

# Cheese travels well around the world

## IN MY VIEW

By Godfrey Hall



TUCKED away in the village of North Cadbury is Manor Farm. Situated close to the local post office, this delightful unassuming farm is home to the famous Montgomery cheese. Distributed through Neil's Yard Dairy in London, the cheese is currently available through well-known outlets such as Fortnum and Masons, Selfridges, Waitrose, Whole Foods and also a large number of specialist shops located all over the country including The Fine Cheese Company in Bath. Locally it can be found in North Cadbury Post Office and at Martins in Castle Cary. Exported overseas, it is even available in Japan.

Talking to Jamie Montgomery, I quickly became aware of his passion and commitment and also the dedication of his small team who daily produce this iconic cheddar cheese together with Oglesfield. Different from Montgomery cheddar, this is popular with cooks and also for raclette. It is produced from the milk of 160 Jersey cows which live on the farm and is washed in a special brine every three days and has a slightly pungent moist rind which gives the cheese that extra flavour. Oglesfield was created in the late nineties and since then has gone from strength to strength. Named after a bronze shield found in 1997

on Cadbury Hill and William Oglethorpe, an urban cheesemaker who originally created the cheese, it has developed a strong following in the world of cooking.

The Montgomery family first came to North Cadbury in 1911 when Sir Archibald Langman, Jamie's grandfather bought the farm. They really liked the idea of making cheese and so began producing it from the 30 or so cows. Today Jamie has over 300.

In the early days almost everyone made cheese and although Jamie's grandfather had no real farming background, he was still very keen on the process. Full of new ideas, he even bought a large number of cheese racks from Scotland which could turn over eight cheeses in one go.

Before the war there were around 380 cheese makers in Somerset, however now there are just a few main traditional Cheddar cheese makers including Montgomery's.

The decision to make cheese in large quantities happened during rationing as there was so much milk available. Co-operatives eventually got set up as farmers started to work together. However some cheese makers including Montgomery's decided not to buy in milk as the family thought it better to use only their own products and so when Jamie's mother took over the farm in the 60's she continued the tradition.

During my time at the farm, Jamie explained that there are several reasons why Montgomery cheese is so unique. These include the quality of milk, the use of good local spring water, the way the cloth bound



cheese is stored and how the mould grows whilst the cheese is in store. These major elements combined with the family's unique way of making cheese, using at one point an old fashioned machine, produces a cheese which is quite different from many others.

Montgomery cheese is unpasteurised and has a distinctive nutty flavour.

Walking around the storage area I was immediately aware of the strong aroma and the large quantities of cheese left to mature. With just a small number of staff there is plenty to do including hoovering up the cheese mites

which can, if not dealt with, be a potential enemy to maturing cheddars.

The farm currently produces around 120 tons of cheese and about 40 tons of Oglesfield. Jamie's philosophy also means that he believes in quality over quantity with any excess milk being sent to Arla.

Jamie has a reputation in the industry for high standards and being a great cheese maker. He is also a well known cheese judge travelling in this country and to the USA.

For further information go to [www.montgomerycheese.co.uk](http://www.montgomerycheese.co.uk)

Jamie Montgomery in their cheese store and, below, Manor Farm  
PICTURES BY Godfrey Hall

