

# The CHEESE MOVERS

Across the River Towns, cheese makers create artisanal varieties with personality.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOBOLINK DAIRY & BAKEHOUSE

*Cheddar ground reserve from Bobolink, where Jonathan and Nina White make cheeses using methods that are centuries old.*

By LYNNE S. GOLDMAN

The first time I tasted cheese from Bobolink Dairy & Bakehouse, in Holland Township, New Jersey, I was stunned. I had never tasted cheese like this that wasn't from Europe. I know that sounds snobbish, but I love cheese, and I've tasted all kinds. This cheese, however, was something else—earthy, creamy, complex, with a bit of tang. It wasn't a copy of some European cheese, like an American-made brie or such. It was its own cheese, with its own personality.

Many Americans, even those who know their cheeses, are aware only of the standard cheeses—Cheddar, brie, feta, mozzarella, Parmesan, blue cheese, etc. Most anyone can make a Cheddar or mozzarella, but it takes skill and practice to make a cheese with a flavor profile all its own.

Like wine, cheese comes from its place—its terrain, its grass, its climate and the animals that live in all that, what winemakers refer to as terroir. Perhaps most of all, a cheese comes from its history.

This is the challenge American artisanal cheese makers

have had to overcome in marketing their cheese. How can you—and why should you—make a copy of a cheese that's been made for centuries in France or Italy or England? Why not make something unique to this land? Fortunately, here in the River Towns, we have some exceptional cheesemakers crafting their products from locally grazed cows.

On the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River is Ely Farm Products in Newtown. This family-run business is known for its pork products, but Ely also makes award-winning cheeses. Dwight Ely once told me that he started making cheese so that each of his three children would have a piece of the business to call their own. I don't care what the reason was; I'm just glad they are making cheese. One of my favorites is Washington Crossing, which is creamy and sweet, with a consistency and taste comparable to Parmigiano. Ely also makes a mild, Colby-style cheese and a hickory-smoked cheese.

In West Amwell, New Jersey, Fulper Family Farmstead, a fifth-generation family farm run by Robert II and Fred



PHOTO COURTESY OF FULPER FAMILY FARMSTEAD



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELY FARM PRODUCTS

From Fulper Family Farmstead, mozzarella made with crushed red pepper and parsley (left) and (right) smoked Ely Farm cheese.

Fulper, produces fresh cheeses such as feta, mozzarella, ricotta, mozzarella string cheese, and buffalo milk brie, as well as yogurt and other dairy products.

Cherry Grove Farm sits on 480 acres of woodland, wetland, and pasture in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, a few miles southwest of Princeton. Cherry Grove Farm is a diversified, sustainable farm that also sells exceptional raw milk cheeses made from the farm's grass-fed cows. Each cheese captures the distinct flavors, aromas, and seasonal variations of the farm's unique terroir. The cheeses are based on classic European recipes, but are American originals. A good example—and customer favorite—is Havilah, made from raw milk produced only when the cows pasture on fresh green grass, giving the cheese its rich, golden color. The cheese is aged eighteen to twenty-four months.

At Bobolink, Jonathan and Nina White make cheeses from the raw milk of their 100 percent grass-fed cows using methods that were in common practice more than 200 years ago. Their cows roam their pastures year-round, eating native grasses as the seasons change, like onion grass in the spring, and hay from Stockton during the winter. The cheeses

are made daily, on premise, April through November. By mid-winter, customer favorites such as Drumm, Baudolino, and Amram have reached their full flavor potential. (These cheeses are available year-round.)

All of Bobolink's cheeses are made from raw milk that is not homogenized or pasteurized. The latter is particularly important since pasteurization entails boiling the milk, which kills all bacteria, including the good kind that makes flavorful, intense cheese, unique to its place and the time of the year. Because the cheese is made from raw milk, by federal law it must age for at least sixty days. Most of Bobolink's cheeses age longer, up to twenty-four months, in the cheese cave, a refrigerator kept at fifty-five degrees or colder.

Several of these River Towns farms encourage visitors—to see how the animals are raised and the cheeses are crafted. Check their websites for information on ordering, tours, and classes. Add in a stop at a local winery or brewery, and you've got a nice day trip. 🌊

*Lynne S. Goldman is the creator of Bucks County Taste and a regular contributor to River Towns.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERRY GROVE FARM

*Buttercup Brie from Cherry Grove Farm.*