



# WESTCOMBE CHEDDAR



<b>MILK</b>	Unpasteurised cows milk
<b>RENNET</b>	Traditional animal rennet
<b>MADE BY</b>	Tom Calver
<b>REGION</b>	Westcombe Farm, near Shepton Mallett, Somerset
<b>FLAVOUR &amp; TEXTURE</b>	Firm, smooth textured with nutty, savoury and a slightly caramel flavour.

Westcombe Farm has been making traditional cheddar since 1880s. In 1960s like many other cheddar farms in the South West at the time, they switched from making the traditional, clothbound cylinders to block.

At the time block had less wastage, less blue and pressure from supermarkets was to supply that sort of cheddar. The difficulty of making block cheese was that they were now making a cheese quite like those made in big factories, but the factories were able to make economies of scale more easily so beat them on price. Finding it hard to compete, Richard Calver eventually took the decision to stop making cheese and the farm sold its milk for drinking for some years. In 2001 however Richard decided to start making cheese again. Their roots were in traditional clothbound cheddar-making and the market had moved on from the 1960s. Traditional cheddar and block cheddar were being treated as separate cheeses and sold differently. It was time to return to making cheddar in the traditional way.

Richard called in Randolph for advice and he visited, tasted cheese and made suggestions for about 5 years before we put in our first order. Meanwhile Richard's son Tom had been training as a chef in London and worked for

a while at Neal's Yard Dairy before returning to the farm. He began work in the stores selecting cheese to ensure each customer had the type of cheese they were looking for. In addition he started to make cheese and today is a regular cheesemaker. Tom and Robert Purchase make most of the cheese and in addition Tom manages the team that works alongside them in the dairy while his father manages the farm. One particular focus of attention for him is the way the animals are fed, always aiming for a specific ratio of fat and protein in the milk which will ensure the cheese has good body and texture and matures to have smooth, savoury flavours.

Their cows graze out in the fields from April to November. In addition, they receive a bit of winter ration all year. This is grass silage, maize silage, crimped wheat and soya and apart from the soya, is all grown on the farm. The reason for feeding the winter ration is to keep up the dry matter in the cows diet as this will mean better fat and protein content in the milk, which in turn means better cheese.

