

A person wearing a brown apron is holding a large, round wheel of cheese. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights the texture of the cheese and the person's hands.

BITE
SIZED
GUIDES

KENT'S CHEESE & DAIRY

ENJOY A MOOVABLE FEAST
FROM THE GARDEN OF ENGLAND

kentfoodtrails.co.uk



Produced in Kent

We want to inspire you with the amazing food and drink of Kent. From products grown here for hundreds of years to 21st century innovations, food and drink has shaped the landscape of our wonderful county and we hope you enjoy exploring all it has to offer.

This series of publications will introduce you to a whole range of fabulous food and drink and kentfoodtrails.co.uk will guide you through what to do and where to eat and stay so you can make the most of the Garden of England. Enjoy!

Go to producedinkent.co.uk to find out more about the tasty work we do inspiring everyone to buy locally.



In less than two decades Kent has become a cheese-making county! Taking dairy techniques from the West Country and blending with the cheesy delights from across the Channel, Kent now makes a superb range of hard, soft, cow's, goat's and sheep's cheeses, taking the very best of traditions from across Europe and giving them that Kentish tweak.

George Ward, Cheesemonger



THE CREAM OF KENT

Think Kent, think crunchy apples, aromatic hops and juicy cherries. We aren't known as the Garden of England for nothing! BUT, did you know that the climate, soil and landscape makes our corner of England a fine spot for luscious, green grass too? Where there's top quality grass, cows are healthy and happy and the richest, creamiest milk flows!

Of course, like everything else in the Garden of England, the quality of our produce is only half the story. It's the artistry, dedication, innovation and (dare we say) love of our farmers, our dairies and our artisans, that adds the magic and turns that wonderful milk into rich and intense cheese, indulgent and velvety ice-cream and silky, oh-so-healthy yoghurt. There are some cracking discoveries to be made that are keeping our dairy industry sustainable whilst making the products even better for you to munch, lick, slurp and otherwise enjoy to your heart's content!

So forget (just for a moment) the orchards, hop gardens and vineyards and come and explore our beating grassy heart. It's time to feel the love, and the craft, in the crème de la crème of Kent's local produce.



THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT DAIRY

1. A lactose love affair...

It's thought cow's milk was first drunk over 10,000 years ago in what is now Afghanistan and Iran.

2. Cows rock!

Dairy cows provide 90% of the planet's milk supply with every cow producing around 200,000 glasses of milk in her lifetime.

3. In case you hadn't noticed...

All cows are ladies (bulls don't "do" milk) and only produce milk after they have given birth to a calf.

4. Low fat by design!

Regular whole milk contains less than 4% fat. The fat in milk is actually cream - that's why it is called full cream milk.

5. The big Cheese!

It takes 10 litres of milk to make 1kg of hard cheese and as we eat about 600,000 tonnes of it a year (that's about 10kg per person), we keep the cows busy!

6. On Nanny's authority!

High in buttermilk and easy on the digestion, goat's milk is amazing stuff (especially as each type of goat yields a different flavour of milk), and goat's cheese was likely the worlds' first dairy product!

7. Melts in the mouth...

It takes 4 litres of whole milk to make 1 litre of ice cream and here in the UK we each get through 9 litres a year! Oh, and it takes about 50 licks to finish a scoop (we checked)!

8. The Swiss army knife of dairy...

Not only is yoghurt tasty, it also promotes healthy skin, aids digestion and is even used in toothpaste, mouthwash, facial masks and suntan lotion!

9. Best before 1950...

Sell-by dates first appeared on dairy products in the 1950s. M&S pioneered the practice to give people confidence in their new-fangled chiller cabinets.

10. Count your nipples!

Stick with cows, goats, camels, yaks, sheep or water buffalo for your milk, as animals with more than four nipples (like dogs and pigs) don't make suitable milk for cheese (or much else!).

THE MILKY WAY...

A short history of Kentish dairy

Dairy farming has been a British institution since time immemorial. But these were “cottage” industries with each farm rearing animals to supply themselves with milk and making cheese from the surplus. Interestingly, animals of choice were sheep and goats, cows only got in on the act in the 17th century.

Life as a Kent dairy farmer got really interesting as the industrial revolution kicked into gear and railways were built; firstly they could sell more widely and secondly they could scale up to meet demand (and get paid a premium for selling to London). However, the good times didn't last and, although the industrial cities demanded milk, they also drove down prices and increasingly commercialised large scale cheese production.

Add two World Wars, the Great Depression, food rationing and cheaper foreign imports and the UK dairy industry was on its knees. The Milk Marketing Board (MMB) was set up to guarantee prices for milk and control the wholesale market, and whilst it did keep farmers afloat it almost destroyed our cheese industry through enforced monopoly. Fuel was thrown on the fire with the dissolution of the MMB in the 1990s (causing the price of milk to crash) and the introduction of EEC milk quotas (capping production).

Fortunately there is light at the end of the tunnel. The UK public today has increased interest in quality, ethical food production, supporting local, and buying “real” British produce we can be proud of. Although life is still tough for many UK farmers, here in Kent we still boast over 40 dairy farms bringing that top-quality, creamy Kentish milk to market.



COWS RULE!

Dairy farming in Kent today

Listen up, this is the important bit... The cows come first! What they eat, how healthy they are and how much outdoor time they get directly affects the quality and flavour of the milk. The entire industry today is geared to making cows happy and healthy and here in Kent we've got some of the happiest cows you'll find.

Breed is the first important factor, with specific breeds chosen for their suitability to the landscape and the quality of their milk. Here's a primer on some breeds you'll see in Kent:

THE COLOUR OF SUNSHINE...

Guernsey cows do not digest the carotene in grass so it is converted into beta-carotene, resulting in milk and cream with a lovely deep yellow colour and the highest beta-carotene percentage in the world!



HOLSTEIN FRIESIAN

RECOGNISABLE BY THEIR DISTINCTIVE BLACK AND WHITE MARKINGS, KNOWN AS THE WORLD'S HIGHEST-PRODUCTION DAIRY COWS

THE BRITISH FRIESIAN HAS THE SAME COLOUR MARKINGS BUT IS SLIGHTLY SMALLER AND IS RENOWNED FOR ITS HIGH FERTILITY



GUERNSEY

RED OR FAWN OFTEN PIED MARKINGS AND KNOWN FOR RICH, GOLDEN MILK, HIGH IN BUTTERFAT, FAT AND PROTEIN



VIKING RED

OR DANISH REDS, A SCANDINAVIAN BREED THAT GIVES MILK WITH A HIGHER FAT AND PROTEIN CONTENT



AYRSHIRE

KNOWN FOR THEIR HARDINESS, ABILITY TO CONVERT GRASS INTO MILK EFFICIENTLY, EASY CALVING AND LONGEVITY



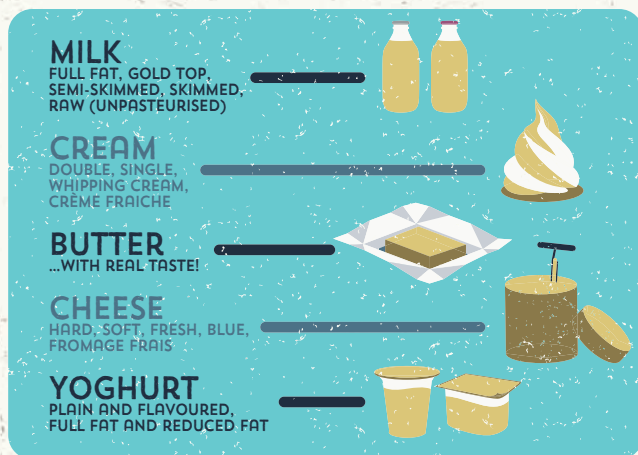
JERSEY

A SMALLER BREED POPULAR FOR THE HIGH BUTTERFAT MILK, EASIER MANAGEMENT AND A GENIAL DISPOSITION

Secondly, you need top notch grazing land and although Kent is not thought of as a dairy champion (it doesn't rain much), our landscape and soils are actually spot on, especially in the Weald and Kent Downs. Finally you need to get the cows out there, which is why you'll see organic and free range dairies, ensuring cows graze outside for at least six months a year.

Even if you do all that right, running a dairy is hard, mostly due to the great fluctuation of milk prices which makes it tough to plan production quantities ahead. Fortunately Kent's dairy farmers are a committed lot and their connection to the land and love for their herds means they innovate and diversify.

That's why you'll see all this and more, direct from Kent's dairies!



You'll also spot the occasional Milk Mate – vending machines providing raw milk (literally the definition of buying local) – and doorstep deliveries as well as partnerships with local enterprising artisans who'll turn the great quality milk into exciting, unique and inspiring cheeses, ice cream and other dairy delights (read on for more)!

Remember, by buying Kent cheeses, ice cream, yoghurts, milk, cream and butter, you're doing your part to support our farming and rural communities whilst experiencing the deliciousness of The Garden of England.



SILAGE - THE MOST RURAL OF SMELLS!

Our farmers make their own silage – usually a mix of cut grasses and maize – that gets put into a dark place to ferment (by anaerobic bacteria). Silage provides winter feed for cows when there's less grass available. Good silage is very nutritious – and no, the cows don't get drunk from it!



SAY CHEESE!

Elevating milk to immortality...

Fromage, Formaggio, Käse, Queso, Nǎilào... Cheese, the world's favourite dairy product bar none, and a product elevated to an obsession for many (science shows a protein in cheese releases opiates during digestion!) and a staple of the British diet. We have more than 700 named cheeses made in the UK and although Cheddar dominates the scene, there are many more wonderful ones to sample, including some Kent classics! So here's the low-down on all things cheesy!

STAGES

CURDS AND WHEY



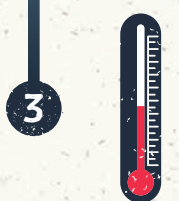
BACTERIOLOGICAL STARTER IS ADDED TO 'SOÜR' AND THICKEN THE MILK. A RENNETING AGENT IS ADDED TO THE MILK TO FORM CURDS, THEN LEFT TO SET.

CONCENTRATING THE CURD



THE CURDS ARE CUT SO THE WHEY IS RELEASED. THE CURDS ARE EITHER 'COOKED' OR PILED UP, TO FURTHER EXPEL THE WHEY. THE CURD IS MILLED AND SALT IS ADDED. THE CURD IS PRESSED INTO MOULDS.

RIPENING THE CHEESE



THE CHEESE IS PLACED IN TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY CONTROLLED STORAGE ROOMS. MILD CHEESE MAY BE STORED FOR 3 MONTHS, A MATURE CHEESE FOR UP TO A YEAR. SPECIFIC RIPENING PROCESSES PRODUCE DISTINCTIVE FLAVOURS AND TEXTURES.

SEPARATING THE CURDS FROM THE WHEY

'Rennet' is used to make the milk set into a firm curd and the whey (moisture) is removed. Traditional rennet is curdled milk from the stomachs of unweaned calves, although vegetarian alternatives like lemon juice, thistle juice or even fig tree sap (an old Roman trick) are possible. Most Kent cheese makers use vegetarian rennet.

Producing perfection - getting cheese right!

Surprisingly, cheese is made up of just a few simple ingredients - milk (most Kent cheese makers use raw milk), a starter culture (good bacteria), salt and rennet. But it's the quality of the milk, the cultures used, the times and temperatures and length of ageing that makes the difference. So whilst two cheese makers may make the same type of cheese starting with the same basic recipe, the end result will be completely different. Recipes are of course closely guarded secrets!

Tweaking the mix...

Slight tweaks in production methods result in different varieties of cheese...

FRESH CHEESES

Lactic acid is used to form curds, rather than rennet.

The cheese is not cut, pressed or ripened (except for feta).

SOFT-RIPENED CHEESES

The curds are cut into large cubes to help retain the moisture.

The milk is 'inoculated' with penicillin at the start of the production process (or some spray the rind with a surface mould) to produce the distinctive soft, velvety bloom and ripen the cheese from the outside in.

HARD AND SEMI-HARD CHEESES

A high temperature is used to set the curd which is then cut very finely to release more whey.

The ripening process takes anything from 3 months to 2 years.

BLUE CHEESES

The mould *penicillium roqueforti* is introduced to the milk.

Cheese is turned daily to ensure an even distribution of moisture.

After 6 weeks each cheese is pierced with steel needles to let oxygen in, encouraging mould growth.

STORAGE CAVES

Cheddar was originally stored in Somerses's Cheddar Gorge caves. Not to be outdone, Winterdale Cheesemakers dug 3.5m down into the chalky Kent Downs to create their own cool, damp ripening cave where the cheese takes on even more interesting characteristics and flavours.

BLESSED ARE THE CHEESEMAKERS

Getting up close and personal with Kent's cheese

All cheese is about discovery of different textures and new flavours. Kentish cheese isn't just delicious; it's surprisingly diverse, and a great way of tasting your way around the county.

Here's a few of Kent's top cheese makers and the fruits of their craft!

The Cheesemakers of Canterbury

Founded in 2007 they produce cow, goat and sheep's milk cheeses in 14 varieties. All their cheeses are handmade in the traditional way with milk sourced from within the Kent Downs.

Look out for:

Ashmore Farmhouse

An unpasteurised cheddar style cheese aged for a minimum of 15 months. A 2011 World Cheese Award Super Gold Medal winner – one of the top 50 cheeses in the world!

Dargate Dumpty

A pasteurised Camembert style cheese made with sheep's milk, matured for two to six weeks. Sweet and creamy when 'young', deeper and stronger as it matures.

Ellie's Dairy

Rear their own goat herds in the heart of the Kent Downs, following traditional and ethical farming techniques. All cheeses are handmade and GM and chemical-free!

Look out for:

Shaggy's Beard

A Camembert-style cheese. Creamy and mild when young, ripening to a more mature flavour. Enjoy it as it is, or bake to produce a delicious melting cheese.

Fremlin's Log

Named after the herd's chief male goat, made in the style of a ripened goat log but with a distinctive 'bloomer' shape. A smooth luscious cheese with a sharp citrus tang.

Hinxden Farm Dairy

Farming since 1930, their cheeses are made with milk from their pedigree Guernsey herd by the Cheesemakers of Canterbury.

Look out for:

Tam's Tipple

A cheddar style cheese named after the late Thomasine Ann Manford, who spent her whole life on Hinxden Farm.

Winnie's Wheel

A handmade rich, buttery Camembert style cheese made from their Channel Island Gold Top milk.



PUT THE RED WINE TO ONE SIDE FOR A MOMENT...

...as blue cheeses go rather well with dessert wines, or even a good stout! The sweetness of a dessert wine also balances the sharpness of a mature cheddar - in much the same way as an apple - which happily means an apple brandy can be a real treat with a chunk of best cheddar.

Rich creamy Camembert and Brie styles go brilliantly with Kentish sparkling wines which revive the tongue after every mouthful. And, if you like an apple with your cheese you'll realise how well a good apple juice will fit the bill for those wanting to keep off the alcohol.

Best of all, experiment - there are no hard and fast rules!

George Ward, Cheesemonger



Kingcott Dairy

A family run free range dairy farm producing unpasteurised blue cheese. The cheese room is close to the milking parlour (just across the yard) so we're talking food metres rather than miles!

Look out for:

Kentish Blue

A traditional style blue cheese with a firm but moist texture. Smooth flavours when 'young', the more mature version packs a pleasant tangy, spicy kick!

Kingcott Blue

A softer blue cheese made in the Continental style, with a mellow, creamy texture and flavours.

Ottinge Court Farm

Washed rind 'Appenzeller' style cheeses made in the Elham Valley using specialist cheese making equipment brought over from Switzerland.

Look out for:

Ottinge Mutchli

A light, every day semi-hard 'high pasture' style cheese, matured for 10 weeks. A good melting cheese!

Ottinge Bramshill

A straw coloured hard cheese with tiny holes and a golden rind, it has a nutty, sweetish flavour.

Silcocks Farm Shop, St. Michaels

An organic farm where the cows eat a diverse wildflower and herb rich grass mix, imparting unique flavours into the milk that changes with the seasons.

Look out for:

Saint Michael's

A fresh curd cheese, similar to a feta (but without salt) which can be eaten in much the same way i.e. straight out of the fridge. Great in salads!

Boresisle

The old Celtic name for the village in which it's made. A soft, creamy cheese reminiscent of the French classics. Best eaten at room temperature. Great baked!

Winterdale Cheesemakers

Makers of traditional unpasteurised cloth bound hard cheese, this is the UK's first carbon neutral produced and delivered cheese!

Look out for:

Winterdale Shaw

A rich creamy Cheddar style cheese with a wonderfully deep complex flavour. A hard cheese that simply melts in the mouth. Awarded Gold in the 2012 World Cheese Awards!

Look out for the Winterdale Oak Smoked variety too.

A BIT ON THE SIDE?

We love cheese, but matching it with the right accompaniments can elevate it to an entirely new dimension!

The good news? This is the Garden of England and we have flavoursome fruits, brilliant baked goods, chunky chutneys and enough wine, beer and cider to go with anything! Get creative and look for flavours that contrast its saltiness with some sweetness, acidity or spice, or add some textural complexity.

But whilst we know that a Kingcott Blue and Biddenden Special Reserve Cider is a match made in heaven, we appreciate that with so many options, finding the perfect accompaniments might present you with a bit of a conundrum. Fear not! You'll find all the guidance you need provided by the specialists in our restaurants, at our farmers' markets and our specialist cheese counters.

Go to kentfoodtrails.co.uk for details.

ONE SCOOP OR TWO?

Heavenly ice cream from Kent

It's not all savoury you know! Our creamy Kentish milk is the perfect starting point for voluptuous, indulgent ice cream, ice cream so good it scoops awards and flies off the shelves faster than our artisans can churn it out!

Kent's ice-cream makers and dairies make their ice-cream and sorbets the traditional way using only the very freshest of milk and cream for a rich and heavenly end product. No preservatives, no additives and no artificial colourings, flavourings or stabilisers!

The best part is that the rest of the great produce of the Garden of England plays its role in some fantastic local flavours and textures. You'll see Kent's cherries, raspberries, strawberries and blackcurrants playing a starring role but also other great products like honey and cobnuts. It's a taste of Kent in every scoop!

Some of our heavenly ice cream heroes...

Simply Ice Cream

14 years of ice cream experience shows in this multi-award winning brand. They get through 800 litres of Kentish milk a day and shove 3 pints of Kentish cream into every 5 litres of ice-cream! All handmade in small batches with nothing artificial, but the best part is the local (and seasonal) flavourings!

Look out for:

Coffee & Kentish Cobnut Fudge and Cherry with Cherry Brandy.



Solley's Ice Cream

The oldest ice cream maker in Kent! They use milk exclusively from the neighbouring farm's herd of Jersey and Guernsey cows - ideal for ice cream due to its high fat content. Swing by their Ice Cream Parlour, complete with farm trails and tractor rides!

Look out for:

Kentish Honey & Honeycomb and Apple & Elderflower Sorbet.

Taywell Ice Cream

Making handmade real dairy ice cream since 2006, initially as a way of utilising surplus fruit from local farms. Free from anything artificial, almost all are gluten free. Serial winners of Great Taste Awards with over 20 to their name!

Look out for:

Raspberry Ripple and Blackcurrant Sorbet.

Silcocks Farm Shop

Using organic cream and milk left over from their cheese making, constantly changing flavours reflect the seasons and ensure year-round pleasure!

Look out for:

Gooseberry, Rhubarb and Custard and Mince Pie Ice Cream.



SOMETHING TART TO FINISH?

A quick slurp of Kent's exceptional yoghurt

Ice cream is a hard act to follow, but Kent's top notch milk may just have a final ace up its sleeve when it's fermented into thick, tangy, creamy yoghurt.

It takes about 2 litres of whole milk to make 2 litres of yoghurt, although the final product will vary in taste and texture depending on the source of its milk, the time of year and what the cows are eating. Whilst many manufacturers standardise their milk, Kentish yoghurt is left untouched so that the full complexity of the natural taste comes through. We're told that making yoghurt on the morning of milking (you can't get much fresher) guarantees the best yoghurt.

The magic in yoghurt comes from the added bacteria cultures which ferment the lactose in milk to make lactic acid, which in turn acts on milk protein to give yoghurt its texture and characteristic tart flavour. For extra texture, straining the yoghurt allows the whey to run off, leaving behind an extra thick Greek style yoghurt.

And just like its iced cousin, all the best Kentish yoghurts benefit from fresh local fruits to provide their flavours!

Otties

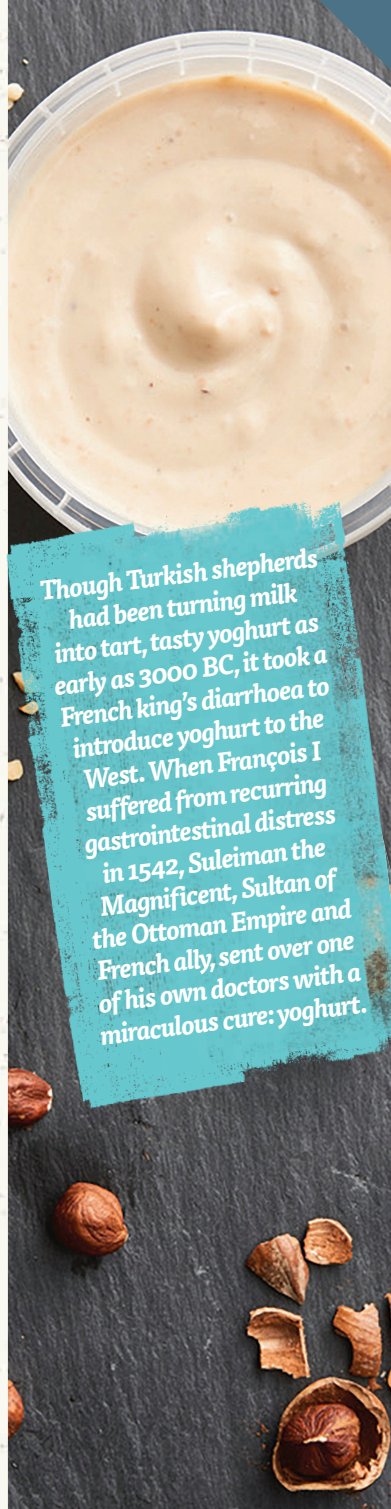
Proper Kent farm yoghurt, made with milk from their herds of Danish Reds and Holstein Friesians at Ottinge Court Farm. Comes in seven cracking flavours from Black Cherry to Apricot and Hazelnut.

Hinxden Farm Dairy

12 flavours of top Kentish live low fat and wholemilk yoghurt from their pedigree Guernsey and Holstein Friesian herds.

Street Farm Dairy

Low fat, creamy and plain yoghurt made right on the farm in the High Weald within sight of their Friesian herd.



Though Turkish shepherds had been turning milk into tart, tasty yoghurt as early as 3000 BC, it took a French king's diarrhoea to introduce yoghurt to the West. When François I suffered from recurring gastrointestinal distress in 1542, Suleiman the Magnificent, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and French ally, sent over one of his own doctors with a miraculous cure: yoghurt.



REASONS DAIRY IS GOOD FOR YOU!

Ignore the nay-sayers, dairy is an important part of a balanced diet. But did you know just how good it is for you?

1. Milk it for all its worth!

Milk contains a massive range of naturally occurring nutrients - not least calcium, potassium, protein and several B vitamins.

2. Calcium-tastic!

There is more calcium in 1 cup of milk than there is in 16 cups of spinach. You would need to eat more than 48 cups of spinach to get the recommended daily intake of calcium.

3. Runners choice!

Milk is more hydrating than water with its high quality protein, carbohydrates, calcium and electrolytes. Milk also replaces sodium lost in sweat and helps the body retain fluid better.

4. Don't fear the fat...

'Full fat' is seen as "bad" but it's the full fat varieties that are the richest in nutrients so essential for health. Choose fat but in moderation. Remember full fat is still only 4%!

5. Keep things flowing...

The calcium in milk helps bind to oxalates in food so that they can no longer be absorbed by the body, reducing the risk of kidney stones.

6. Pile on the protein...

Yoghurt packs in a hefty 12g of protein per 200g serving, supporting your metabolism by increasing your energy expenditure as well as increasing the production of hormones that signal fullness.

7. Little helpers

Some types of live yoghurt contain probiotics, which may boost digestive health by reducing the symptoms of gastrointestinal disorders such as bloating, diarrhoea and constipation.

8. Looking good!

Dairy is high in lactic acid and vitamin B - both useful to maintain supple, healthy and glowing skin.

9. Old wives tales...

Contrary to popular belief, cheese may even help you sleep as it contains the stress-reducing amino acid tryptophan.

10. Get happy!

Ice cream in particular stimulates the release of thrombotonin, another stress busting hormone that improves mood. You see - ice cream does make you happy!

THE CAT THAT GOT THE CREAM

Where to sample, taste and buy

Alright, enough talking! We're sure you're craving cheese, salivating over the thought of ice-cream and yearning for a fruity yoghurt by now. So here's the good bit - where to buy, taste and try!

Kent's dairy products are surprisingly easy to get hold of, even if a couple of our cheeses still appear to be well kept secrets! You'll find our Kent cheese at farmers' markets, food festivals and in farm shops and delis. For the dedicated, we have a growing number of specialist cheese shops too!

Doorstep deliveries of milk, cream and a wide range of dairy products by Hinxden Farm Dairy, Street Farm Dairy and Plurenden Manor Farm are also made to a growing number of our restaurants, pubs, cafés and ice cream parlours, ensuring Kent's dairy products feature regularly on their menus.

Keep an eye out for Milk Mates – raw milk vending machines – which can be found at Honeychilds Manor Farm on the Romney Marsh (check out their cream too!) and Ottinge Court Farm, deep in the heart of the Elham Valley, where they also sell their cheeses, yoghurts and other local produce.

Some dairies have their own farm shops. As well as Ottinge Court Farm, be sure to check out Silcocks Farm Shop and Plurenden Manor Farm.

For information on these as well as places to stay, eat and for things to do, go to kentfoodtrails.co.uk.

Produced in Kent

This is one of a series of food trails promoting Kent's local produce and distinctive landscapes. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the content of this leaflet is accurate and up-to-date at the time of printing, no liability can be accepted for any errors, omissions or misrepresentation of fact contained herein.

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Photo credits

Cheesemakers of Canterbury, Hinxden Farm Dairy, Kingcott Dairy, Ottinge Court Farm, Otties, Plurenden Manor Farm, Simply Ice Cream, Silcock's Farm Shop, Solley's Ice Cream, Winterdale Cheesemakers.

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The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas.



**CHEESE IS MILK'S
LEAP TOWARD
IMMORTALITY**
Clifton Fadiman



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