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## Cream of the Crop

### Turkey Hill Farm sets hands to making cheese and yogurt



Stuart Osha pours milk into a 40-gallon bulk tank in the micro-dairy at Turkey Hill Farm in Randolph Center.

Photo by Robert M. Eddy

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Many of Vermont's farms were damaged by the floodwater and winds associated with Tropical Storm Irene. Turkey Hill Farm, in Randolph Center, was among the fortunate that were not. Saturday, they'll be sharing the bounty of their farm at an open house to celebrate their new on-farm creamery — and the new dairy products they're making to feed their community.

Sixth-generation Vermont farmers Stuart and Margaret Osha will inaugurate the creamery Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m.

The new production space allows the Oshas to make several varieties of fresh cheeses and creamline yogurt from pasteurized, non-homogenized whole milk.

Visitors to the open house will have the chance to taste the yogurt and cheeses, tour the creamery, learn about small-scale dairy production, and sample other foods that Margaret Osha makes on the farm including artisan pizza from local ingredients, maple cashew granola and chocolate granola bark.

The creamery, or dairy processing facility, has been several months in the making. The Oshas renovated their garage to install the pasteurization, production and packaging equipment, as well as a farm store whimsically named the Moo-tique.

Turkey Hill Farm is producing three varieties of fresh cheese: a fromage blanc-style soft cheese, ricotta and ricotta salata, a salty cheese similar to feta.

"Fromage blanc" literally means "white cheese" but in actuality refers to soft, fresh cheeses that aren't aged. Margaret Osha has concocted four savory blends from their fresh cheese: pesto and walnut; "south of the Vermont border," with tomatoes, cilantro, poblano peppers, garlic, jalapeños and cumin; roasted red pepper; and "Vermont salsa verde," flavored with green onions, jalapeno peppers, cilantro and garlic. For purists, the cheese is also available unadorned.

"They're great as an hors d'oeuvre with crackers, and nice on top of a steak or hamburger," she suggests.

This fall, she'll add a sweet cranberry and maple blend to the offerings.

The Turkey Hill ricotta is a little sweeter than the fresh cheeses, she notes. In addition to the traditional uses of ricotta, like lasagna and cannoli, she suggests drizzling it with just a bit of honey, or mixing in a bit of maple syrup and almond flavoring for a “super dessert.”

Turkey Hill is producing two flavors of creamline yogurt: “simply plain” and “spirit of Vermont maple.” The maple flavor isn’t a super-sweet yogurt, Margaret Osha promises; it’s only very lightly sweetened with their own maple syrup while supplies last, then with syrup from neighboring sugarmakers.

Creamline yogurt, she explains, means cream rises to the top during incubation. The thick cream can be mixed into the yogurt, though she admits to eating it right off the top of the container. “We really like our cream,” she says.

For several years, the Oshas have sugared in the spring, raised pigs and chickens, and milked a small herd — right now, they’ve got five cows. When Vermont’s raw milk law went into effect, they began to sell raw milk to neighbors.

“Raw milk has been a wonderful thing for us,” she says, “but it’s a vulnerable market. You never know when it’ll go, or be slow. It’s nice to have another use for our milk.”

Locally, the yogurt is available at about a dozen stores in central and northern Vermont, including Hunger Mountain Coop in Montpelier. The farm’s fresh cheeses are just beginning to make their way into area stores; find them at the Chef’s Market in Randolph and in other stores soon.

The Oshas are committed to sustainable small-scale agriculture and to cultivating strong connections with their neighbors. “Our real purpose in starting the creamery is our belief that our community needs our own food supply,” Stuart Osha says. “This storm may be a good reminder of that.”

Turkey Hill Farm is six miles off Interstate 89, and the roads are fine, Margaret Osha promises. Directions and details are at [turkeyhillfarmvt.com](http://turkeyhillfarmvt.com).

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