

Milk prices and cheese...

Make it British please

It's British Cheese Week, but as we lunge into it dairy farmers at home and across Europe are having a milk crisis. As usual, price is the issue.

Some farmers are so fed up with supermarkets squeezing them for more milk at lower prices that they're throwing in the towel - by dumping a day's worth of milking. Doris Robertson, from Dairy Farmers of Scotland, will spread her daily supply of 2,000 litres over fields and feed her cows with it. Such farmers feel they're basically dumping their milk anyway when they give it away for profits that hardly match the cost of producing it.

Such a scenario nearly put Nick Gosling out of business. When we met Nick and his wife Christine, Berkeley Farm Dairy was about to be put up for sale. Luckily, we were on the hunt for a milk supplier at the time. We now take 80% of the milk from the Gosling's Guernsey herd, and of course, we don't mess around with his prices!

Hear Nick tell his story on our video clip at:
www.abelandcole.co.uk/milkman

The milk price issue is now having a profound effect on other dairy products, namely Britain's most famous: cheddar!



Next time you are in the supermarket, take a closer look at the blocks of the hard yellow cheese, which has been produced in England since at least 1170. A good number of them are imported. Figures from DairyCo, the body that campaigns for the UK's dairy industry, reveal that between January and June we imported 62,003 tonnes of cheddar compared with 48,633 tonnes in the same period last year.

We're throwing our support behind our organic cheddar makers Lye Cross and Green's. Since the summer, we've increased our cheddar range - we now have grated cheddar made from the scraps from cutting the truckles, we have a mini cheese selection for children and we'll be adding many more to our range in the coming months. Watch this space, and try to make sure you always buy British cheddar!

An apple a day...



Bramley Apple Bread

This bread is a cross between a loaf-like cake (think banana bread) and a moist wholewheat loaf, making it delicious with a steamy cuppa or a slice of Cheddar.

150g plain flour
200g wholewheat flour
½ tsp salt
1 tsp baking soda
50g butter
4 tbsp honey
1 egg
2 medium-sized Bramley apples
240ml milk
A handful of walnuts or hazelnuts (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4.

2. Combine plain and wheat flours with the salt and baking soda. Peel and grate the apples; thoroughly fold through the flour.

3. In a separate bowl, blend butter with honey. Whisk in the egg and milk.

4. Pour the wet mixture over the dry and gently fold together, just until blended. Add the chopped nuts, if you like.

5. Place the batter in a large, oiled or buttered loaf tin and bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Remove from pan and allow to breathe for a few minutes before serving. Keeps in the fridge or a cool place for up to 3 days.

Bramley apples make the most voluptuous apple sauce - gorgeous with roast pork, or you can turn it into a healthy breakfast parfait by layering it with raisins, cinnamon, honey and crème fraîche. To puree simply peel, dice and cook the apples in just enough water to cover them for 5-10 minutes, until fully tender. Then, puree with a touch of the cooking liquid until it's as smooth or as chunky as you like it.