

Suffolk Farmhouse

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I think pride of place in this "Guernsey Champions" category should go to Jason and Katharine Salisbury, [Suffolk Farmhouse](http://www.suffolkcheese.co.uk/index.html), from Suffolk. Jason contacted me about 5 years ago to ask if I knew of any Guernseys for sale as he and Katharine were putting together a business plan based on using Guernsey milk to make soft cheeses. Jason had been milking and managing a herd of 90 Holsteins on a farm at Coddendam in Suffolk but had just been made redundant by the farm's owner who could see no "commercial" future for a herd of that size and was not prepared to invest the capital to replace the outdated equipment necessary to allow more cows to be milked on the farm. Jason and Katharine had calculated that if all of the milk could be turned into cheese and to be retailed direct to the consumer, then 30 Guernseys would create similar income as the previous 90 Holsteins had produced from the wholesale milk market. It is of course very much easier to produce a business plan than it is actually to achieve it in reality, but to their credit and, with the support of their former employer who agreed to grant them a tenancy of the farm buildings, plus a limited amount of land to support the herd of Guernseys, they started to convert the buildings to provide a room to process the cheese, along with installing temperature-controlled storage, to allow the cheese to mature before sale. The Guernseys were purchased from the Witchball herd of Bruce and Helen Whitehead in Kent and arrived on the farm in Suffolk in October with the first cheeses planned for the Christmas markets of that year, but the inevitable red tape meant that the deadline was missed as the licence to retail the cheese was not agreed in time. For a lot of people that would have signalled the end of the project but undeterred, Jason and Katharine decided to use the Suffolk Show in May of the following year as a launch pad for their products, and took some of the cows along as well as sampling the cheeses. The business has now outgrown the original farm and the herd has moved to bigger premises; the cheeses now embrace 3 different award-winning varieties, but it is their ability to take opportunities that impresses me. Suffolk Farmhouse Cheese was one of the producer retailers linked to the Channel 5 website after the first report in September and Jason said to me at the time that they were disappointed to have to turn away customers who were just too far away to be able to have a regular supply. They have now made the necessary plans to deliver by mail order to the doorstep and have successfully delivered Guernsey milk to customers in Scotland, who are hoping that the Guernsey milk will have the same benefits for their children as reported by parents who have changed to Guernsey milk, as a result of the Channel 5 reports.