

GET AWAY EASY Okanagan Life

march 2009

food of choice

THERE'S AN ART TO MAKING GOURMET GOAT CHEESE



Leah, serving samples of goat cheese to a group of visitors from England and Australia.

If you are looking for a delightful culinary experience and have not yet visited charming Carmelis Goat Cheese Artisan, located on Timberline Road, I recommend you put it on your list of discoveries. Just follow the signs along the Wine Route that includes Summerhill Pyramid Winery, Cedar Creek Estate Winery, and St. Hubertus Winery and take in some of the most breathtaking vistas in the Okanagan along the way.

The dairy farm is owned by Ofer and Ofri Barmor. Wanting a safer life for themselves and their two daughters, the Barmors recently moved to Canada from Israel. They fell in love with the Okanagan on a ski holiday, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Ofer and Ofri are no strangers to farming; in Israel they had a herd of 1,000 sheep, which they raised for meat consumption. Eventually switching to 600 goats, they began making their own cheese from the goat's milk. It was therefore only natural that they decided to use their knowledge and experience to start up the first artisan cheese-making operation in Kelowna. After all, wine and cheese – what could be more complimentary?

The Barmors now have a herd of 120 goats and two billies comprised of three different breeds: French Alpine, La Mancha and Toggenburg, chosen because they give milk that "has no bad smell or taste," explains Ofri.

The name Carmelis comes from combining the names of their daughters Carmel and Liior. Ofer's father Benny, a renowned artist in Israel, created the colourful mural painted on the side of the barn,



Ofri Barmor with day old "Sophie," the orphaned baby goat.



Feeding time and a little AS R in the barn.

as well as the charming country scene in their logo Carmelis Goat Cheese Artisan.

On the day I visited, there was much excitement in the barn – a baby goat abandoned by its mother was adopted by another goat. This said Ofri "was the first time such a thing had occurred."

The goats are fed a diet of alfalfa, whole grains and oats, free of any hormones or additives, which produces milk with a good butterfat; the end results are gourmet cheeses.

Sitting in the Barmors' beautiful log home, enjoying their wonderful hospitality and a selection of heavenly goat cheeses, I am reminded that this is a family of indomitable courage. It was in August of 2003 that the Okanagan Mountain Park forest fire raged through their Timberline Road property, destroying their dairy, just as they were completing construction, and only four days after they had taken delivery of their herd of goats! When Ofer made an appeal for help to evacuate the goats on the local radio station, six trailers arrived on the scene. The goats were given refuge at Sumac Valley Alpaca in Southeast Kelowna. Within days they also lost their barns, the cheese and aging cellar, the milking parlour and the visitors' centre. Even the log house was damaged; thankfully, they did not lose it. Ofri says "she is very proud to be part of such a caring community."

They have since rebuilt, and although it was a traumatic experience for their entire family, they have not lost their spirit; one of

Ofri's favourite sayings is "what doesn't kill you – makes you stronger!"

The Barmors remain passionate about cheese making, and take great pride in the unique quality of their cheeses. While Ofri takes care of the extensive business end of the operation, Ofer is the master craftsman when it comes to making goat cheese – a true artisan. Every cheese as he explains with a twinkle "has its own unique characteristic,"

by adding just the right amount of his own "secret blend" of bacteria to the goat milk, and letting the cheese age, much like a fine wine in temperature controlled aging cellars.

Throughout the Okanagan people are talking about the importance of cuisine tourism to our economy. Judging by the many people enjoying the selection of goat cheese in the Carmelis tasting room, the word is out – the Barmors have found their niche – lucky us! ■

PLEASING CHEESING

In addition to Carmelis Goat Cheese Artisan in Kelowna, there are three other gourmet cheese makers in the Okanagan-Shuswap.



The Village Cheese Co.
in Armstrong: Handmade cheese made the old-fashioned way.

The Village Cheese Co. offers a wide variety of handmade gourmet cheeses including all cheddars from mild to aged to marble and smoked. Trademarked cheddars include Pacific Salmon and Canadian Maple. Other cheeses are flavoured with garlic, caraway, hotred-pepper and red hot pepper. Liqueur cheeses are beer, Gewurztraminer, Cointreau and Merlot flavoured. Havarti, Parmesan, Swiss and German Butzer are also made. Westside is a unique Monterey Jack with onion and chive.

You can purchase these cheeses in gourmet blocks in a variety of sizes or as cheese ends. Curds are also available.

A visit to The Village Cheese Co. is definitely worthwhile. Besides getting a tour and a chance to watch Mattie making cheese the old-fashioned way, you're able to sample the cheeses before you buy or have a snack or lunch in the deli. It's also worth it to visit their wonderful website from which you can order cheese and take a virtual tour of the facility. www.villagecheese.com or call toll free 1.888.633.8899.

Gort's Gouda Cheese
in Salmon Arm: Artisan cheese crafted in the Dutch tradition.

Cheese has been made on the farm for 20 years at Gort's Gouda Cheese in Salmon Arm, following the Dutch tradition. At Gort's, all sorts of Goudas are made including mild, medium, aged and light, smoked and 13 flavours of



A gastronomic display of Artisan cheeses.

OFRI'S RECIPE: Fried Carmelis "Blue Velvet" Salad

Although there are over 20 different cheeses to choose from – Ofri has a passion for the blues.

Ingredients for syrup:

- 500 ml red wine
- 3 tablespoons of raspberry confiture
- 3 tablespoons of good quality aged balsamic vinegar
- Raspberries, strawberries, blueberries or cranberries can also be used to flavour the syrup.

Preparation for the syrup:

Heat all of the ingredients on medium high heat, until syrup reduces to a third. Let cool.

Cheese ingredients:

- 2 Carmelis "Blue Velvet" 100 gram rounds (or 2 other similar Camembert type and size of goat cheese)

- 200 grams of good quality bread crumbs
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- good olive oil, for frying

Preparation:

Dip the cheeses in beaten egg mixture and coat with breadcrumbs. Warm olive oil in a frying pan on medium heat, fry the cheese to a golden-brown, remove from pan. Blot cheese with paper towel to absorb the oil. Serve the cheese warm from the pan on baby greens; pour the syrup over the cheese, garnish with orange zest.

This delicious cheese course serves six.

Look for upcoming classes in cheese and wine pairing. Contact Carmelis Goat Cheese Artisan at 250.764.3117 or visit: www.carmelisoatcheese.com