

LINCOLNSHIRE POACHER



MILK	Unpasteurised cows milk
RENNET	Traditional animal rennet
MADE BY	Simon and Tim Jones
REGION	Ulceby Grange, near Alford, Lincolnshire
FLAVOUR & TEXTURE	A rich, long lasting flavour with sweet, nutty notes and a sharp tang that sometimes tastes a bit like pineapples. The texture is smooth, close, dense and creamy.

The strangest thing about Lincolnshire Poacher is the land from which it derives. To the east is the North Sea; to the west, the fens, a flat beige-and-brown patchwork quilt of rapeseed and flax, wheat and cattle beans. It's a long way from the traditional home of cheddar: Somerset.

Undeterred, Tim and Simon Jones, the fourth generation of farmers cultivating Ulceby Grange, which has fields rather lush and hillier than fenland, took over their father's dairy herd, and, thirteen years ago, decided to make cheese.

While the Jones brothers consider their cheese 'cheddar style', they also rejoice in the differences between Lincolnshire Poacher and a Somerset Cheddar. Simon Jones, the cheesemaker, learned to make cheese with the late Dougal Campbell, a Welsh cheesemaker whose cheese T'yn Grug was a mixture between a cheddar and a swiss mountain cheese. As a result, Lincolnshire Poacher is also influenced by the swiss mountain cheeses. Their starter has thermophilic (heat loving) bacteria which often produce the sweeter flavours you get in swiss cheese. Traditionally, the starter bacteria used to make cheddar are mesophilic and grow best at slightly lower temperatures. However there are instances where the Jones

brothers have elected to retain some of the conditions required of traditional West Country cheesemakers, where they think it makes a vital difference to the quality of the cheese. They only use milk from their own herd, leave the milk unpasteurised, and use traditional rennet.

Their farmland has undergone an organic conversion and the dairy herd is fed with as much organic feed as possible. Ironically, they can't feed entirely organically because some of their certified organic feed had to be bought from China. Simon felt that while this might be certified, the environmental concerns of transporting it went against the organic spirit and when a supply problem caused him to rethink, he opted to buy locally. This meant that the herd lost its organic status, not a decision Simon took lightly but, as they aim to produce as much food on the farm as they can with grass and silage, buying locally fitted these aims better.

For Simon and Tim, each part of the farm dovetails with and influences the next: the land, the feed, the herd, the cheese. Simon describes Lincolnshire Poacher as the essence of the farm. All their work farming the land, feeding and breeding the herd and skill in the dairy comes together in each piece of the cheese.

