

Mil-Rich Yogurt Has Jersey Milk Appeal

BY GINGER SECRIST MYERS
Adams County Correspondent
NEWBURG — They want to process 600,000 pounds of yogurt a year. Within the next three years they plan to utilize all their milk in yogurt production. They are Bill and Susan Dietrich, Carrock Jerseys, who operate Pennsylvania's first on-the-farm licensed yogurt plant.

The Dietrichs are adamant in their belief that the milk produced by their 65 Registered Jerseys should be used in a manufactured product. Both are quick to agree that their yogurt production is allowing them to capitalize on a resource they already produce for added income.

More importantly to them, however, is their belief in the quality of Jersey milk. "We believe that dairy products made with Jersey milk are better tasting and are better for you," Bill said. "Jersey milk should be used for processed products, not just mixed with the rest for the tanker load."

Susan adds: "One of the most important things about making good yogurt is that you have to really like yogurt yourself. Our

family has always eaten a lot of yogurt. We believe that Jersey milk with its higher milk solids and higher lactose content produces a yogurt with a creamier texture than what's generally available on the store shelves now."

The Dietrichs have partners in their undertaking; mutual friends from their college days, Steve and Linda Miller of Bethel. Linda and Susan had often talked about going in together on a business venture, but they lacked the capital. Then last May, the Millers sold a piece of real estate that they had improved and the seed money became available for the two women to realistically explore their options.

The idea of making yogurt was the brainchild of Susan and Linda. The men were skeptical at first about the idea, but with some pencil pushing and a genuine interest in producing a quality product, both couples agreed to pursue the idea.

Mil-Rich Dairy, Inc. was formed for the production of their yogurt. Susan relates that their present product carries the name Mil-Rich, but they are presently working with an artist to develop a



Bill Dietrich and Linda Miller prepare the 100-gallon pasturizing tank used to make Mil-Rich yogurt. The Dietrichs and Millers had to procure most of their processing equipment through farm sales and leads since few local equipment dealers stock such items.

new cup logo and a new name. The words "manufactured by Mil-Rich Dairy, Inc." will remain on their new labels.

While the idea for making yogurt had come simply enough, getting their information on processing and marketing has been somewhat a learn-as-you-go process. "We're in the middle of a yogurt revolution," Susan said. "It's coming into its own now. There's a market for it with its variety of flavors and different ways of packaging. Everyone has a different idea as to how yogurt should be made and retailers are discovering more about the package form that consumers like best. We're learning right along with everyone else."

Two persons the Dietrichs and Millers credit with being the most helpful with the initial phases of their operation are Ed Crotty and Donald Lerch. Ed Crotty is the farm superintendent for the New Jersey State Farming System. Crotty shared with them his all-natural formula for making yogurt. Crotty, who oversees New Jersey's 600 dairy cows and 12,000 acres of state farmland, processes the state's milk into yogurt which is served to the 22,000 persons in New Jersey's penal system and other state-run institutions.

Donald Lerch, their Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture inspector, worked closely with them on the plans for their processing room and made sure their plant met all state regulations.

Beginning in early October and

finishing the end of January, Bill and Steve did all the necessary renovation work themselves with the exception of installing the boiler and some of the concrete block work. They converted the Dietrich's original milkhouse that was 20 feet by 20 feet into a milkhouse measuring 6 feet by 20 feet, a vestibule that is 6 feet by 20 feet, and a yogurt plant measuring 13 feet by 20 feet. They also constructed a walk-in cooler.

Susan and Linda procured the processing equipment, mostly at farm sales and from following leads since most local dairy equipment dealers don't have such items in stock. The two couples

initially invested \$11,000 in equipment, \$5,000 in renovations, and another \$1,500 in start-up costs.

They have been making yogurt once a week since the beginning of February with the Millers coming out from Bethel to help with the processing and packaging. The process starts with heating the milk in their 100-gallon pasturizing tank. While the milk is heating, powdered milk solids and a minimal amount of sweeteners are added.

This mixture is heated to 185 degrees for at least one-half hour. They have found that the mixture

(Turn to Page A22)



Susan Dietrich prepares to fill containers with their Mil-Rich yogurt. They are presently packaging their yogurt in 10-pound and 32-ounce containers, but plan to be using an 8-ounce cup in the near future.



Bill Dietrich finishes milking one of the Favorite Saint daughters in his 65-cow Registered Jersey herd. Bill hopes that he will be able to use all his milk in yogurt production within the next three years.

Adams Co. Correspondent Ginger Myers

Ginger Secrist Myers characterizes herself as a person who has dairy farming imprinted on her genes. Although her parents sold their farm when she was six years old, Ginger still developed a keen interest in dairy cattle while working summers on her uncle's dairy farm.

She was an active member in the 4-H dairy program in Franklin County and a member of the county dairy judging team. Ginger was high individual in the 1971 state dairy judging competition at Penn State and was named Outstanding 4-H Girl in Franklin County in 1972.

In 1975 Ginger received her bachelor's degree in health and physical education from Penn State University. While in college, she was a member of the Campus 4-H and PSU Dairy Science Club. She also served as editor for the 1974 *Penn State Dairyman*.

Following graduation, Ginger worked at Wilson College in Chambersburg, where she taught for a year and later moved into an administrative position. In July of 1979, she began working as a field representative for the Pennsylvania Guernsey Breeders Association. It was during her tenure there that she met her husband, John Myers.

John and Ginger married in 1980 and established Green Manor Farm located just east of Littlestown. Having started with Guernseys, the Myers now milk a herd of 60 registered Jerseys with a compliment of young stock. They also have a hay and straw dealership operated under the name J.D. Myers, Ptr. The Myers have



Ginger Secrist Myers

two children, Susan, 4, and Andrew, 2.

Ginger remains active in both dairy associations and community groups. She is editor of the Pennsylvania Jersey Cattle Club's quarterly publication, *The Jerseyletter*, and is a member of the American Jersey Cattle Club, the Pa. Jersey Cattle Club, and secretary for the Cumberland Valley Jersey Breeders Association.

She is a member of the PSU Dairyman's Club, Dairy Shrine, Penn-Agri Women, and is a 4-H club leader and coach for the Adams County 4-H Dairy Cattle Judging Team.

Holding a position on the approved judges list of the state's Purebred Dairy Cattle Association, Ginger finds time to judge a number of cattle shows each year. She is also a member of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Hanover where she serves on several committees.