



by Keith Waller

Got “Real” Milk?

Butter Patch Jerseys

Raw Milk Dairy in Saluda, SC

Family dairies, which produce fresh raw milk, have been locked in a “David and Goliath” battle for years with industrial dairy producers of processed “Big Milk” with unnaturally long shelf life. Is it time to let consumers choose the winner?

Straight from the cow, milk is warm, rich and creamy, and as dairy owner Patrice Buck reminds us, “Natural, fresh raw milk always has the cream on top.” For millennia, humans have taken advantage of the nutrition found in fresh milk. In South Carolina, family farmers have long kept a milk cow just for feeding their families, putting the children in charge of caring for the cherished animal and her regular milking. The milk became part of recipes, was made into butter, cheeses, sweet and sour cream, yogurt, baby formula or just drunk in its natural state. Even natural soaps and body creams were made from it. Kept cool, fresh milk lasted for several days—more when refrigeration became available—and cheeses and other products much longer. Twice a day, more fresh milk arrived, the excess and its products sold, its revenue added to the household budget.

Butter Patch Jerseys dairy farm started 25 years ago when Buck’s youngest daughter joined the 4H program to raise a heifer to breeding age and then sell it. The interest spread through the family. “Eventually, all of the girls did it,” says

Patrice, “and we liked Jerseys because they were smaller and easier for them to handle. They got to keep the money, which grew into an interest in dairy farming.” Butter Patch Jerseys Dairy became a real business when they bought a larger property nearby with a milking barn. “It’s an old flat barn, not like the modern dairy pit barns where you can stand up to milk,” says Patrice. “We’re just a small family dairy, and don’t have help, so it’s enough. The girls are all grown, but they come back sometimes and give us some time off.”

Years ago, money and politics began to take over the



cottage dairy industry and small family-owned dairies, inventing industrial dairy farming and the need to maximize profits, protect markets and drive out competition. This new industry introduced growth hormones, pasteurization, restrictive legislation and degradation of the environment. Cows were reduced to nothing more than biological factories. Since pastures were costly and inefficient, industrial farmers instead fed their livestock imported, poor quality grain and feed, bakery waste and rendering proteins or other surplus biomatter. Supplements were needed to buffer the high acidity of these unnatural food sources and to support the failing immune systems in animals living nothing that resembled a normal life. To protect markets, public relations firms churned out misleading information and false news that fresh raw milk was actually dangerous, and in some states, maneuvered legislation to make it illegal to sell raw milk at all. Although raw milk is much safer than eggs, processed meats, undercooked chicken, apple juice—or as the news shows—

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peanuts, some leafy vegetables and virtually any cooked food when mishandled, including pasteurized milk, raw milk remains the primary food-safety target. In true *quid pro quo* fashion, legislators supported corporations and corporations supported legislators in the battle to ban raw milk. Truth and nutrition lost. "Big Milk" was big business and big money.

"Five or six years ago we started bottling milk from our little farm," says Patrice. "Why did we choose Jersey cows? We just like the breed—it's a nice cow to work with, smaller, and gives a nice amount of milk. A lot of people want a family milk cow now, and we sometimes sell a cow, but most stay with us for years and get to be old grannies. They're happy, and it's good." Jersey cows are known to offer extremely rich milk, especially when grass fed and healthy.

Setting up a small family dairy takes determination and care. Patrice elaborates: "We went through the DHEC [Department of Health and Environmental Control] to get a permit. They came out to inspect and we followed all the rules, met the guidelines, designed a label, bottle and cap for them to approve. Now they come every month to sample and laboratory test the milk, and every quarter to inspect the equipment. They check everything for cleanliness and maintenance and we get a report back with the test results. We are tested by the co-op every other day, but the DHEC tests are even more intense. It's a lot of work, but it's important to be careful." Small family dairies produce a product that they themselves drink and give to their own children.

Unlike traditional hand milking into an open bucket, today's milking machines collect milk before it is exposed to the air and pump it into clean tanks. "We milk twice a day, morning and afternoon," says Patrice. "We pasture-raise our cows, but do give them a small bucket of grain to keep them in the stanchion during milking. In a modern pit barn they can't back out, but in our little flat barn they can back out and just leave while we're trying to milk. The bucket of grain keeps them occupied for a bit.

"Dairy cows, pasture-fed like ours, have a higher quality of milk, with more vitamins, minerals and conjugated linoleic acid [CLA]," continues Patrice, "While industrial dairy farms rely heavily on pharmaceuticals to maximize

output and profit, we make sure that our cows are healthy and happy," says Patrice. "We don't try to milk our cows for excessive amounts of milk – not that we don't want milk, we just don't want to push them with grain or shots [pharmaceuticals]. We let them produce what they naturally do. Stressed cows on growth hormones also have breeding problems," adds Patrice. "Life expectancy isn't great for them either; they get sick. We might use antibiotics to save a cow, but never as a routine practice."

With clean milk from healthy, well-managed cows, sanitary equipment and careful handling and packaging, pasteurization should not be needed. In fact, pasteurization can reduce the quality of the milk. "Pasteurization kills all of the good bacteria and enzymes in the milk and destroys vitamins," says Patrice. "Real raw milk can sour, and if it does

there are things you can make from it, like sour cream or buttermilk. Pasteurized milk, dead milk, putrefies, and you can't use it for anything. Pasteurized milk is also harder to digest, and elderly people especially have trouble with it; they can't absorb the nutrition. I honestly feel that it's primarily pasteurized milk that

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Farm fresh raw milk, produced locally on family farms, is available in South Carolina, directly from the farms, farmers' markets and health food stores. In most states, raw milk has been outlawed or restricted from sale to consumers, allowing only pasteurized and homogenized industrial farm milk. You can exercise your right to buy the same raw milk that your parents, grandparents and ancestors enjoyed, and defend your right to choose. Know your legislators, meet your local farmer, and look for the milk with "cream on top."

Butter Patch Jerseys Raw milk Dairy delivers to 14 Carrot Health Food store in Lexington, the Aiken Farmers' Market and in Columbia at the new Saturday Farmers' Market at 701 Whalley St. (formerly at Rosewood and in the Vista). Also available from the Dairy in Saluda at 219 Bethany Schoolhouse Rd. For info, call Patrice Buck at (864) 445-7399. See ad page 13. Also visit RealMilk.com, WestonAPrice.org and FarmToConsumer.org.