

Jefferson Cheese Company

From Grass To Milk To Cheese In A Day

BY

GINGER SECRIST MYERS
Adams Co. Correspondent
HAGERSTOWN, MD —

"Your milk can be grass one day and in a package of our mozzarella cheese the next." This is how Jefferson Cheese Company owner Bruce DeStafeno explained the need to rapidly process milk arriving at his plant into high quality cheese to members of the Cumberland Valley Jersey Breeders Association members.

The tri-county group toured the Hagerstown plant as part of their annual field day activities. Many members of the group market their milk to Jefferson Cheese Company through Dairymen Inc. These dairymen receive a protein premium through a new program implemented by Dairymen Inc. last winter.

Starting the tour at the point of intake, DeStafeno noted that most milk delivered to the plant is back out in processed form within 24 hours of its arrival. The plant produces 30,000 pounds of cheese daily.

This plant produces four grades of mozzarella and provolone cheese and four varieties of Latin American cheeses. Latin American cheeses are white bland cheeses that are a staple table item in most Latin American meals. All the cheese is sold domestically with the largest potential market in Maryland and Florida.

The milk is then pasteurized and put through the separator. The surplus cream is pulled off and the milk is standardized to 3 percent butterfat. The surplus cream is

then sold. DeStafeno stressed that while there is no problem marketing the cream in the summer months, the market takes a drastic downward dip in the colder months.

Once the milk has been standardized it is poured into 20,000 gallon troughs where bacteria culture is added. DeStafeno uses over thirty different varieties of cultures at this facility. The cultures give the cheeses different flavors and consistencies.

Calf rennet is then added which works as a coagulant, turning the batch of cultured milk into what looks like white jello. Knives then cut this into small kernel size pieces. These pieces are heated until they are hard and firm. The liquid that is left is the whey, which is poured off.

DeStafeno explained that this is where each cheesemaker leaves his mark on the product. Some cheesemakers determine when the kernel is hard enough by squeezing it, others drop them on the floor, each has his own method of determining when the heating process should end.

From this point, the processor has approximately one hour to get the hardened kernels through the extruders and into a molded form. The cheese in its molds is then placed in cold water for three to four hours. The molds are then transferred to a salt brine where they set overnight. The cheese is now ready for packaging.

DeStafeno noted that milk quality can greatly affect its cheese yield. When making mozzarella cheese, he uses 100 pounds of

Holstein milk to produce 10 pounds of cheese. When he uses a blend of Holstein and Jersey milk, it yields 10.4 pounds of cheese per 100 pounds of milk. When he uses only Jersey milk, the yield increases to 11 pounds of cheese per hundred pounds of milk. He also notices that the cheese is more yellow and softer when all Jersey milk is used. Stated DeStafeno, "A lot depends on milk quality. When the Jersey milk is good, it makes really good cheese."

Bruce DeStafeno definitely knows what it takes to make good cheese. He is the third generation of cheesemakers in his family. His grandfather started making cheese in Italy before immigrating to the States in the early 1900's. His Jefferson Cheese operation is part of the family's Vermont based parent company, Dari Desserts Inc. It is a family owned and operated business which also has a cheese plant in Vermont called Richmond Cheese Company.

The cheese business is good and DeStafeno feels the boundaries are unlimited. He has purchased a new facility in Hancock, Maryland and plans to move his operation there. The new facility has 70,000 square feet of floor space. His existing operation in Hagerstown could fit in the same space as just one of his coolers at his new site.

In addition to expanding his operation, DeStafeno will also begin a new enterprise at the new plant. He has entered into a joint venture with a German company to dry down the whey from his cheese production and to ship it overseas. They anticipate the bulk of the



Bruce DeStafeno (right) owner of the Jefferson Cheese Company welcomes members of the Cumberland Valley Jersey Breeders who toured his operation during their recent field day. Peter DeBaugh (left), Field Representative for Dairymen Inc. markets milk from many members of the Cumberland Valley Jersey Breeders Association on a protein premium to Jefferson Cheese.

dried whey to head for Japan.

Following their tour of the Jefferson Cheese Company, the group headed back to the Lester Martin Family farm, Pleasant Val-

ley Jerseys, for a roast pork picnic. They were also treated to a tour of the Martins new 20-stall horizontal parlor. The Martins will host a grand opening of their new facility on July 20th.

Penn's Agri-Women To Host 1988 American Convention

PHILADELPHIA — Plans for the 1988 American Agri-Women (AAW) Convention, to be held in Philadelphia Nov. 16-20, are well underway, according to Gail McPherson, convention chairman.

The convention, which will be hosted by the Penn's Agri-Women (PAW), will focus on national and international agriculture issues. Philadelphia's own "Ben Franklin" will be the keynote speaker.

The program is centered on the theme "The Challenge of Change." Issues to be discussed range from farm futures and risk management to animal rights. Also, AAW issue and commodity committees will meet to develop resolutions for the organization's policy statements.

With the program agenda in place, PAW is now concentrating on its fund-raising efforts, McPherson said.

"We hope to raise nearly \$50,000 for the convention," she said. "While half of that amount will be in registration fees, we are relying on the support of agriculture organizations for the remainder."

To date, PAW has raised more

than \$14,000 in pledges. The monies will be used to sponsor program speakers and special events. Donations in kind, such as promotional items, are also appreciated, McPherson said.

Sponsor organizations, thus far, include: Agri-Data Resources Inc.; Agri-Pulse; Atlantic Breeders Cooperative; Brandt Farm Real Estate; the Chicago Board of Trade; Corodus Fertilizer; DuPont; Farm Credit Banks of Baltimore; F.M. Brown's & Sons Inc.; Farm Journal; Farmshine; Ford - New Holland; Hatfield Quality Meats Inc.; ICI Americas; Keystone Fruit Sales; Pennsylvania Poultry Federation; and Richard A. Shaw Inc.

Individuals of organizations interested in offering their financial support for the 1988 American Agri-Women Convention are asked to contact Gail McPherson, Box 127, New Park, Pa. 17352, (717) 382-4847.

The American Agri-Women is a national organization representing 35 state and commodity affiliate chapters. Its goal is to promote agriculture among urban consumers, politicians, media and church leadership.

Farmers Assn. Hails Farmland Preservation Bill

CAMP HILL (Dauphin) — The Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA) today hailed House passage of H.B. 442 as a major step forward for farmland preservation in Pennsylvania.

The legislation, which now requires Senate consideration, establishes operating procedures for a \$100 million bond issue. Pennsylvania voters approved a bond issue in a referendum last year to help county governments fund the purchase of development rights to farmland in agricultural districts.

PFA president Keith Eckel said, "The program will help take the heat off prime farmland in areas

under pressure for development. Farm families who chose to participate will be able to receive compensation for their development rights in exchange for a guarantee that the land will remain in farming. Everyone — both farmers and consumers — will benefit. PFA has been a prime supporter of this farmland preservation initiative since its inception. We are calling on the Senate to take prompt action on the bill so Pennsylvania can begin to preserve its valuable farmland."

PFA is a voluntary, general farm organization representing over 23,300 farm families in 54 county associations.



Once the milk at Jefferson Cheese Company has been pasteurized and standardized, it is poured into these 20,000 gallon mixing vats where cultures are added that will give the cheese its particular flavor and consistency.



Once the cheese has been through extruders it is placed into molds to be chilled in cold water. Here the mozzarella cheese has been formed and placed into molding trays. Bruce DeStafeno places the cheese into cold water where it will be cooled for three to four hours and then will be transferred to salt brine for an overnight soak.