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Deborah Rogers and her goats
 photo by Wendy Crooks



July of 2003, Ms. Rogers had fine-tuned her product and began selling her goat cheese to a few local restaurants. Now she has 110 goats with 22 new babies and sells her goat cheese in Dallas, Ft. Worth, Plano and Austin. Her cheese continues to be a staple for many restaurants and can also be found at Roy Pope's Gourmet Grocery and Deli and Central Market.

Like fine wine, she believes great cheese is a product of the land. All of her goats are in the pasture year round.

Besides being a former model, this goat farmer touts many modern day cheese-making anomalies. While most cheese products are made with several ingredients that many cannot pronounce, there are only three ingredients in Deborah's Farmstead Goat Cheese, all of which are natural and can even be pronounced. While Ms. Rogers did initially milk the goats by hand, she soon realized that the goats liked the milking machine and it made her milking process much more efficient. This was extremely helpful since the demand for her cheese had increased so greatly, as had her lactating goats.

Ms. Rogers believes another natural ingredient makes her goat cheese so special and is truly a product of the environment her goats enjoy. "Like fine wine, I believe great cheese is a product of the land," Ms. Rogers explained. All of her goats are in the pasture year round, which, for the most part, provides them with a comfortable, natural environment. There are some challenges to allowing them to roam free in their pasture. Ms. Rogers really has to keep an eye on her goats, especially the babies. She

The Model Goat Cheese Maker

By Wendy Crooks

GOING FROM MODELING IN FRANCE to milking goats in Texas is certainly not the most glamorous career path to take. But for one beautiful Texan, that is exactly how her life has evolved.

In her early 20s Deborah Lawrence Rogers was single and jet setting abroad as a fashion model for the world-renowned Ford Agency of New York. It was in those early years that she acquired a taste for good cheese, especially goat cheese. While working in Europe, she

began learning the basics of producing goat cheese from a friend's mother. Those skills never left her.

After modeling for several years and working in corporate finance, Ms. Rogers moved back to Ft. Worth and became a stockbroker. In 1992 she and her husband, Pollard, purchased her grandfather's farm on the outskirts of Ft. Worth.

Initially Ms. Rogers had only two goats and began experimenting with making goat cheese for her own consumption. By



New in Town?

MOVING YOUR HOME and family is never an easy process. Whether it's across the country or across town, a million things need attention before you leave your old home and arrive at the new one.

An endless list of questions need answers, such as what are the schools and medical facilities like and how convenient are they to where you will live. What about available housing, where can you buy necessities, and what's the city itself like?

The Frisco Chamber of Commerce is your Frisco information resource before moving and when you arrive. The Chamber staff is always ready to answer questions and offer direction to community businesses, agencies and individuals who can assist newcomers. Each month, we answer over 4,000 phone calls and greet 500 walk-ins to our office in downtown Frisco.

Our Relocation Guide/ Membership Directory – with articles, advertisements, a map, and a business directory – is mailed to prospective Frisco residents on request. It is also included in our New Resident Packet which is delivered to almost 5,000 new residents every year by the City's Environmental Services Department. Filled with coupons, flyers and our Guide, this packet is essential for newcomers.

The Frisco Chamber of Commerce is growing steadily with approximately 1,150 members currently supporting our local business community. Once you settle into your new home, the Chamber is the place to connect with the community - in business, government, the arts and education.

Stop by and visit us at the Frisco Chamber of Commerce office, 6843 Main Street, or call us with a question at 972.335.9522. You can email us at info@friscochamber.com and visit our web site for more information at www.friscochamber.com.



recalled, "One young mother left one of her babies behind and there was no way the baby could have found her or the others." Fortunately she has a few friends to help her keep watch over them. Sam, a monstrosity of a dog, has saved many goats from the clutches of the wild coyotes that find their way onto the farm. Then there's Rudy. Rudy is a rather large and rambunctious Longhorn who helps scare off unwanted predators.

Many in the cheese making business breed their goats when they are as young as seven to ten months old or 60–75 percent of their adult weight. Ms. Rogers prefers to wait until her goats are a year old, as she believes older mothers make better mothers. The gestation period is about five months and, of course, that also means that the pregnant goats don't lactate during that time.

Surprisingly, Ms. Rogers doesn't have to work too hard getting the goats to come for their milking session. She has found the perfect time for milking is between 7:30 and 8 in the morning, which works out great since she's not generally a morning person. She laughed as she recalled her early milking days. "I got up before dawn ready to go and get those goats milked. None of them came running. In fact, I had to wake them up. I quickly realized that

we'd all be happier with a later milking time." Now Ms. Rogers milks three goats at a time and the goats enter through a window in the milking room. She even built steps so the goats can climb through the window easily. The goats stand and eat their great morning meal while they're getting milked so of course they don't mind coming around for the process.

Making awesome goat cheese certainly isn't a quick process. It takes a few hours alone to milk the goats. Then it takes four days from the time the goats are milked until the finished cheese is produced. After milking, the milk must be ladled into molds and time allotted for the whey to shrink. A natural enzyme called "rennet" is added. As the whey shrinks, more milk must be added to have the final cheese product the proper size. Then non-iodized salt must be added. Ms. Rogers' herd of goats produce eight to 15 gallons a day, which results in 40–50 blocks of cheese per day. Besides the milking machines, the entire process is done by-hand. Everything is ladled, formed and packaged by-hand.

Deborah's Farmstead Goat Cheese is even hand-delivered to vendors. Each Wednesday, Ms. Rogers delivers two-thirds of the cheese production

Molds of goat cheese
photo by Wendy Crooks

personally to Central Market. From start to finish, Ms. Rogers is truly hands-on with this very traditional cheese-making process.

I got up before dawn ready to go and get goats milked. None of them came running. In fact, I had to wake them up!

In case you're wondering how this dedicated farmer manages to keep this steady pace and have a life outside of making cheese, she does have a little help. She can currently sleep in, if she desires, on Friday and Saturday as the goats are being milked and the cheese is being made by two great helpers. Ms. Rogers' mother and another friend have learned the ropes from the master. Even with two full days off, these long farming hours can put a damper on a girl's social schedule. When attending dinner parties and functions, she often misses the cocktails and hors d'oeuvres because she's wrapping up her farming responsibilities for the day.

The past has already proven fruitful for Deborah's Farmstead Goat Cheese and the future looks bright as well. After only two years in business, Ms. Rogers' cheese took 2nd place in the nation in the goat cheese division at the American Cheese Society's 22nd Annual Cheese Competition. In June of this year, Ms. Rogers introduced her newest cheese, "Bird Song." Bird Song is a Camembert cheese, which is a stronger tasting cheese. While her cheese production has steadily increased, her desire to mass-produce has not. One of the things Ms. Rogers prides herself on is her fine organic cheese that is made the old-fashioned way.

Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano.

The logo features a red square with white, stylized, overlapping letters 'F', 'S', and 'M'. To the right of the square, the word 'frisco' is written in a cursive script, and 'STYLE MAGAZINE' is written in a bold, serif font.

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