

SPARKENHOE RED LEICESTER



MILK	Unpasteurised cows milk
RENNET	Traditional animal rennet
MADE BY	David and Jo Clarke
REGION	Sparkenhoe Farm, near Upton, Leicestershire
FLAVOUR & TEXTURE	The flavours are rich, nutty, sweet, wholesome, and milky. It is a complex and intriguing flavour but at the same time balanced and smooth. It's mouth-filling and lasts long after swallowing but has no aggression. The texture is moist but chewy and firm.

Leicestershire established its cheesemaking independence from the Cheshire-producing counties, sometime before the 1700s. In the south of the county, some villages were locally famous for the quality of their cheese. A 1790 report prized them above the newer cheese, Stilton, although Stilton itself had more national renown.

The first factory to make Leicester was established in 1875 and farmhouse cheesemaking in Leicestershire mirrored that of the country as a whole, in that it diminished from about the 1850s as England became more industrial. It suffered further during the First and Second World Wars to the extent that there were no farms documented in Leicestershire in the 1938 - 39 register. It seems to have continued unrecorded as David and Jo Clarke recall local reports of farm-made Red Leicester from 1956. Leicester was made in factories during the Second World War but as colouring was not permitted, it was literally a pale shadow of its former self. Factory Red Leicester continued in the latter half of the 20th century but by the time Patrick Rance was writing his Great British Cheese Book in 1982, it was a pasteurised cheese and in some cases not very inspiring. All this was to change in

November 2005 however, because David and Jo Clarke decided to revive cheesemaking on their farm and make a traditional, clothbound Red Leicester.

Red Leicester was made on Sparkenhoe Farm in 1745 by Mr George Chapman. The Chapmans ceased cheesemaking in 1875 and the farm did not produce cheese again until David and Jo revived the tradition. David and Jo Clarke both have a dairy farming pedigree; their families have farmed in the area for generations. They have a herd of 150 Friesian-Holsteins whose unpasteurised milk is used for cheese. They make cheese using traditional animal rennet and the cheeses are moulded to the traditional shape (roughly 20 inches across and 6 inches deep) and bound in cloth and lard.

