

EDITOR'S LETTER

Back to the land

WHAT BETTER TOPIC for our Thanksgiving issue than...cheese? When it comes to sharing, the holiday conjures a big golden turkey, plentiful side dishes, and pies galore—and our pages are packed with delicious takes on these Thanksgiving classics. Yet for me, our story about Vermont's artisanal cheese makers ("Made in Vermont," page 160) is the perfect expression of sharing something made from the heart. This new breed of farmers is dedicated to preserving the land—nourishing it, working it, and eating well from it. As Janine Putnam of Thistle Hill Farm, in North Pomfret, puts it, "The only thing that goes off the farm is cheese. Everything else goes back into the soil."

When Lucinda Scala Quinn, *Living's* food director, and I first discussed the idea of this story, we planned on highlighting farmstead cheeses across America. But Lucinda's research uncovered a fast-growing trend of cheese-making in Vermont: young families buying abandoned dairies and older couples choosing farming as a second career. And they're turning all that fresh milk into superior gourmet cheeses.

Creating a story like this is exhilarating and exhausting—up before dawn, driving long distances to unfamiliar places, working continually to get the essence of the story, and shooting until it is too dark to capture another image. Lucinda was especially impressed by the farmers' work ethic, from milking the herd twice a day and constantly caring for the animals to the physical labor of making the cheese. "Curiosity drives us," Lucinda says, "but it's the people who have opened their lives to us who motivate us to tell their stories well."

Now, when I go to my favorite cheese store, Murray's, in New York City—where I have been buying Jasper Hill Farm's Constant Bliss, Bayley Hazen Blue, and Cabot Clothbound Cheddar—I have a better understanding of what it takes to make delicious cheese. I know where it was made and who made it. And that makes all the difference.

We decided that this project was too big for just the magazine, so we raised the bar: Could Lucinda and photographer and foodie Christopher Baker also create a documentary-style video for television and the Web? To meet this challenge, Christopher went high tech. He used the revolutionary Red One camera, which fashion photographers have been experimenting with because it enables them to shoot video and still pictures simultaneously. The result is an ultra-high-definition video with true color and exceptional quality. Christopher then chose the frames he wanted for the pictures in "Made in Vermont." The video will air on *The Martha Stewart Show* on November 5 (and then can be seen at marthastewart.com/dairy-farms).

Personally, I am thankful for the artisans at *Living* and the artisans they discover and introduce us to all year. Happy Thanksgiving!

Gael Toweey
Acting Editor in Chief



LABOR OF LOVE Clockwise from left: Lucinda Scala Quinn holds cheeses from Consider Bardwell Farm for "Made in Vermont." Photographer Christopher Baker shoots with a Red One camera at Thistle Hill Farm. A cow watches over her newborn calf at Thistle Hill Farm. Lucinda with owner Janine Putnam, who named the calf Lucinda.

COURTESY OF LUCINDA SCALA QUINN

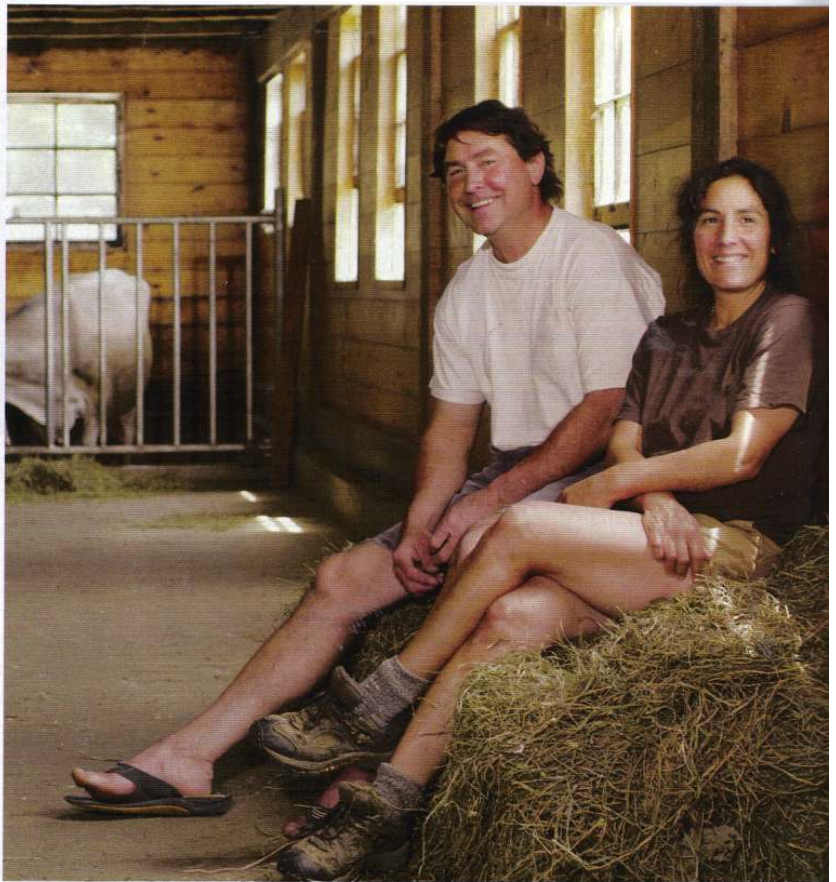


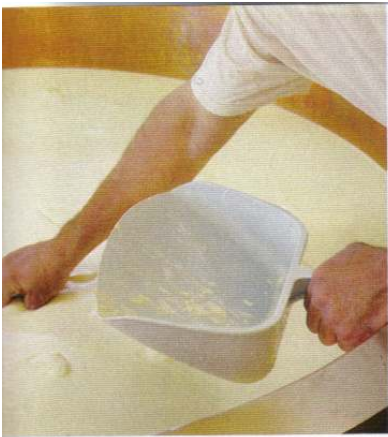
THISTLE HILL FARM

"We do it the European way: one place, one cheese. That way your cheese tastes like your farm."—John Putnam

THE FARMERS John and Janine Putnam, right, of North Pomfret, in their dairy barn
THE CHEESE Tarentaise, an aged semihard cheese inspired by Beaufort and Abondance, from the French Alps, and made from the organic milk of the farm's Jersey cows (such as Georgia, above).

LEARN MORE thistlehillfarm.com





ODE TO THE ALPS
 TOP ROW, FROM LEFT: Tarentaise cheese is made every other day at Thistle Hill Farm; here, John Putnam uses a scoop to check the consistency of the curd, which forms when rennet is added to heated milk. A tool called a harp is strung with piano wire, which cuts the curd into corn-kernel-size chunks; they continue to cook in the Swiss-made copper-lined vat. A large hoop, outfitted with a swathe of cheesecloth, fits the contours of the vat and will be used to scoop out the curd. LEFT: Using the net, John scoops the curd from the whey and ties the cheesecloth into one hefty package for efficient removal.

READY, SET, EAT

NEAR RIGHT: Because the parcel of curd weighs significantly more than John does, it gets hooked on a boat traveler and transferred to a large mold, which presses the cheese and expels whey. FAR RIGHT: Janine removes the cheesecloth from the sufficiently pressed cheese and then scrapes away small curds on the surface. BELOW: John quarters each giant wheel, readying the pieces for their final molds. BELOW RIGHT: The end result: Tarentaise in all its glory, after six to 12 months of aging. OPPOSITE: The picturesque farm, with the barn on the left and the cheese house on the right.

