



THE PIEDMONT DAIRY GOAT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

The Dairy Goat Gazette

March/April 2011

News of Dairies, Farms, Breeding, Showing, Owners & All Friends of *Capra Aegagrus Hircus*

Meetings: March
at Karen Jordan's
April at Round Mtn. Dairy



"Small is Beautiful" – Dark Cove Pottery & Farm

EDITORS NOTE: This, the ninth dairy in the series on western North Carolina and upper South Carolina Grade A and B dairies, Dark Cove, was actually the first licensed Grade B dairy in WNC. This article was submitted by Jackie Palmer, seen here with her husband David Smith.

While attending college in the early 1970's, the book *Small is Beautiful* by EF Schumacher was required reading for the newly offered liberal studies class on Ethics and the Environment. Normally I chafed against requirements of any kind, as it was a time to dodge the draft, break dress codes, experiment with drugs, ignore religious restrictions, protest politics in

general and make rock n' roll music... really loud. But Schumacher simply, carefully and respectfully described his philosophy of "economics as if people mattered." He explained a deeply compassionate approach to business transactions and challenged our notion of land as a mere commodity. Really? Any exchange of resources, even



Dark Cove cheese house with coolers full of product ready for market.

Small is Beautiful: Dark Cove Pottery & Farm



commercial, should be a venerable act and not a hostile takeover. Especially for the time, this book was truly radical and it caught my attention.

Actually, I loved that class just as much as Creative Writing, Astronomy, Yoga and Evolution of Non-vascular Plants. I just loved it all. I was learning so much. And Schumacher's ideas kept finding their way into my mind and strongly influenced the way I learned and how I began to live my life. Somehow I ended up married to David Smith (we're working on 32 years now). I earned my PhD in Biology from Harvard University and took a job teaching at Western Carolina University. As I tried to sort out the details of spider silk production in my research lab, it occurred to me again and again that the exchange of resources (in this case knowledge), whether in the classroom or the lab, deserves courtesy and reverence. For me, Nature no longer felt like a mere commodity and scientific research couldn't and shouldn't mimic a hostile takeover. In a rare moment of clarity, I resigned my hard won position in traditional academics and set out to "be the change I wished to see in the world."

In a short time, I created a small business modeled after Schumacher's ideas. That is, I started a business that suited just me, as if I mattered, and my life was more than a mere commodity. I bought 4 alpine goats and

began dairying, opened a production pottery studio, designed personal perennial flower gardens for wealthy women in a nearby resort community and signed on as an independent consultant with a spider silk research group at Clemson University. In a marketing



Jackie & a small friend work on silk production.

class, I took the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator and the Edwards Personal Preference Test. The results reminded me that I am mostly reclusive, sensitive to beauty and love music and art. I am physically active, mathematically inclined, drawn to living things and good at nurturing them. I am creative and intellectually curious, and fond of change and diversity. Some things I don't much like are crowds, fluorescent lighting, financial debt and dull conversation. These assessments of my temperament helped me tailor a business (a life, really) that works

for me. As an example of how this approach toward a business plan can work, I'll focus here on my goat dairy operation, but keep in mind my pottery, gardening and consulting enterprises work similarly.

Probably the single most important business choice I have made is the small size of my dairy. Just how small are we talking about? What is a reasonable size for my farmstead goat cheese enterprise? Schumacher's book emphasizes operating within "human proportion and scale" and since I prefer to work alone (except for the invaluable contributions from my husband, David, during his "off time"), well, for the last 10 years or so this is how it has worked:



1) Each spring, I freshen 10-14 Alpine does. I keep 10 or 12 and milk twice a day from March until Thanksgiving.

2) With a 15 gallon pasteurizer/vat, we produce consistently about 4000 pounds of chevre each year.

3) I wholesale all my goat cheese so I can avoid crowds at tailgate markets and spend more time at home with my animals.

4) Because we live in a remote setting, all my cheese is frozen in 1 pound tubs and I deliver on Thursdays to restaurants and retail outlets with a 20 pound minimum order and within a 1 hour driving radius. Orders are taken by phone message and email.

5) To keep it simple, I make only 2 varieties, a plain and a garlic/chive.

Dark Cove Farm continued

6) My goats form a closed herd and our farm is not open to the public. We have tested negative for CAE, brucellosis, Johnes and TB for over 10 years.

7) I have high producing goats and participate in Linear Appraisal here on site. Many animals I sell for show and as family milkers. All others are processed and sold for meat locally.

Farm work keeps me physically strong as well as outside in the sunshine (and the rain). So far I have been blessed with good health and can do most of my own animal maintenance and veterinary work. Being handy with tools, I enjoy construction and repair projects. Usually I can rotate making pots and gardening by the season to keep stimulated creatively and much of my consulting work I can do from home. I don't have a lot of free time but I do have hobbies. Once a week I take Suzuki flute lessons, I am a committed yoga practitioner and my

horse Maizie and I are studying Vaquero style natural horsemanship. Around the farm you'll find 10-20 beehives painted bright colors, 15-20 chickens running about, 50 or so rainbow trout jumping in the pond, a small



vegetable garden with Belinda the scare crow, and four Great Pyrenees dogs keeping the wild things at bay. And for now, small is beautiful and it suits me well.



Dark Cove Goat Cheese is available at these fine locations in western North Carolina.

Cashiers

Cashiers Farmers Market
The Orchard

Highlands

Mountain Fresh Grocery
Rosewood Market
On The Verandah
Highlands Country Club

Bryson City

Cottage Craftsman



Cullowhee

Tuckesegee Trading Company

Sylva

Bryson Farm Supply
Guadaloupe Café
Lulu's on Main
Papous Wineshop
Signature Brew Coffee Co.

Waynesville

Chef's Table
Classic Wine Cellar
Sunburst Market