



<b>MILK</b>	Unpasteurised Organic cows Milk
<b>RENNET</b>	Traditional Animal Rennet
<b>MADE BY</b>	Joe Schneider
<b>REGION</b>	Collingthwaite Farm, Welbeck Estate, Nottinghamshire
<b>FLAVOUR &amp; TEXTURE</b>	Flavours are cool and buttery with underlying nutty toasty notes. There is a spicy element from the blue mould but alongside that is a long lasting savouriness and caramel-like sweetness. The layers of flavours expand and develop in your mouth as you eat and last long after swallowing.

Stichelton is one of very few unpasteurised English blue cheeses. It is made by Joe Schneider using organic, unpasteurised cows milk from Collingthwaite Farm on the Welbeck Estate.

The Stichelton recipe is distinctive and a couple of important characteristics are that it allows a long time for a slow acidification of the curd and a very gentle set, factors which are influenced by using very small quantities of starter and rennet. In this sense it is almost like a lactic cheese as the curd has not reached its greatest acidity until the day after it has been set. The sparing use of rennet results in a very delicate curd which needs to be transferred for drainage with care. Many dairies transfer curd from vat to drainage using a 2 level system and pulling out the plug of the higher vat, so the curds and whey flow, sometimes very quickly, down a chute onto the draining table. In order to maintain curd structure so that it does not break up & lose fats, quite a robust set is needed. In order to drain their delicate curd, the Stichelton cheesemakers Joe, Margaret Richardson and Tracey Scotthorne ladle their curd from the vat to the draining tables. This means transferring the equivalent of 1 soup bowl of curd at a time from a low vat to a waist height trolley and is both time consuming and back breaking work. However it is very gentle, the fats remain locked into the curd particles and the benefit of this is felt as the cheese matures as it allows for a rich creamy texture in the ripened cheese.

Stichelton has come about due to a partnership between Joe as cheesemaker, the Welbeck Estate on which the farm and dairy herd are based and finally Randolph Hodgson. Recalling the depth of flavour

of a cheese he sold about 20 years ago, Randolph set out to find an organic farm and a cheesemaker with whom to start making an unpasteurised blue cheese in the traditional mould. Joe, a very talented and experienced cheesemaker who had previously made cheese at Daylesford and Old Plawhatch was keen to be involved and thanks to the Welbeck Estate he has organically produced unpasteurised milk, of the quality that allows him to make great cheese.

Joe moved to the Estate on the borders of Sherwood Forrest in Nottinghamshire in early 2006 where he began organising the building process of his new dairy from an existing barn on the estate. A perfectionist and never one to do things by halves, he shouldered huge responsibility for the project from the start even getting involved in the building work himself where he thought it appropriate. In October 2006, the first cheeses were made.

Since those first cheeses, Joe has been aiming for ever better, more savoury, more complex flavours. Over the years he has moved from a freeze dried powdered starter culture (DVI) to a liquid pint starter which has provided more complexity of flavour. Using a piercing machine rather than piercing the cheeses by hand has meant that the blueing is spaced more regularly and the breakdown of the texture more uniform. The more subtle changes require regular monitoring of acidity, moisture and temperature then adapting the make in response. Luckily re-assessment in pursuit of better and better cheese suits Joe Schneider. It also makes Stichelton a very inspiring cheese to work with and a joy to eat.

