



MILK	Unpasteurised goats milk
RENNET	Traditional animal rennet
MADE BY	Caroline & Will Atkinson
REGION	Stawley, near Wellington, Somerset
FLAVOUR & TEXTURE	Dense and smooth textured in its paste with a nutty, creamy breakdown under the wrinkled geotrichum rind. Flavours are floral, honeyed and lactic.

Caroline and Will Atkinson have not been farming very long; neither one was born to it. Will had trained in law and Caroline had worked behind our shop counters. The dream for them both was ultimately to leave London for the country and in June 2006, they realised the time had come.

At first, they moved to Bath where Will continued to work in law and Caroline made cheese with Mary Holbrook. Until then, she wasn't sure if she'd wanted to have a shop or make cheese but here she began to formulate plans to be a cheesemaker and the idea of goats was planted. It wasn't part of the plan for Will to become a farmer but the more they thought about it, the more they realised that they didn't want to buy in milk and did want to control the process from start to finish.

They first bought British Saanen and British Toggenburgs and later, a few Anglo Nubians (known as the Jerseys of the goat world because their milk is particularly rich). The herd currently stands at 44 goats and their aim is to breed more so that they have around 100 milking in 4 years time.

Stawley is made using a mix of morning and evening's milking. The evening milk has been left overnight cooled to 12C and its starter culture is added at that time. The following morning, the milk is added immediately after milking

and, after the curd has set, it is ladled by hand into the moulds for draining. It is very important during this stage that the temperature is maintained at 21C. Even a couple of degrees either side affects the acidity development which in turn affects how the whey drains out of the cheese and that affects the way the flavour develops and even the moulds that grow on the rind. The new cheeses are turned twice in their moulds and the following morning, they are turned again and salt is sieved over them, again at the all important 21C. They are then transferred to racks where they spend the next 36 hours huddled up together to maintain the temperature and also help keep their shape. During this time, a light coating of a wrinkled-textured mould called *geotrichum candidum* develops. They are then transferred to a drying room and when the rind has the right texture to the touch (not too crispy), Caroline finally moves them to the maturing rooms where they are kept at between 12C and 14C. It takes a lot of work to get that lovely *geotrichum* rind but it tastes delicious.

The striking thing about Will and Caroline is how carefully they monitor and measure every stage of the process. From the amount of hay that the goats are fed through to the amount of weight lost while the cheeses are in the drying room, it is all measured so that they know exactly what they're dealing with. It has helped them make very good cheese right from the start.

