

## Jordandal Farms



Jordandal Farms' cheese making venture was initiated 18 months ago to supplement an established, successful line of pasture-raised meats. The farm owned by Eric and Carrie Johnson, Argyle, Wis., markets four varieties of raw milk cheeses from its herd of Jersey cows: blue, Cheddar, Tomme and washed rind.

In addition to a herd of 15 Jersey cows, the Johnsons raise Red Angus beef cattle, Icelandic sheep, crossbred (York/Duroc) hogs, broiler hens and turkeys on the farm in the southwest part of the state. Jordandal Farms has built a niche market for meat from livestock that are fed a strictly grass-based diet, including pasture-raised Jersey veal. The Johnsons recently formed a partnership with neighboring farmer, Matthew Walter of Darlington, to manage the livestock, share resources and increase farm size.

Jordandal Farms products are sold in a variety of specialty shops in Chicago and Madison and a number of farmer's markets, including the well-known Dane County Farmer's Market and the West Side Community Market. They are also used heavily used at restaurants in the Chicago and Madison areas.

The farm's cheese is produced at Fayette Creamery, located about 15 miles from the farm. Joe Burns is the cheese maker. He also handles most of the cheese marketing. The farm became an All-Jersey producer-distributor in 2009 and is also enrolled on REAP.

"The main reason we became an All-Jersey producer-distributor was to differentiate our product from the rest," said Carrie. "When consumers see the Jersey on the Queen of Quality label, they know our cheese is special. The label shouts, 'this product is superior because it is made with 100% Jersey milk.'"

“In this market, your product also has to have a story to be successful,” Carrie continued.

“All-Jersey tells a great story: the Jersey cow is great for you and great for the environment.”

For Jordandal Farms, the Jersey is an easy fit because she produces quality milk for quality cheese, is better suited for the farm’s limited resources and matches its grazing philosophy.

“At one point, we thought about crossbreeding—which seems to be all the rage in grazing circles now—but quickly dismissed the notion,” noted Carrie. “After all, purebred Jerseys are perfect grazers already. Why mess with perfection?”

The Johnsons plan to expand the Jersey herd in the coming years in order to increase cheese production. They look forward to entering their first Jersey cheese competition this summer.

