



MILK	Pasteurised cows milk
RENNET	Traditional animal rennet
MADE BY	Dick Willems
REGION	Coolea, near Macroom, County Cork
FLAVOUR & TEXTURE	The textures are smooth and close-textured. The flavours are usually rich and sweet, often hinting at hazelnuts, butterscotch and honey. At other times, they may be long-lastingly nutty but with a savoury edge. Either way, the flavours are complex and mouthfilling.

Dicky's parents Helene and Dick Willems moved to Ireland in the late 1970s from Amsterdam, Holland. In Amsterdam, they did various jobs, among which was running a restaurant. They moved to Ireland looking for a serene contrast to the bustle of restaurant work and bought a farm in a beautiful, but remote part of the country. Coolea is a small village nestled in among a deep, quiet mountain range where the Irish language is still widely spoken and where the Willems thought they'd have a complete change of pace.

They started making cheese as a hobby, from the milk of their few cows, but the cheese just tasted too good. First neighbours started to want it, then shopkeepers including Neal's Yard Dairy. Before long it was a small business. In 1991, Dicky joined his parents making cheese and a couple of years later, he had taken over as head cheesemaker. Helene and Dick retired in 1999 and Dicky now makes the cheese on his own, buying in milk from a couple of local farmers.

Coolea cheese is made to a recipe similar to Dutch Gouda. Dicky makes cheese using pasteurised milk, but in other respects it is a very traditional recipe: handmade and using traditional animal rennet.

