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5 Generations of Passion & Service for the Emmentaler AOP

Welcome

Hi Nadine

Nice to meet you again. Thank you for doing this. How has life been since we last met?

Good, thank you!

I have a scenery imprinted in my brain, when I first entered your beautiful family barn and experienced the peaceful and natural environment – where animals and humans interact daily to produce the fundamentals of our unique Emmentaler AOP – the Swiss cheese with eyes and the Original for hundreds of years.

Your family has already produced milk for 4 generations, and you and your sisters are going to continue this tradition in the 5th generation. Your family has been part of the Emmentaler story for a long, long time. What drives you guys?

First, the passion, joy in the job, the animals, and our nature. Second, the pride in continuing this profession in the 5th generation. It is not common to see three generations (my grandma Elisabeth and grandpa Paul, my father Roland and my mother Andrea, and my sisters Sarina and Carmen) working together on the same farm, e.g. in the stable or during the hay harvest. Third, producing food for the people.

It is also important to mention that we cannot live only from our farm today. My father works as the mayor of the municipality of Rüderswil for about 20-30%, my mother works 20% as a dentist prophylaxis assistant and I work 20% on the farm and 80% as a retail saleswoman.

How many cows are serving in your herd and what makes them so special?

22-25 dairy cows. A diverse herd from four breeds (Red Holstein, Holstein, Swiss Fleckvieh and Jersey. The reason for Jersey cows is that they were a birthday present from my parents for my 20th birthday, and a Jersey calf as a birth present from my school colleagues. Each cow has its own characteristics and character! With a herd of 22 cows, you know the characteristics of each and can respond to them individually. They are family!

I have a very close bond with one cow line, the Red Holstein. Our cow Rivergil was once selected as the most beautiful cow of the day at a regional show in Burgdorf. It was an incredible feeling – a wonderful memory. Rivergil gave birth one year later to the heifer calf Olbia, which also won in regional shows. Rivergil has calved five times. Three of her daughters are still alive. Two died from a fatal injury and a birth illness.

We farmers say, “that's farming.” In agriculture, there are both happy and sad moments. But if Rivergil can stay healthy, she will be able to give us several more heifer calves. Our cows also must be fit and robust to graze our “stotzigen” (steep) meadows.

« With a herd of 22 cows, you know the characteristics of each and can respond to them individually. They are family! »

I saw the fresh green grass – it looks like the cows get a really good treat. Why does it matter and what difference does it make in the milk quality? And why do you stick to raw milk when most of the cheeses use pasteurized milk?

No fodder equals no milk, and poor fodder equals poor milk! Emmentaler AOP cheese is produced without silage (fermented grass and corn), therefore in summer full grazing the cows must eat most of their fodder on the pasture. Only a small amount of concentrated feed is fed in the cowshed.

In the fall, the cows are given fresh corn and a little grass in addition to grazing outside. In winter, they mainly get dried fodder (high-quality hay that we produced ourselves in the summer), supplemented with a mixture of chopped fodder beet and dried beet pulp and a small amount of concentrated feed. They also get to go out into the yard every day in winter, of course! Good quality feed also pays off in terms of the quality and salary paid at the cheese dairy. For better quality milk and a good fat and protein content in the milk, the price paid for the milk is adjusted in favor of the farmer.

« No fodder equals no milk, and poor fodder equals poor milk! Emmentaler AOP cheese is produced without grass and corn silage... »

Do you know all the cows by name and how do you feel about them?

Of course! Our calves are named using the first letter of their mothers' names. Three quarters of our herd begin with the letter “R”. This line goes back to the original cow, Regine. We are very proud of our herd of self-bred cows. None of our cows (except for the Jersey) were bought. We have built up our current herd ourselves.

Good care is essential for every matter in life. What does it mean to take care of a cow?

24/7 and 365 days a year. In spring and fall, at the cattle show (cantonal assessment) we shave and wash the cows. The cattle show is always a big highlight for me. The sounds of the bell on the cows move me to tears every year.

What do you love to do when not taking care of our precious Emmentaler AOP milk? I saw horses...

Horses are another passion of ours. We currently have four Freiberger horses, a foal and a Shetland pony living on our farm. Every year, we get a foal that we train ourselves in riding and driving, when it turns two and a half. For us, this is a family affair that requires skill and mastery. It takes skill, patience, and sensitivity.

Our home-trained horses are sold at the age of 3, 4 or 5 (if they do not remain on our farm for further breeding), and we can proudly and with a clear conscience sell the buyers an absolutely reliable horse. I will want to continue breeding with our horses in the future.

Would you be joining us on one of our Mondays@Emmenaler AOP webinars? Our cheese-monger friends in the US and Canada would love that for sure...

Never say never :) I don't know yet, but I will think about it.

Thank you for your time. Have a wonderful day and we are looking forward to maybe meeting you soon!

