

Painted Goat Farm

PSFC and One of Our Local Suppliers

By Marion Stein

In August of 2010 my husband and I had the pleasure of meeting Ilyssa Berg, the cheese maker at Painted Goat Farm and one of the local suppliers of artisanal cheese for our Coop's well-stocked cheese section. We had a lengthy chat with her

goat cheese. Together, they tend to about 80 goats on approximately 100 acres. They do everything themselves including milking the goats, making and aging the cheese, and marketing the cheese at farmers' markets and retail outlets. Javier is from Cuellaje, Ecuador, a farming region high in the Andes, where his family has been campesinos (small farmers) for generations. Ilyssa says that the "coolest" things about their farm are:

They have done everything themselves. They designed and built the cheese house, aging cave, house and barns, and developed all the infrastructure. Everything they brought onto the site was used or reused for another purpose. They farm using sustainable practices. Ilyssa and Javier rotate the goats through their 100 acres of different pasture, shrub and forest land according to a

modified Management Intensive Grazing practice that maintains optimum pasture and animal health.

Javier's background is the other "coolest" thing. Having come from an isolated location, he learned to be a "jack of all trades." He came to New York to marry Ilyssa, not in search of the "American Dream," *per se*. (How did Ilyssa, a New York girl, meet Javier, a campesino from Ecuador, you may ask?) She met him in Ecuador while completing a master's degree in Ecological Anthropology, researching the local farming practices and attitudes towards environmental conservation. These multiple skills serve them well in their current work. At first, they wanted to remain in Ecuador, but when opportunities for learning about cheese making and starting a new venture in farming came about, they decided to go for it. Now, appropriately, Javier is putting his vast



Say goat cheese, please

knowledge of farming and carpentry skills to use doing what he already knows and loves. Ilyssa and Javier are real "do-it-yourselfers."

Of course, the "coolest" thing of all is the cheese itself. Here are some of the varieties of Painted Goat cheese that we carry at the PSFC:

Soft fresh goat cheese in tubs (richly plain or flavored varieties such as garlic and chive, rosemary-fig, or pine nut pesto);

Little herbed buttons (lightly sprinkled with dill, pepper, or herbs du provence);

Esperanza and Cinderella

(both French-style, soft ripened cheeses) aged for 2-3 weeks in their own caves, built 12 feet below their cheese house.

Don't fail to come and try them when Ilyssa comes for her cheese tasting in March. That will mark the opening of the new 2011 season for their goat cheese since the goats are 'dry' between December and February and only start milking again at the end of February. For more information about this local producer, visit www.paintedgoat.com or www.facebook.com/PaintedGoat. ■

Member Contribution

and sampled several of her offerings that day at the Cooperstown Farmers' Market. We were pleased to have discovered some of the best goat cheeses we have ever tasted.

Ilyssa is originally from the NYC metropolitan area and was a member of the Coop only six years ago before heading to upstate NY where she and her husband, Javier Flores, settled down to make



One of Painted Goat Farm's milking does, an Alpine named Picasso.



The exterior of the cheese caves.



Javier washing and turning wheels of "Fighting Goat."



Salting fresh cheeses before aging.

PHOTOS BY MARION STEIN