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Meg and Bruce Schader enjoy working together on their Wake Robin Farm in Jordan



Bruce Schader grew up on a conventional dairy and has a political science degree. Meg studied agriculture at Cornell. In 2006 the couple decided that they should change from growing vegetables for a CSA and return the farm back to its original use—a dairy farm. That prompted the purchase of a small herd of Jersey cows.
Photo by Ken Thomas

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It may not be the biggest farm. It may not be the largest herd. But there is nothing small about the energy and effort that Meg and Bruce Schader put into their farm and their growing dairy business located just outside of Jordan, NY, on Brutus Road.

Standing among their docile Jersey cows the hardworking couple shared their farming history and their common 'sustainable' philosophy.

Meg began, "We started on the farm in 1999. I had graduated from Cornell's agricultural science program. Bruce had grown up on a conventional dairy farm and had a political science degree from SUNY Oswego. He had thought he wanted to get a Masters degree and go into education. Instead, we landed here — only about two miles or so from his family's farm."

With her son by her side Meg added, "Our family enjoys working together. We all are involved in taking care of our land and our animals. We like the idea that we can produce healthy food. Now that we have our processing plant up and going we are even more involved in the 'entire life cycle' of our products. We grow the grass in our pastures that allows us to feed our Jerseys. We love having our local folks come to the farm where we then meet the consumers who eat our healthy products."

Wake Robin Farm

"At first we grew vegetables and cut flowers. We even named the farm after a wildflower that grows here and blooms in the spring. It is called Wake Robin and it is a protected species now," she continued. "We had a pretty good CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program going. All tolled we have about 175 acres."

Bruce explained that in 2006 the couple decided that they should take the farm back to its original use — a dairy farm. That prompted the purchase of a small herd of Jersey cows. "We started with only four cows. We now have 12 milking cows and seven calves. We also decided to build a New York State licensed dairy processing plant on our farm. We use most of our milk for yogurt. It's going pretty well for us."

During the grazing season the Schader's cows are turned into fresh pasture twice a day. Only organic grain is fed along with dry hay that they keep in their barn. Meg chimed in, "We do not use anything not natural. That includes no synthetic hormones, antibiotics or pesticides."

What about Wake Robin yogurt...and cheese, too?

"We don't 'doctor' the yogurt either," Meg exclaimed. "No thickeners, stabilizers, or artificial flavors are blended into our yogurt. Our recipe was really developed by trial and error."

But what they do tastes simply wonderful!

They make a plain yogurt, a vanilla-flavored yogurt and one that is sweetened with just a touch of maple syrup in each container. Wake Robin yogurt is thinner than most store-bought yogurt. Because they use their own un-homogenized milk the yogurt is thicker at the top. You just might be reminded of back-in-the-day times when milk came in glass bottles and you unwrapped the outer crimped paper, pulled the cardboard tab to find that wonderful cream on the top of the milk!

They make around 600 quarts of yogurt each week. A one-cup serving contains only 200 calories and 11 grams of fat.

"We deliver our yogurt to a good number of local stores," Bruce mentioned.

Most recently, the Schaders have expanded to include cheeses. They make farmstead cheddar and another variety that Meg has tagged "grass-i-ago."

"We process it just like you would an Italian asiago. Since we graze our cows we picked the name 'grass-i-ago' for our effort."