

Ohio woman gets license to sell goat cheese

By CELESTE BAUMGARTNER
Ohio Correspondent

OXFORD, Ohio — Debra Bowles has been making goat cheese for 30 years — every day in the summer, every other day in winter. She considers it as much a part of her routine as brushing her teeth.

"I just love making cheese," she said. Opening the finished cheese block is "the gift of the day," Bowles said.

Another gift is that, after 30 years, Bowles received a license from ODA to sell her cheese. She first tried to get a license shortly after she began making cheese.

"The first time they just laughed at me," she said. "They literally chuckled on the phone."

"At that time everyone laughed at you if you had goats. People still had the mistaken idea that goats were smelly and dirty."

Bowles contacted ODA about a year ago to try again for a license. This time they "were very welcoming," she said.

The licensing process was complicated. Eric Schaeffer, ODA dairy sanitarian,

visited Bowles last May, the first of many visits. They spent three hours looking at the barn, the kitchen, the equipment she used. To be licensed, Bowles would have to build a cheese room.

"We went in depth into what I needed," Bowles said. "I started working with architects, and thinking about this space. I told them I wanted it to be a show room, a nice little space."

Using an exterior wall of the house, Bowles built an 8-foot-by-10-foot cheese room with a sink, refrigerator, and warming pan.

"It's fortunate I had been making cheese for 30 years," she said. "I knew exactly what I needed. There is no wasted space here."

Bowles has to test the milk but otherwise her routine has not changed. Every morning at 8:30 sharp she milks the goats — she has French Alpines and Saanens.

"I milk my goats once a day," Bowles said. "The more you milk an animal the more milk you'll get. But this is 2007, and I have a life. So the way I deal with that is, milking once a day."

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DEBRA BOWLES MUST test the milk every day. She said unwrapping a cheese block is her "gift of the day."

(Celeste Baumgartner photos)

COVERING THE CHEESE with salt in her grandmother's crock, Debra Bowles continues her cheese-making process. Another block can be seen air-drying.



GOOD PRE-OWNED EQUIPMENT	
<p>USED TRACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MF 165 w/Kelley loader & 4024 hrs. (Tag #3587) \$7,900 • Allis Chalmers C, narrow front w/Woods 60" belly mower (Tag #4024) \$2,950 • 2004 JD 990 w/430 loader, R-4 tires, 358 hours (Tag #4339) \$15,900 • 1978 JD 8630, 6500 hrs., 3 Rem, 3 pt., PTO, drawbar 20.8-38 (Tag #4313) \$27,500 • Kubota B21, TL421 loader w/55" bucket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White 5100 6 row corn planter (Tag #4349) \$1,995 <p>USED DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JD 750 15" drill, no-till, w/monitor, drill fill (Tag #4221) \$17,500 <p>PLATFORMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JD 213 flex platform (Tag #4028) . . . \$4,500 • 1998 JD 925 flex platform, Lankota drive-shafts, bean saver, hyd. FIA, stubble lights (Tag #3744) \$16,500



1998 NH 6635, O/S, 2WD,

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A good quality milker will give 3/4 of a gallon to a gallon and a half a day (that's one reason Bowles got involved in the cheese making process — her goats produced more milk than her family could use).

"I come in the door with my bucket of milk," she said. "I strain it into a pot. It goes on a warming tray. And when it gets to 100 degrees I put rennet in it. It sets until curd forms solid. I cut the curd into chunks, and when those get to the right place that gets poured through a strainer."



DEBRA BOWLES

The whey drains into the bucket and Bowles gathers the curds in cloth which she puts in a form.

Bowles puts a 25-pound weight on the curds.

After an hour she rewraps the curds and then weighs it down with 50 pounds overnight.

"This is pressing out more whey and causing the curd to become a solid block," she said.

"After milking the next morning, I bury the block in a crock which was my grandmother's. It is full of kosher salt. It pulls out moisture and dries the block."

The next morning Bowles takes out the block and lets it air-dry for another day.

"Then it gets waxed with local beeswax and goes into the aging refrigerator and where it will set for two months," she said.

Bowles has already had interest from restaurants which would like to use her cheese but, at this point, she will sell it only at the Oxford Farmers Market Uptown.

"If I have extra I might market other places but this is never going to be a big operation," she said.

"I'm not trying to make a big money operation out of this, I just love doing it."

For information on the Oxford Farmers Market Uptown visit www.localharvest.org/farmers-market



AFTER BEING AROUND goats all of her life, Debra Bowles thought making cheese was a logical thing to do. Now, Bowles is licensed to sell her cheese to the public.

(Celeste Baumgartner photos)