

A nice article in the St Catherines Standard, Canada, which includes some descriptions on how they make their cheeses. **It's all in the cows**

Jordan Station business riding wave of success with winning cheese

Posted By DON FRASER, STANDARD STAFF

Bite into a morsel of Niagara Gold cheese and the taste buds quiver.

A rush of earthy heaven is followed by a creamy, nutty finish.

These are qualities that put the star creation of the Upper Canada Cheese Company on top last November.

At the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, Niagara Gold was named best in class for interior-ripened, Canadian variety cheese.

"We were really, really pleased about that," said Vivian Szebeny, general manager of the Upper Canada Cheese Company, located at 4159 Jordan Rd. in Jordan Station.

"Niagara Gold gets such enormously wonderful reviews from everybody who has tasted it," Szebeny said.

The business was started in 2004 by Niagara construction contractor Wayne Philbrick, the Upper Canada president and one of five owners.

"Wayne loves good food, wine and cheese," she said. "And he started experimenting at home and one thing led to another.

"All of a sudden, this place sprung up." The creamery produces two other artisanal cheeses, aside from Niagara Gold which is a semi-soft, washed rind, Okastyle cheese. The two others are Camembert-type Comfort Cream and Guernsey Gold Ricotta.

Its cheeses originate from a herd of Guernsey cows at the Comfort family farm in St. Anns, one of only a few such herds registered in Ontario.

The prized bovines produce milk that's uniquely flavourful and high in butter fat.

"Every morning we get the first delivery of the Guernsey milk from those huge trucks," said Szebeny. "This milk is what gives our cheeses their rich, yellow appearance and that buttery finish."

To make Niagara Gold, the milk is pasteurized and put in a vat. Cultures and rennet (curdled milk found in the stomach of an unweaned calf) are added to the stirred milk, and the gel-like result is cut into curds.

The curds are drained of whey and put into stacked moulds that are rotated to apply equal pressure on each cheese round.

After a day in a brine solution, the rounds are ripened for five months, during which time they are hand-washed twice a week.

Upper Canada-made cheeses can be bought on site for \$12 to \$48 a kilogram. They are also distributed to fine restaurants in Niagara, the Greater Toronto Area and as far away Kingston.

Its retail store focuses on Niagaramade foods like jams, crackers and lifestyle items such as cookbooks.

Retail manager Joanne Kool-Schutten said she has worked hard to add 31 Niagara producers to the shop's mix of items for sale.

"We have everything from antique sideboards to Niagara-published authors," said Kool-Schutten.

"There's a diverse amount of regional product from smoked trout to Lake Land Game Meats and Niagara Presents.

"You'd be hard-pressed to say any product in here does not pair with our cheeses," she added.

Next month, Upper Canada will launch an in-house cooking seminar series with Niagara chefs and area wineries.

Ryan Shapiro, the chef-owner of About Thyme Bistro in Vineland, is an Upper Canada cheese convert.

"I really like it," Shapiro said. "I carry it because of its quality and ... I try to do as much local shopping as possible.

"It's very special to me to have their cheese and to help promote the area," he said. "It's great to have a venue like this."