has: hoses, lawn and gardening gadgets. Large windows filled the room with light. My mind filled with glimpses of fuzzy little kids jumping around in the barn. I pictured the herd munching on all the green goodness of spring and summer. And I became impatient for my next batch of velvety-textured, full-flavored Washed cheese and the earthy, grassy, goatly Tomme.

# COBB HILL

BY SASHA DAVIES

Jeannine Killbride was wrapping wheels of cheese for shipment to the Cellars at Jasper Hill while I spoke to her. "I'm a woman, I can do two things at once," she assured me over the rustling of paper and murmur of her colleagues. The cheese that Cobb Hill sends to the Cellars is their Alpine-style tomme called Ascutney Mountain. Cobb Hill has been making this cheese, named for the summit that can be seen from the cheese room, since 2000 and it has earned a huge following in Southern Vermont.

Cobb Hill is a co-housing community situated on 270 acres of forest and farmland in rural Vermont. The residents, or partners as they refer to themselves, of this community have developed what they call "enterprises," or small businesses, that lease pieces of the communal land for agricultural endeavors. The farm has enterprises growing vegetables, keeping bees

cheesemakers starting out ten years ago, the aging component of the process was not incredibly well understood and typically not where many focused serious resources. Ascutney Mountain was "aged" in a temporary cooler next to the cheese room. Over time the cheese partners at Cobb Hill grew to better understand the environmental needs of their cheese and they convinced the larger Cobb Hill community to construct a new building on a plot of their common land that would include both a "Common House" and a cheese aging room. This gave the cheese enterprise the proper tools they needed to increase production and have better control over the aging process; wheels steadily improved, gaining popularity and increasing demand.

Although the original intention of Cobb Hill's cheese enterprise was to focus on selling their cheese in the surrounding communities, they came to the realization

up real estate in their aging room. Cobb Hill had begun to run out of space a mere four years after constructing their aging room. This is where the Cellars at Jasper Hill come in.

Cobb Hill sends about 40% of their production to the Cellars at Jasper Hill. The wheels are aged for about four months at Cobb Hill before being packed and trucked north to the Cellars for another three to four months of aging. When I asked Jeannine what the primary benefit was to Cobb Hill to hand over their cheeses to be sold under the Cellars label, the answer was clear: space. Of course there is a built in benefit to Cobb Hill in that they also utilize the marketing and distribution efforts of the Cellars but it's possible that they could have found those benefits through a traditional relationship with a distributor. The big difference is that Cobb Hill can ship a chunk of their inventory at a much younger age than they

*The residents, or partners as they refer to themselves, of this community have developed what they call "enterprises", or small businesses, that lease pieces of the communal land for agricultural endeavors.*

for honey, raising hens and pastured poultry, etc. A little over ten years ago the vegetable growers determined that they needed manure for their pastures; that need, along with the convenience of an existing dairy barn with stanchions for Jersey cows, lead to the development of a dairying enterprise in the community.

The cheese enterprise grew organically alongside the dairy. Initial batches were made at an existing cheesemaking facility up the road (Woodcock Farms) until there were resources to build a cheese room in the barn, adjacent to the milking parlor. With help from a cheesemaking consultant, the Cobb Hill team refined a recipe for Appenzeller, a popular mountain style cheese from Switzerland, to fit with milk from their herd and their aging environment.

Appenzeller is a cheese that requires anywhere from four to eight months of aging. As is the case with many new

that many "local" producers do: in order to grow your business, especially if you live in a somewhat rural area with a seasonal population, you need to expand into new, more distant, markets. The two cheeses produced by Cobb Hill, Ascutney Mountain and Four Corners Caerphilly, have done well throughout the Northeast, this has allowed the farmer to continue adding cows to the herd of Jersey cowss supplying the milk.

So the equation would seem simple: as your cheese becomes more popular, make more of it and when you tap out your local market expand into new ones. But it is a bit more complicated when you're making an aged cheese. Ascutney Mountain, like Appenzeller, is at its best when aged for approximately seven to eight months. If a cheesemaker makes cheese year-round and ages all the wheels for eight months then at any given point in time they have eight months worth of inventory hanging around, wanting for turning and brushing and taking

could to any distributor.

Although farmstead cheesemaking, along with most small-scale agriculture, is a romantic idea it only survives if it is fiscally sustainable. The relationship between Cobb Hill and the Cellars illustrates how small businesses often need to change course from their original concept. For the Cellars working with Cobb Hill was not about providing affinage consulting to a producer, rather they needed to do their best to not alter the established aging trajectory of Ascutney Mountain. For the partners of Cobb Hill's cheese enterprise working with the Cellars required them to officially bend their original concept of sustainability that would have had them aiming to keep their cheese largely within their local market. Judging from the wheels of Ascutney Mountain (wheels coming from the Cellars) I'm eating and selling out here in Portland, Oregon, I'd say the arrangement is working just fine.





BARN IN THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM



THE CELLARS AT JASPER HILL

JULIA GILLARD  
GEMMA & ANDREW INGALLS



# GREENSBORO

BY DAN PRIBBLE & ZOE BRICKLEY

But, sir, you have to remember, I couldn't walk. I couldn't hear. I just woke up with her arms around me—  
Again, Sailor, whose? Whose arms?  
Hers. Greensboro's.

Sailor, please be advised your testimony is being recorded by both military superiors and civilian experts. Anything you say—

The sound of those mikes, it was, I don't know. I've never put ear to anything like it. I mean shrieking, beautiful noise. Burning with friction. The place was swarming with it and I passed out. But then, well, she protected me, and I could hear her.

She spoke to you?

Yes.

The alien?

Yes.

In Fardic?

Yes. No. It wasn't the same.

Those sounds—words, I guess—they made me remember things I've never heard before, alien things. But when she spoke to me, I understood.

Can you elaborate?

In the dark the mikes scream their endless scream, and she takes my head in her arms. She covers my ears, and then I see the yoozee on her skin, whole spectra of light I ignored while the richness of the mikes rattled me. The water in my eyes blurs the pink and purple stripes on her arms, and grows the hot, living orange on her hands into sunbursts, and I have never loved my eyes as I do now. What light I can see lives on her like howling continents of biota. Then she speaks in a voice above the chaos, or in it. A quiet voice and an ancient language.

You are home.

No, I can't be. This is not my home. This place is cold and bright, this place hurts. It's filled with alien voices but there's nobody here. My home is far away, you should see me there. You would know then. This planet is hunted and strange and I do not fit here.

She told you what?

I, I don't—

Sailor, please repeat for the record, for those assembled here, what the alien told you.

You are home.

A review board? A hearing? That's what I come home to? Trust me, I never wanted this, none of it. I know the ones that sent me are all long dead, and I don't know what the records might say, but this whole thing wasn't exactly voluntary.

I admit it. I never wanted to go. Which is probably surprising. Someone comes to you, your Cap no less, and tells you they got a boat that'll take you out twenty light-loops and back and that they're using it to basically launch you into a bedtime

story, well, that sounds like a Sailor's dream. I probably would have said it was my dream. Until they came to me. Until they showed me the boat. Until they told me I was going to Earth.

Truth is, I was scared shitless. I've had more jumps up than I can remember, even if I wanted to. I got my sails ten times over. I've counted stars with my coil spinning like a gyro between my ears, seen stellar wash hit a boat's nose like a neon squall of the most beautiful yoozee you can imagine. And I've heard the silence there, the huge unimaginable quiet made even larger by the tiny chirps and chuckles of passing alphas. But Earth? Sailors don't plot by Sol, not for a thousand loops at least. Not since before it dimmed and got quiet. It's not even on most charts anymore, really just the military's. I probably hadn't even heard the name since primary, but when the Cap came to get me, well, Earth is sure as shit where I was headed.

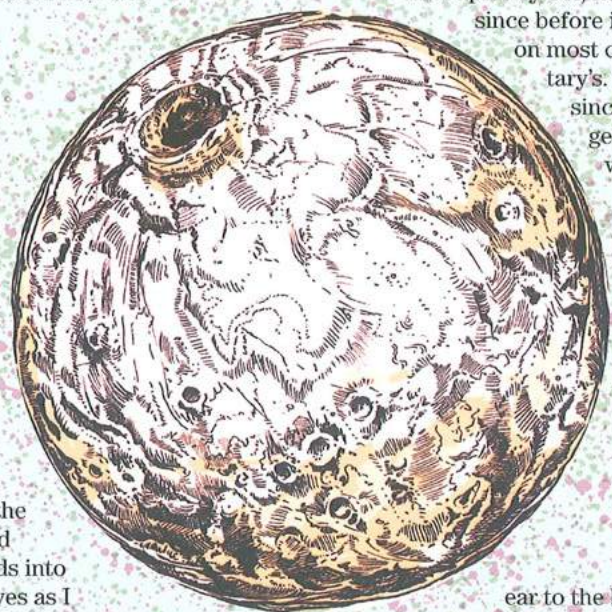
I knew the pilot on the bird Cap came in on. We went to primary together, loops ago. Funny I'd remember something like that. I guess he's dead now. What else? I remember that bird's tinny, rasping engine. The mudfields spread beneath the plane, silent as stone. The Cap's back against the sky. His voice.

"Sailor, how old are you?"  
"40 loops, sir."  
"Just a pup."  
"Yessir."  
"Child of the famine." He pressed his ear to the bubbled plastic canopy, near the pilot's slotted amps. Below the bird was nothing, no sound, not a trill or a hum or even a moan to let you know the soil was there. Just gray, empty silence. "This land used to sing, Sailor, if you can imagine it."

I nodded, but I could not imagine it. I heard the recordings in primary same as everyone else, but they say that's nothing compared to what it really used to sound like. Down with the crops and the animals and all the invisible little mikes crawling over everything, keeping it clean and healthy. The old-timers say you could get lost in a pollinating field, your coil shaken right out of your ears by sound that rich. But I never heard it. Nobody has since the Scorch.

The bird was approaching a din, something huge and noisy with the regular, metallic cadence of working fards. I've been to our cities, and I've been around machines. Hell, I'm a military fard. But I could tell we were coming up on something beyond all that. The Ambience absolutely vanished behind that racket like there was nothing else but this mountain of clanging clockwork. I joined my Cap near the canopy, listening.

"What is it?"  
"That, Sailor," he said, "is your boat."



If I could just interject.

Please state your title for the record.

Chief Secretary of Fardic Affairs.

Proceed, Secretary.

I find it very interesting, considering all this mumbo jumbo, these ghost stories, that we're even entertaining this report. Certainly this Sailor's return is a marvel, 400 loops is not nothing. But, Sailor, you tell me: with all your obvious confusion, with all this noise, how can we be sure you were on Earth at all?

I don't understand.

Your report. I'm quoting here. 'Have located a body emitting frequencies consistent with Earth intel, though at greatly reduced amplitude. Planetary position off. Appears to be over a thousandth of a light-loop from Sol.' A thousandth, Sailor? Our reports indicated Earth is almost 80 times closer to Sol than that.

It's not. Not anymore.

So it's that simple.

It is.

Secretary, the board of course notes your reservations with the Sailor's report, but this line of question is getting us nowhere. If we could just, perhaps, start at the beginning.

You will never know the beginning.

Sailor, what we need from you right now, is cooperation. Nobody's accused you of anything. We're just trying to figure out what happened up there.

I found Earth.

You found Earth.

Yes, Secretary, I did.

Smaller than a blade of grass on the mudplains, you found Earth.

Yes.

Secretary—

No, I'm sorry, I will not calm down. This is what happened: you took your boat—our boat—twenty light-loops out and you set it down on the first rock you found. Period. Incompetence, laziness, fear, who knows. Fards are dying, for loops beyond memory we are dying. And you set down as soon as you could. There was no reason to think that asteroid was Earth. There remains no reason.

My navigational instruments were useless that far out. The Cap's briefing suggested they might be. But I could hear it, sir, at least the boat could. That sound. It was an enormous noise that writhed, that moved against itself. Just like they told me, unstable but not random. It was Earth, I could hear it. I could hear her.

Greensboro.

Yessir. I knew because of her. She sang to me and what she sang was like a very old song. Fardic. No, not Fardic. Like Fard itself.

Fard itself?

Yessir. Like Fard before the Scorch.

"You're familiar with the Scorch, Sailor?"

"Yessir."

Cap's finger rubbed rhythmically against the panel of switches set into the table where we sat. "No you aren't."

"Yessir."

"Back then, before Earth, I was a much better-disciplined Fard."

The briefing room, large enough for a squad, was empty except for the two of us, and very quiet. The whole place—base, dry-dock, lab—had been structurally hushed. They were using tech on that boat I'd never even heard of and it was loud. The Cap threw a switch and told me to listen.

Overhead, a fuzzy, high-pitched hum spilled from the amps and a screen on the far wall lit up, showing a blue scythe-bade arcing through a field of black.

"This should sound familiar. It's the ionosphere, about a hundred loops ago. It sounded more or less the same to the naked ear then as now." He tapped the panel in front of him. "Except for this."

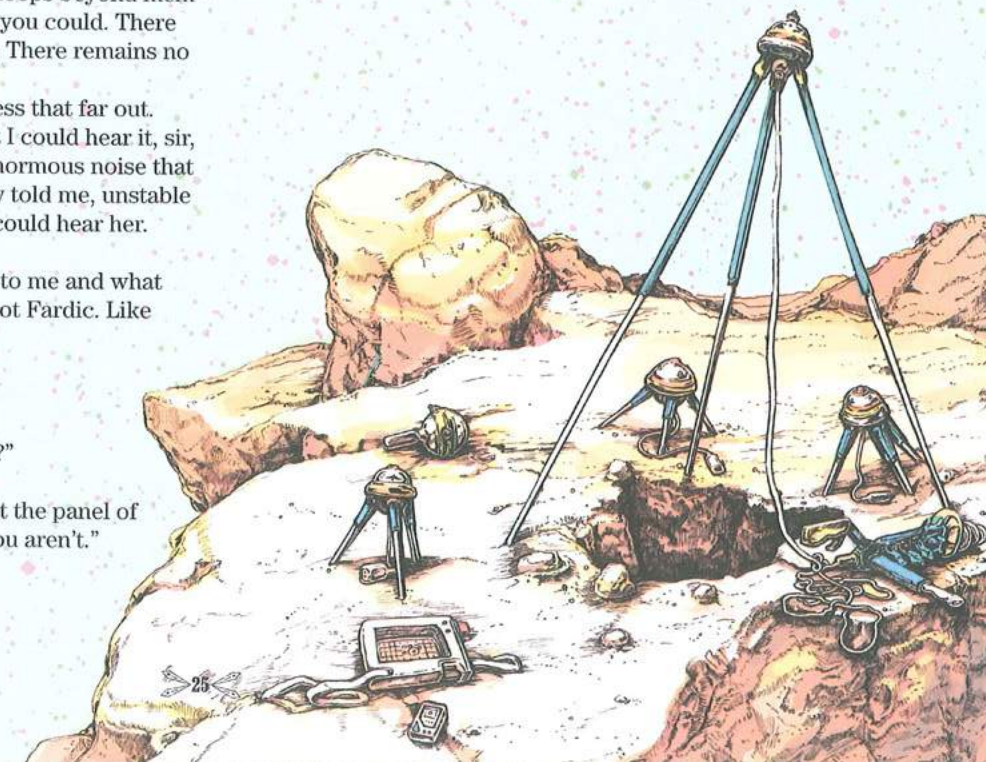
The fuzzy hum did not disappear, but a whisper was growing in its frequency.

"Brace yourself, Sailor."

I didn't, but I should have. Something was churning up the bottom of that noise, muddying it. Something like a boat—a big boat—revving up. Bending fluids, shivering particulate. A peal rising out of the hiss, ragged and electric and more like an internal hemorrhage smearing the bleeding heart of the ionosphere across the room than a whole new sound blotting it out. On the screen the blue arc flared indistinguishable colors in an instant and then darkened, or I think it did. I was blind by then. The enormous rend in the sound crashed and receded and from it came the reestablished ionospheric monotone, like a comforting voice. The constant mutter of the Universe hitting our planet.

I put my head on the table, which was not the correct thing to do with my Cap there, but there was nowhere else to put it. Though I remained blind, it was my ears that concerned me. The violence done to them was echoing in my coil and I wanted quiet. If my Cap chastised me I could not hear, but I don't think he did. There must have been a first listen for him, too. When I could hear him again, I could tell he had his face to the amps.

"Just a stellar flare. Damnedest thing was, we knew it





was coming. We were ready. Fardologists knew it, outstromers knew it. They all said the spheres would hold up, and they did." He paused and let the soft ionosphere fill the briefing room again. "They did hold up. But there's always something. I tell you, though, for the longest time we'd be damned if we could figure out what it was that happened. I mean, besides just about every crop on the planet dying and most of the livestock and fards along with them. Nobody could figure it out." He leaned over the panel once more.

"Okay, now listen to this."

This time something living, something active and dynamic came from the amps. Like a chirp, but magnified and multiplied many million times. The sound modulated, grew discordant, harmonized, quieted, rose again. It growled and purred, now throaty, now wailing and shrill. It pounded in my ears like my valve had fritzed and was trying to send an ocean of blood up to my coil in an instant. I'm from the south and if you've ever been down there when the mudsliders are rutting, it's a bit like that. Times a billion or so.

"These were taken with recording devices much more sensitive than the fardic ear. It's the Ambience, pre-Scorch." He flipped another switch. "Here's after."

The chirps were now individually audible and between them spread dire silences. The ionosphere chugged on in the background, but the organic, swollen noise atop it was all but gone. A popping sizzle now overlaid the Ambience, muffling the chirps.

"What happened?"

"Have you ever heard of mikes, Sailor? Little critters, too small to hear. But they're everywhere. They're in the soil, in our bodies. At least, they used to be. Turns out the Scorch irradiated the ionosphere, showered our planet in strange gammas. Near as the fardologists can tell, wiped out about 90 percent of them. That's what we weren't ready for. Sure, the spheres held, but what the Scorch turned them into was as bad as if they'd just burned."

"I don't understand."

"We can't live without them, Sailor. The mikes. Crops don't live. The dead don't decompose. The food doesn't make it, and even if it does, we can't digest it. Point is, without a mike-resurgence this whole planet's got maybe a thousand loops left in it. Maybe." He sighed. "I won't lie to you, Sailor. We've been sending good fards like you up to try find us more mikes for about 80 loops now. No one's come back, but that doesn't mean they failed. It's a long trip. But we just can't afford to wait, so we're going to keep sending you up until someone comes home." He tried to smile. "The more the merrier, right, Sailor?"

I learned about mikes in primary fardology. At that level, nobody's going to ask where they came from, they're just here. And I'm no scientist, I sail boats. So that's as far as it went. But something didn't click about what the Cap was telling me, so I asked the obvious question. Why send a swab like me up to try to find some little critters that live right here on Fard? The sound of the Scorch lingered with me for a while, but it's gone now. But when I heard Cap say that name—Earth—well, I don't suppose I'll ever forget that.

"Earth, sir?"

"That is correct, Sailor."

"I'm going to Earth?"

"Fard willing."

"Sir? Do you mean, that is, are you saying that mikes are, are aliens?"

"No son, it's not like that. We don't how they got here, but they did and I'll be goddamned if we don't need more." He flipped the switch and the eerie silence of the dry-dock returned. "The crunchers upstairs say, relatively, it'll be about a 400 loop round trip. Only be about 20 to you. So, I know it breaks your little valve to hear it, but I won't be here when you get back." His voice was shrinking. "I guess nobody knows what it's going to be like when you get back. Considering what we're asking, I hope you understand when I say we'll take our problems one at a time. But, hell itself, Sailor, though I be dead and buried in the silent soil of Fard, I want you to bring me back a present anyway." He flicked one last switch and leaned back while the enormous roaring cacophony of the pre-Scorch mikes clamored into the room. "Happy hunting, Sailor. And don't you dare come home without some of these noisy bastards to take me to my rest."

Chief Medical Liaison here. I have a question for the Sailor. Proceed.

This, alien, Greensboro—

She was real. She held me. She was real.

Sailor—

That's what you were going to ask, isn't it?

Is that unreasonable? The planet is uninhabited. It's frozen.

That's from your own report. Granted we don't know much about these aliens, but what we know indicates that nothing lives at those temperatures—

Not nothing.

This is getting us nowhere. In my opinion—my expert opinion—that these proceedings are without purpose. We owe him our thanks, surely, but this Sailor needs—

I have this.

Quiet! Everyone stay calm. Please. Let the record show the Sailor has produced a sealed canister. Guards, stand down. Sailor, goddamnit. For the record and for your own well being I suggest you hurry up and explain that canister, its contents, and why it's humming.

I am so far from home.

Do you want to know how I remember it? This is how I remember it.

I can hear two things. First, there is the moan. A ghost's lament. This is the ambience of Earth as I found it. A singing voice, frozen. Something is stuck here. Sol is a distant, clicking star in the sky. Just another star. If this planet obeys gravity, it is difficult to see how. Unmoored, it wanders the Universe and is a museum, but a museum of one particular moment: the last one. History is a play in motion and I have found the end. It sounds like this. Humped hills in the distance, entombed in ice. A sky burned away by cold, lost to the black encroachment of space. Ragged galactic silence overhead, and night will not become day. Rock, frozen to breaking, water that will burn you. A voice that will, at any moment, be arrested. A voice that is all the time always about to arrest and that is the only thing I can think of in the world: the coming silence.

My boat heard the second sound, but now that I'm down here I can hear it, too. It reminds me of the Cap at the canopy in that bird, talking about the pre-Scorch fields of Fard. This sound rattles your bones, digs deep into your body and readjusts it to match the modulating wavelengths. You could stand on this sound, you could eat it. You could swim in this sound and let it permeate you until you disappeared.

Yes, Fard. Somewhere below the surface I can hear Fard on this alien planet. But it remains muffled. Not far from where I put my boat down there is a spot strewn with stone and I know I am above it. I can feel the stones rattling in the frozen soil, and in my feet I can feel the vibrations marching into my body. So I dig.

The soil is like ancient stone. Hard, but not unbreakable. It flakes and pops under the digger and I hear the shrapnel whizzing past my face. Below the soil I find a solid layer of stone. I'm no fardologist, but this feels made to me, solid, crafted and as though it has been here for loops beyond counting. This, I know, is a carapace for something alive and screaming because I can feel it and I can hear it beating against the stone. And also because it is when my driller tip pierces this shell and I pull it out that the sound comes on me in its fullness like a gunshot to the head and I lose consciousness, falling forever into the hole I have made, until the darkness of this dying world takes me and the sound falls away like light chasing a setting sun.

I awake embraced. Held. I do not know why I am safe because I am caught in a gale, the great sound my boat heard wailing somewhere nearby. But wherever I am is safe, and I begin to understand this planet because it is like her body, and I can hear everything in her body. Blood is a river, hearts are a war drum, bellows blowing breath in her like the foundries of Fard or the deepest vents in the seas and in the earth and all the hot wind blowing out up into the sky, carrying our hearts and our minds and yes, even carrying us.

Where am I?

And a voice.

"First, eat."

What she places in my mouth is strong. Powerful. I have tasted nothing like it. It squirms in my mouth, crawls in my mouth, charges into my body and fills my face with its texture of minerals and ancient green.

What is it? What is this food?

"We made this place bountiful. We did. Greensboro. When all were dying, when all seemed lost, we made the place green and fragrant. The people. The animals. The creatures tinier than dust. We made this place and when the earth grew hot they came to us from everywhere and we fed them."

With her fingers she closes my eyes and I see many things. Bizarre things. There are lowing beasts and metal pails ring with the spray of hot white river. A machine rolling among her people, between great wooden shelves, taking enormous wheels and lovingly turning them, rolling into the darkness of a cave to turn yet more.

"Who are you?"

"I am Greensboro. I am everyone. We lived here. This was our home."

Green grass, sweet smells and tang from patches of wild flowers and unearthed bulbs. Snuffling snouts close to the ground where the blades of grass are rent and chewed. Each time the molars clamp on those sweet plants there is a wet whisper of tearing fiber and I can see the cud and the great flanks of those beasts. The grass is in my mouth where I will chew it for hours.

This is your home, Sailor."

"No. No it isn't. My home is far away and dying. I came here to save it."

The screaming intensifies as she pulls away from me and I blink rapidly because I can see her now. In the light she casts I think I can see the same rolling machine now reaching above us,

carrying bricks to the ceiling where I made my hole. But I think it must be a delusion crafted by her because in reality she is all I can see. Swirls of violent purple tattoo her flesh, and her hands are painted vibrant orange. Neon pink wings frame her large, brilliant eyes. She is so hard to look at, she is so bright. And where these colors grace her body there is the bleating of countless mikes, the millionfold chirping of charging, hungry creatures everywhere on her. She sees me watching her and places one of her hands across the pulsing purple of her stomach.

"You can see them, can't you, Sailor? You can see them fluorescing and growing and living upon me?"

"Yes."

"Good. Then you are kin with them and you will know I wear a coat made of my planet, Sailor. I wear the colors of my land."

"Help me."

Then she gave me this.

Please! Calm. Everybody calm down. What did she give you?

She gave me our salvation.

I think you better open that canister and show us what you have. Do it now, Sailor. Do it slow.

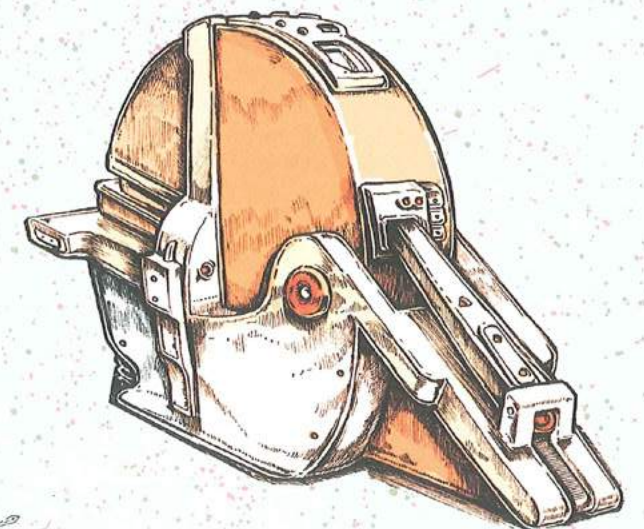
It will blind them and it will deafen them. When I unlatch the lid, when I remove the wheel they will have seen and heard the end and the beginning and they will not see or hear for many days after. Because that's what happened to me.

She said, this is for you. This is for your planet and your people. Because we are all the People, but sometimes you must come home before you can remember. You must come home before you can be saved. So take my gift. It is painted with my most precious life, it is aged in the vaults of my soil. It has all my secrets. It has all my medicine. Take it back and let it loose on your lands.

Then she brought forth the wheel and the light was a sun in her hands, and the screaming was as all the voices of Fard raised in anger or ecstasy. In my lap the wheel felt heavy and dull, but in my coil it rose and shined a beacon light and filled my body with its symphony.

For the last time, Sailor, what is it? What did she give you?

Food from her world. Life for ours. She gave me her glowing flesh. She gave me cheese.





# PLOUGHGATE

BY MERCEDEZ SINGLETON  
WITH LEAH CAMPBELL  
& ANNA DUNN

Marisa Mauro lives in The Northeast Kingdom, a corner of Vermont that spans three counties and includes the small town of Albany. Up there, the twenty miles to the Canadian border is less than the thirty miles to the nearest bar. Albany is where Marisa make her cheese.

In the mornings, at seven, she goes to pick up the milk from a small family farm in nearby Coventry. The Hancock family's herd of Ayrshires provides Mauro with five ten-gallon cans of fresh milk five or six days a week. The trip takes an hour and a half, and once back at the creamery, Marisa will spend the next nine hours transforming the milk into cheese. After two years in business, Ploughgate Creamery churns out approximately 13,000 pounds of cheese a year.

When you talk to Mauro, you get the impression that the daily cheese dance is easy. She seems borne of earnestness and speaks with a natural ease that isn't weighed by her job. You know her life as a cheese-maker must be hard and full of stress—the long hours, the commute to pick up milk before she can even begin production, the numerous variables that go into perfecting her craft. You get no impression of any of that when speaking to her. She sounds young. She is. She's twenty-five. It was at only fifteen that Mauro began working at Woodcock Farm, a sheep dairy in Weston, Vermont. Mauro says

fondly, "I never really thought of another line of work after that."

Mauro grew up in Dorset, Vermont, on seven acres in the Southwestern part of the state. She did not grow up on a farm, but she and her father collected animals. Mauro brought home orphaned lambs from the neighbors farm to pasture in the backyard and started a rabbit breeding business when she was ten. She tried to teach geese how to fly while hiding them from her mother, who had other thoughts about the eclectic company Mauro shepherded home.

"I got the geese from the general store down the road. You could order them for a buck or two a piece and I put them on our charge account," she admits.

Mauro decided to begin her gaggle with swimming lessons. Geese do naturally know how to swim, but Mauro, with her father as accomplice, put them in the bath tub when they were little to get them started. When the geese matured, they were put on the two, small ponds on the property, where they lived no longer as refugees. However, says Mauro, "The rabbit breeding business didn't go so well." The supply, unsurprisingly, quickly outstripped the demand. She couldn't sell them fast enough. The rabbits would have to go.

"I thought it would be great to set them free. So I took them all to the back corner of the property and let them go. My dad came home from work shocked that I had found homes from them all so fast. I got busted the next morning because they all showed up at the back door looking for food."

The entrepreneurial spirit would strike again in Mauro's early twenties. After working at a variety of dairies in Vermont and California and learning the art of making cheese, Marisa knew she wanted her own business. She was going to school at Sterling College and working—cheesemaking and milking in the spring and summer months for Neil Urie, the owner of Bonnieview, a sheep creamery in Craftsbury, Vermont. She met Princess Maclean at Bonnieview, who shared her ambition; they would make cheese together. But leasing a farm to raise sheep and building a creamery was out of their price range. They waited.

After two years, the opportunity to begin Ploughgate presented itself. "Neil knew of an abandoned creamery down the road and he kept urging me to check it out," Mauro explained. It took constant pushing from Neil to get Mauro to sit down with the owner of the creamery. She walked out with the lease: three hundred per month. Mauro then turned to the Small Business Association of Vermont.

"When I started my business at 23, two years ago, I had no credit, not bad credit but no credit. They helped me write a business plan and guaranteed my loan to start Ploughgate," remembers Mauro quizzically. The Creamery came with all the necessary washable walls, drains, a walk-in cooler and a few draining racks. Most of the rest they would borrow. The Kehler brothers of Jasper Hill are old family friends of Mauro's. They lent to Mauro cheesemaking moulds, cooling coils for refrigeration and a cheesemaking vat, one of the largest pieces of infrastructure. Urie provided stainless steel tables, miscellaneous moulds and other cheesemaking equipment. Ploughgate was born.

The first cheese to hit the market was sheep sorrel with milk from Urie's flock, but as the season changed to winter sheep milk was no longer available.

"We started experimenting with cow's milk, and Hartwell came about. Then I decided to try and wash the Hartwell and then came Willoughby!" Mauro modified the recipe adjusting the cultures to be more like a wash rind but the actual process of Hartwell and Willoughby is similar.

This is a story of generosity, experimentation and realization, but the truth is that cheesemaking is a very difficult and expensive business. Ultimately, the enterprise could not support both of its founders. Maclean writes, "It was really hard for me to let go of Ploughgate after putting so much of my heart and soul into it but it seemed like the best thing to do for the business in order for it to continue on its path of success while remaining small, a trait which is essential to what we originally envisioned

for the type of business we wanted it to be." Today Mauro is pulling a salary, but just enough to cover the bills.

Ploughgate Creamery now makes two different soft cheeses from cow's milk. Hartwell is a soft ripened bloomy rind cheese. Cutting into it reveals a white paste which is mild and creamy with a touch of grassiness. The second, Willoughby's rind is washed in a locally produced ice wine which gives it a funky kick reminiscent of French Epoisses, salty and satisfying. Both cheeses are aged and Willoughby is washed at the Cellars. She produces 50 gallon batches five times a week, about 50-55 pound or 90 wheels. This changes slightly with the seasons. Mauro sells at farmers markets on the weekends, and Jasper Hill distributes the remaining 75%.

"There is so much enthusiasm around farming and food amongst young people in my area. I think the hardest hurdle for young farmers is finding the capital to farm. Not many of the young farmers I know grew up on a farm; therefore they don't have land that has or will be passed down," Mauro laments. "Farming and producing food is so, so expensive.... Our group of young farmers regularly cook meals together and share the bounty of our labors. I rarely go to the supermarket. I trade for most of my food at the farmers market and am gifted food from the community on a regular basis."

Mauro's story is one of labour of love and love of labour. It speaks to the great potential of our American communities as well as the great richness of our land and every struggle in between. 🌱

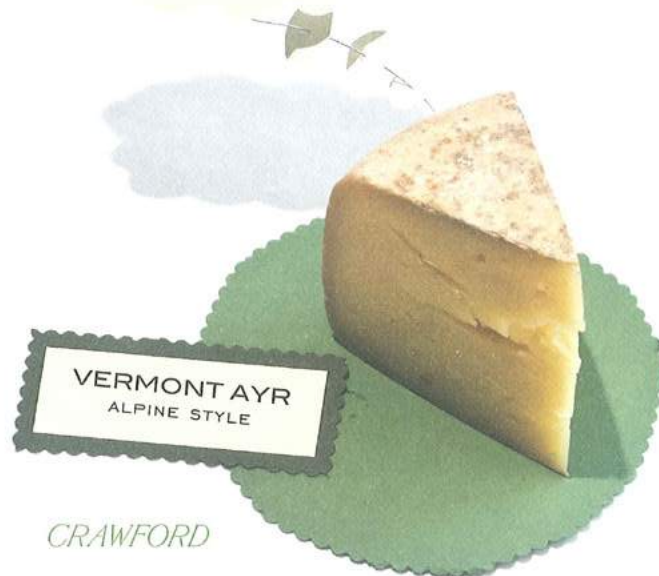


THIS IS FOR  
ENGLAND  
OLD + NEW  
SAILORS + MINERS  
SALT, YOGHURT  
AND BEER



LANDAFF

AYR IS NAMED  
FOR THE COWS THEY BREED  
AND THE AIR THEY BREATHE  
TOASTED MILK +  
TIMOTHY BREAD



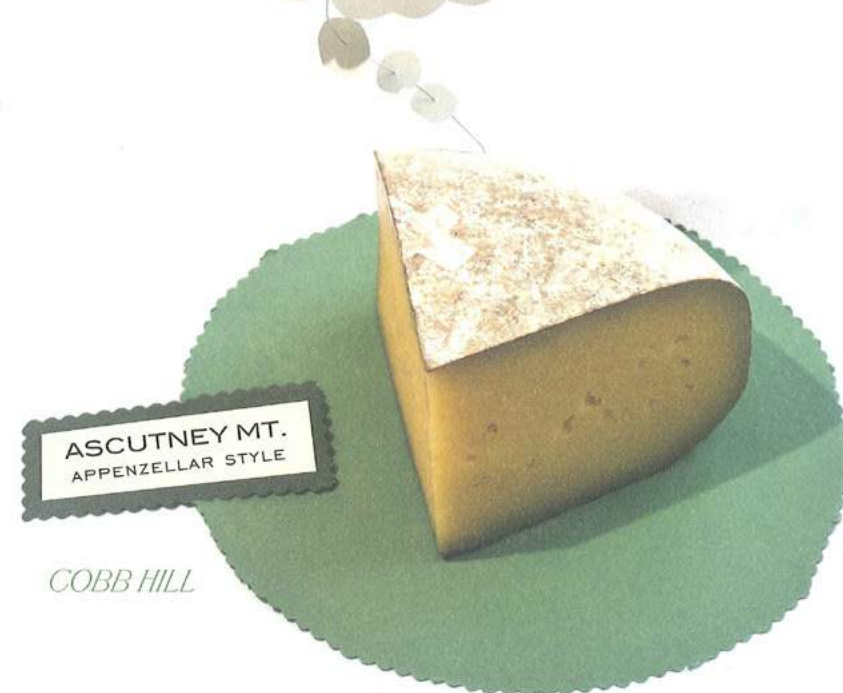
CRAWFORD

OMA  
MAY MEAN  
"GRANDMOTHER"  
BUT THIS CHEESE IS  
PUNGENT + ANIMAL  
WILD, PUNK, FUNK  
+ Oozy



VON TRAPP

SHARP AS COLD  
WINTER AIR  
FULL OF  
CARAMEL + SALT



COBB HILL

PILLOWY, GRASSY  
AND LIKE THE WIND IN  
TREES  
THIS IS BUTTER  
BUT BETTER



PLOUGHGATE

FUZZY  
WHEELS & SQUARES  
AREN'T ALWAYS  
AVAILABLE.  
GOATS BREED SEASONALLY  
AND ONLY MILK WHEN  
KIDDING,  
SERIOUSLY.



TWIG FARM

WINNIMERE  
IS AS WOODY AS THE  
CORNER OF THE LAKE  
IT IS NAMED FOR  
DAMP, FOREST  
+ PASTIS



JASPER HILL

OCEAN,  
SNOW + BUTTER  
HAPPY  
HOMETOWN ZIP



SCHOLTEN



## SPANISH OLIVE OIL CRACKER

- 1 ½ cup + 2 Tablespoons flour
- ¼ cup sesame seeds
- 3 Tablespoon sugar
- 1 Tablespoon crushed anise seeds or fennel pollen
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup + 1-2 Tablespoon ice water

Combine all the dry ingredients in a small mixing bowl. Whisk together the ice water and olive oil and stir it into the dry ingredients. Roll balls that are about a tablespoon or a little more between two sheets of parchment paper. You pretty much want them to be as thin as possible. Carefully peel the top layer of parchment off. Whisk two egg whites until they are foamy and lightly brush the wafers. Generously sprinkle them with sugar. Bake in a 375° oven until they begin to brown. Let them cool on the pans and gently remove. They can be as delicate as they are delicious, so handle with care! -AC

## SPELT/WHOLE WHEAT COOKIES

- 5 oz. butter
- ½ cup + 2 Tablespoon sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 Tablespoon rum
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 ¾- 2 cup spelt or whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- salt

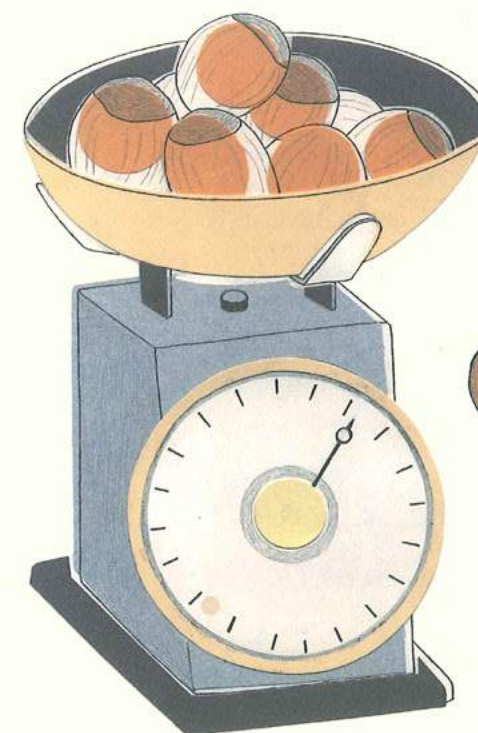
Cream the butter with the sugar. Add the egg, rum and vanilla extract and mix until evenly incorporated. Don't worry if it looks a little "broken"- the dry ingredients will bring it back together. Stir in the combined flour, salt and baking powder. Chill the dough until it firms up, at least a half an hour. Roll the dough out on a floured surface to about a quarter of an inch or so. Cut cracker shapes by hand or use a biscuit or cookie cutter. Bake in a 350° oven until nicely browned. These cookies taste best when they are a little on the dark side, it brings out the nutty sweetness of the whole grain flour. -AC



## PAN FORTE

- 1 ¼ cup toasted almonds
- 1 ½ cup toasted hazelnuts
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¾ teaspoon ginger
- 1 cup + 2 Tablespoon flour
- 1 Tablespoon cocoa powder
- 1 ¼# of dried fruit cut into ½" pieces - I prefer black/calmyma figs, currants, golden raisins and possibly prunes. I would avoid tropical fruits, but apricots, cherries, ginger would be fine.
- ⅔ cup honey
- 1 cup sugar

Roughly chop the toasted nuts and combine with dried fruit. Add the combined dry ingredients. Spices can be adjusted to taste, and I find freshly grinding your spices creates an especially magical pan forte. With a candy thermometer in a saucepan heat the honey and sugar to somewhere between 225-240°. Add the hot syrup to the fruit and nut mixture, combine evenly and press (Careful, it's hot!) into a parchment lined springform pan or flan ring. Bake at 300° until puffed slightly and shiny color turns dull. Let cool in pan before loosening the edges and releasing from ring. -AC







MARTINA MERLINI

## HOT BROWN

butter  
flour  
cayenne  
nutmeg  
white wine  
milk  
cheddar  
white bread  
ham, turkey and bacon  
tomato

Make a mornay sauce by starting with a basic roux of half butter and half flour. A half stick (½#) of butter should make enough roux to yield over a quart of mornay sauce. After roux reaches consistency of wet sand, cook on low heat for about four or five minutes to cook off raw flour taste. Season the roux with salt, pepper, cayenne and a little nutmeg. Deglaze the roux with a ¼ cup white wine. Slowly add milk by whisking it in. Mornay will thicken as the solution comes to a simmer, so it may seem a little loose at first. When mornay sauce has simmered for thirty minutes and is the consistency of gravy, whisk in grated cheddar cheese. Placed triangles of sliced white bread on a buttered oven-proof plate. Layer ham or turkey or both onto the bread. Slather with mornay sauce and bake four to six minutes in a 450° oven. Top should brown slightly. A few minutes before the dish is pulled from the oven, garnish with two or more slices of medium-crispy bacon and sliced tomatoes. Save time for a nap after eating. -SR

## CROSTINI with RICOTTA and FLASH SEARED STRAWBERRIES

baguette  
extra virgin olive oil  
strawberries  
thyme  
ricotta

Toast one or two slices of rustic bread or baguette. While bread is toasting, heat a saute pan with extra virgin olive oil. Toss in a small hand full of cleaned strawberries, cut in half or quarters if they're large. Allow to sear for about 10 to 15 seconds. A little salt, pepper and sugar may be added and a bit of fresh-picked thyme. Spread ricotta or fresh goat cheese on toast. Top with seared strawberries and a pinch of sea salt. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil. -SR

## CHOW CHOW

1 ½ cup rice wine vinegar  
¾ cup white wine vinegar  
2 cups sugar  
2 Tablespoons salt  
3 Tablespoons poppy seeds  
2 Tablespoons mustard seeds (to be added at the end)  
2 teaspoons turmeric  
2 teaspoons celery salt  
1 pinch of ground chile de arbol or crushed red pepper flakes  
1 cup baby carrot or diced carrot  
1 cup of sliced ramp or spring onion  
1 diced jalapeño  
1 cup diced swiss chard stem

Boil pickling liquid (except for mustard seeds) and taste for seasoning. Individually cook all vegetables in pickling liquid until al dente, accounting for carry over cooking while they cool in the pickling liquid. Mix pickled vegetables together, adding jalapeños last, depending on how spicy you want to go. Cover with pickling liquid and refrigerate. Mustard seeds should be added when liquid has cooled down to room temperature and allowed to marinate with mixture overnight. Serve with Cabot Clothbound Cheddar. -SR + SB

## MARINATED CHEESE

washed rind cheese  
thinly sliced red onion  
thyme or summer savory  
extra virgin olive oil

On a plate or tray spread olive oil, thyme sprigs and the sliced raw onion. Place sliced washed rind cheese over top. Repeat oil, thyme and onion process over top of cheese. Cover with a sheet of plastic wrap and allow to sit at room temperature for about two hours. Spread on toast or a Triscuit. -SR

## SQUASH PRESERVES

This is a great for pairing for softer goat and sheeps milk cheeses or on a biscuit with homemade butter. Peel and dice the flesh of one or two butternut, kabocha or acorn squash. Acorn squash isn't as necessary to peel. Do remove seeds. Toss the squash in an equal amount of granulated sugar, a pinch of salt and let sit overnight. The next day, simmer the macerated liquid for about an hour. A syrup-like consistency should be achieved while hot. This mixture is cooled and is then ready to serve. Feel free to decrease the amount of sugar to make less sweet and to add a little thyme or sage over top as a plate garnish. A little cracked black pepper may also be desirable. -SR



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