



MILK	Pasteurised cows milk
RENNET	Traditional animal rennet
MADE BY	Norman, Veronica & Quinlan Steele
REGION	Eyeries, near Castletownbere, Co. Cork, Ireland
FLAVOUR & TEXTURE	It has a very layered flavour, with flowers, mushrooms and herbs flowing through your mouth and a rich and creamy texture. Those floral notes really stay with you long after the cheese is gone. Being a washed rind cheese, it has that familiar farmyard aroma.

Veronica Steele says she started cheesemaking due to hunger and shame. Shame at the transformation of her local grocers into a supermarket and one particular occasion when a jolly elderly French couple were presented with Calvita as the local cheese. Hunger, because she couldn't find the sort of food she wanted to buy on the sterile supermarket shelves.

Their first cheeses were a kind of cheddar. At the time, Veronica and Norman Steele had one cow named Brisket. Brisket produced more milk than the growing family of Steeles could consume and Veronica's first thought was to try a hard cheese. It was an accident of fate and geography that Milleens became a washed rind cheese. The bacteria that create the sticky orange rind, called *Brevibacterium linens*, like to survive in humid and salty environments. This sort of environment is created by washing the rind of the cheese with water or salt water, but along the coastline of Cork where the sea spray and soft rain mingle, conditions are naturally right for them to grow. Veronica Steele's early hard cheeses kept growing a sticky orange rind so she bowed to the inevitable, she changed tacks and started making soft cheese instead. As the cheese grew in popularity and even started to make its way across the Irish sea to us at Neal's Yard Dairy, Veronica and Norman

studied more and more about cheesemaking and the science behind it. Veronica offered assistance to and taught a few other local cheesemakers and was instrumental in setting up CAIS the Irish Specialist Cheesemakers Association.

In the mid 1990s they suffered a setback when they lost their herd. Milleens continued, now pasteurised and made with milk from a neighbour. Norman, who had looked after the cows, felt that he didn't have it in him to start a herd again. Luckily, youngest son Quinlan Steele returned from university to the family farm to make cheese. The herd whose milk Quinlan uses graze and calve seasonally like that of a soft goats or sheeps cheese. During the season, the cheese changes from firmer, mild cheeses at the beginning of the year to soft, luscious and more punchy cheeses in the summer. Out on the windswept and rainlashed Beara peninsula, the seasons are intensified as changes in pasture, temperature and humidity dramatically affect both the composition of the milk & curd and what moulds and bacteria thrive in the ripening rooms. Some cheesemakers would adapt their make in order to produce a consistent cheese all year round. For Quinlan, this misses the point. The seasonality is what interests and inspires him and he wants the cheese to reflect that.

