Dairy Processing on a Biodynamic Mixed Farm

Tali Eichner
Old Plaw Hatch Farm
A Community Farm
The Dairy Herd
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- 35 milking cows + followers
- Meuse-Rhine-Issel X
- Closed herd
- 3-block calving
- Pasture-fed
- All feed grown on-farm
- Avg. 3,700L/cow/year
Milking Parlour

- Twice daily milking
- Abreast parlour with 6 stalls & 4 clusters
- Milk is pumped directly into vats or into a bulk tank
From Parlour to Dairy

- 100% of milk produced is processed on the farm (and vice versa)
- Dairy is located between yard and the farm shop
- Over 80% direct sales
- Zero dairy waste
Dairy Products

- Drinking Milk 37%
- Cheese 24%
- Yoghurts 23%
- Cream 10%
- Kefir 5%
Raw Drinking Milk
Raw Kefir

- 100L Cheese Vat with double jacket & heaters
- Simple to make, but can and does go wrong
- Market price is high
- Commitment to customers
- Warning: Making raw milk kefir may cause long debates with EHPs!
Raw Cream

- Separated during milking
- Microbiologically sensitive
- Profitability highly dependent on cost of producing milk, breed of cow and sale/use of skimmed milk
Yoghurts

- Milk is heated, cooled & cultured in 300L batch pasteuriser
- Potted before incubating in customised chiller
- Pasteurised, acidic
- Longer shelf life
- Our only wholesale product
Adding Flavours to Yoghurts
Cheeses

**Halloumi**
- Fast turnover
- Smaller batches
- Unusual product
- Labour intensive

**Cheddar**
- Slow turnover
- Large batches
- Staple product
- Labour extensive
Challenges/Considerations

- Market
- Scale (equipment, profitability, space...)
- Specialisation vs. diversity
- Energy & water Use
- Regulatory (FSA, EHO, Organic/Demeter, Trading Standards)
- Training, Experimentation, Avoiding burnout
- Food Safety
- Balancing supply & demand
Milk yield throughout the year
Milk yield throughout the year

- Milk yield varies from 180 to 600L/day, i.e. peak yield is triple the lowest
- Seasonal changes in demand sometimes run opposite to changes in yield
- Balance by:
  - Wholesaling milk
  - Aged cheeses
  - Seasonal products
- Educating customers
Food Safety

- Cleaning
- Documentation
- Testing
- Attitude
- Knowledge
Keep in Touch!

Feel free to contact me:

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