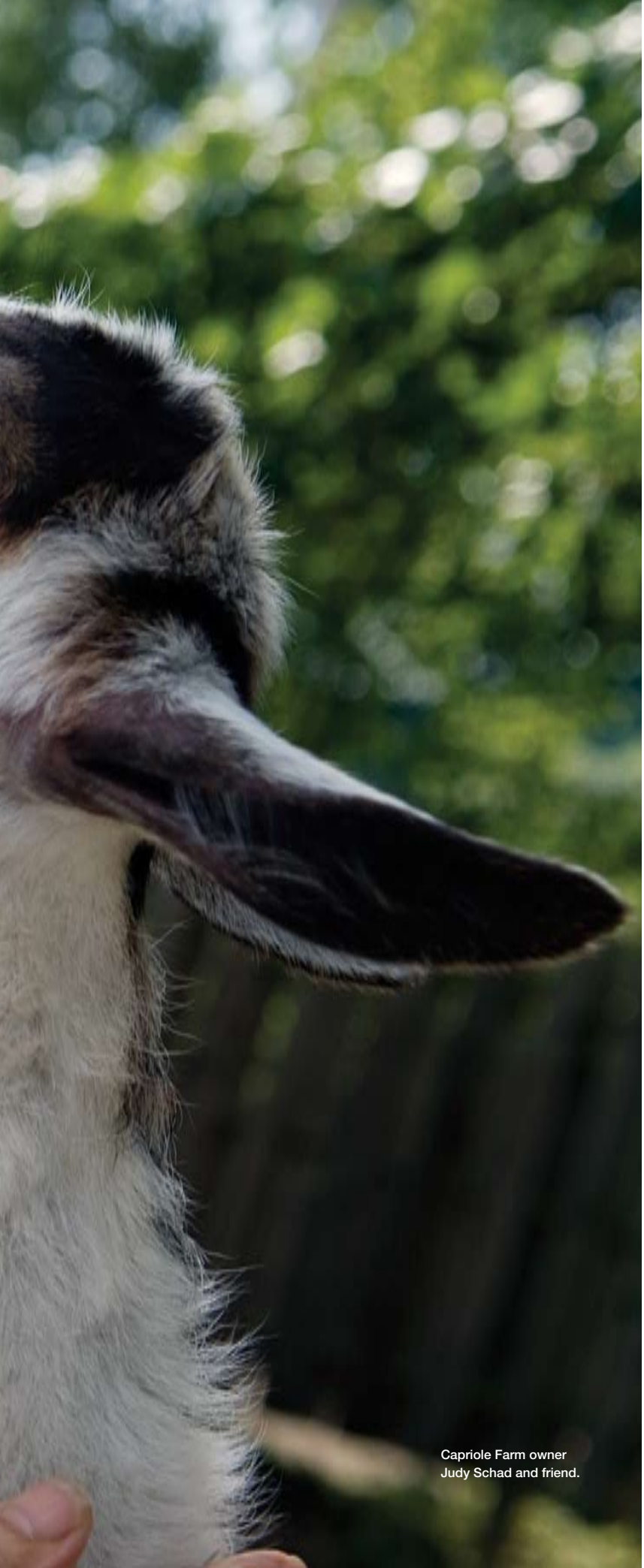

CAPRIOLE FARM
for cheese lovers everywhere



Capriole Farm owner Judy Schad and friend.

By **Christine Barbour**
photography by **Steve Raymer**

A capriole is a playful kick, a frolic in the air, a twist, a turn, a caper. Baby goats are prone to such antics—in fact, the word caper (from whence comes capriole) means goat in Latin. When Judy Schad was looking for a name for her goat farm in the southern Indiana hills, she chose Capriole, she says, because a capriole is "a happy, happy thing."

That's fitting, because making goat cheese is, by and large, a happy, happy business for Schad. It is hard work too, of course; despite the cartoon image of the hearty goat out in the field chewing on old boots and spitting out nails, goats are the most fragile of the milk animals. But still, Schad loves them all, cuddling the newborns, spoiling favorite does in their declining years, enjoying a ribald chuckle over the ripe and randy bucks, and nurturing all 300 of the current milk-producing animals into high yields for her cheeses.

Bloomington Farmers' Market-goers know Judy Schad well. She's the one wearing lipstick and pearls on Saturday mornings, with dark, laughing eyes and a fast, chatty drawl, spearing up samples of goat cheese for customers to taste, perhaps with a bit of ripe, juicy peach or rich, red tomato, and talking all the while—maybe holding three conversations at once, maybe losing track of one or two of them, but somehow ending up at the right place: with a smile and a goat cheese sale and a satisfied customer.

Satisfied with good reason. Goat cheese, known also by its French name, chèvre, is distinctive, its unmistakable tang a piquant reminder that this cheese did not come from a cow or a sheep. And Capriole goat cheese is among the best, from the fresh, soft cheeses that spread on crusty bread like cream cheese, to the heady aged cheeses, covered with ash or soft downy mold or herbs and spice or a bourbon-soaked chestnut leaf, to the more assertive washed rind cheeses that combine a hint of the barnyard with the kick of a goat.

For those who know cheese, Schad's are the cream; they have won multiple American Cheese Society awards and cheese guru Steve Jenkins, author of *The Cheese Primer*, calls them "national treasures." They've been written up everywhere from the *New Yorker* to *People Magazine*, and they appear on the menus of top restaurants across the country—from Campanile and Providence in Los Angeles, to the Everest Room and Charlie Trotter's in Chicago, to Picholine, Le Cirque, and Le Bernardin in New York.

But if Schad's cheeses are national treasures, they are also Indiana's own. Schad and her lawyer husband Larry both grew up in New Albany and they raised their three children on the farm in Greenville where she has been making goat cheese since 1982. The names of the cheeses ring with her Hoosier roots: Wabash Cannonball, O'Banon, Mont St. Francis.

Still, once she launched her business, her home state was slow to embrace her cheese. For 13 years Indiana was just a state Schad had to drive through to get to the markets in Chicago, where savvy food people lined up to buy cheeses increasingly famous on the national scene. Back home in Indiana however, restaurateurs and retailers didn't take to the idea of an artisanal goat cheese, no matter how homegrown it might be. (IU President Herman B Wells, however, was an early fan having been introduced to the cheeses by Schad's son, then working for him as a houseboy.)

Schad is a regular Saturday mornings at the Farmers' Market.

It wasn't until Schad decided to sell at the Bloomington Farmers' Market in 2001 that she finally felt a part of her own state. Unlike Indianapolis, Bloomington opened its arms (and mouths) wide to Schad; her cheeses are available now not just at the summer and winter markets but at Bloomingfoods, Sahara Mart, and Oliver Winery, and they are on the menu at Restaurant Tallent, Trulli Flatbread, tutto bène, and the soon-to-be-open Farm restaurant.

And so Schad appreciates Bloomington as Bloomington has come to appreciate her, making the hour-plus trek from Greenville to the market often (when she can't, the Capriole booth is manned by husband Larry or one of the five or six interns who come to Schad to learn cheese making from places like Transylvania or Bulgaria.) The market experience has been crucial to shaping the way the community views and enjoys the cheese. "The people in Bloomington are finally learning to trust us," Schad says, "when we tell them that this is the best cheese to eat today." But Bloomingtonians are a hungry and suspicious lot, on the whole, and the only way they know for sure is to taste and taste again—hence the crowd of regulars that gathers weekly at the Capriole Farm stand.

Farm markets were always key to how Schad does business; even before she came to Bloomington she was selling at the Bardstown Road Market in Louisville. "The face to face across the table is what farm markets are all about," she explains. "As I make a cheese, age it, wrap it, I think about who is buying it. Is it beautiful? Does it taste good? I'll have the answers on Saturday morning when I have to literally stand behind the cheese."

Those answers are important because the cheese Schad makes is farmstead cheese, meaning that it is cheese made on the farm from the milk of the animals that forage right there, the cheese changing with the seasons as the available forage changes. Unlike commercial cheeses made so that customers are guaranteed predictable bite after predictable bite, farmstead cheeses are always different, always changing, reflecting the feed, the milk, the aging process, and some variables less easy to control. (On one memorable Saturday morning some years ago, Schad offered samples of a delicious cheese with a seductive hint of blue—a serendipitous but temporary visitation by a renegade mold.)

(left) Goats "socializing" in the pen, waiting to be milked, a twice daily occurrence. (right) Judy and husband Larry at the farmhouse.

The French call it terroir—the idiosyncratic effect that the local environment has on the taste of the food that is produced within it. Capriole cheese tastes the way it does because it is made in southern Indiana and it wouldn't taste just that way if it were made anywhere else. "What I love about my cheeses is that I really believe that they reflect a place and an animal," says Schad.

The animals are the 500 Nubian, Alpine, and Saanen goats that Schad raises; the place is 80 southern Indiana acres that Larry discovered in 1977 because Judy had a hankering to live in the country. Weirdly, a title search revealed that the land had belonged to his great-great grandfather in 1856. Now, having combined a log-cabin stage-coach stop they hauled in from Santa Claus, Indiana, and a log cabin imported from Patoka Lake, the Schads live in a gracious log home that looks like it could indeed have belonged to his great-great grandfather, had he had a swimming pool out back and a serious thing for goats.

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Ah, the goats. Beyond the house and its beautifully landscaped gardens are the farm buildings—pens filled with braying, inquisitive goats that crane their necks to see visitors passing by, and sheltered barns for the newborns and their moms and for sick kids and goats who need protection from the wind and sun. What there aren't many of here are male goats—young males are culled from the herd early and sold mostly for meat. Schad is looking into ways to use the meat herself, perhaps in a cured goat prosciutto like the Italian violino. It's important to her to use every part of the animal on the farm. She says, "Everything should be part of the circle."

That utilitarian streak and commitment to sustainability temper Schad's generous, nurturing nature, and is what probably made the goat farm possible in the first place. Having found her place in the country, she wanted to raise useful animals (not what she calls "frivolous animals like horses that don't do anything but eat.") Her neighbor, Dennis Gibson, a retired librarian and art teacher, provided the solution. "Two days after we moved in he was over here telling me what to do," she says, "and he's been telling me what to do ever since." One of the things he told her was that she didn't want to be raising cows—dirty animals (he put it more graphically) that just stand around in a field. "What you need," Gibson told her, "is a goat."

And so goats she got—75 to begin with—and soon she was making goat cheese in her old-fashioned kitchen. Curious to see what was involved in commercial production, she headed east to Hubbardston, Massachusetts, to work with a woman named Letty Kilmoyer, then making goat cheese at Westfield Farm. Soon she was hauling her milk at 3 am to the Hubers cheese production facility in nearby Starlight, Indiana, and by 1988 she was in business.

"Goat cheese, known also by its French name, chèvre, is distinctive, its unmistakable tang a piquant reminder that this cheese did not come from a cow or a sheep."

Back then, in the dark ages of cheese in America, there was a small group of cheese makers, mostly women, who were breaking out the of the bland, plastic-wrapped, industrial American cheese mold. Artisans like Kilmoyer, Mary Keene of Cypress Grove in Arcata, California, and Jennifer Bice of Redwood Hill Farm in Sebastopol, California, were making small batch cheeses by hand, cheeses like those that had long been crafted in Europe.

The recipe for Schad's aged, raw milk cheese is quintessentially American, however, learned from the legendary Ig Vella, maker of Vella Dry Jack in Sonoma, California, which means that Capriole Farm cheese is the goat cheese equivalent of that all-American cow cheese Monterey Jack. More labor intensive, more expensive, less commercially viable than supermarket Monterey Jack, though, with a far more complex flavor and character, not to mention that sharp goaty edge.

For serious cheese makers (and eaters) the most complex flavors really only come through when the cheese is made from raw milk, that is, milk that has not been exposed to heat in the process of pasteurization. Schad says, "There is layer and layer and layer of flavor—a beginning, a middle, an end, and a finish—when you use raw milk. When you pasteurize you lose a lot of flavor-producing components."

Pasteurization kills bacteria in milk and is required by law in the United States for milk that is sold for human consumption, as well as for all cheeses younger than 60 days. Raw milk devotees believe that the health benefits of drinking raw milk outweigh the risk. Farmers try to circumvent the pasteurization laws by selling milk as "pet milk" (i.e., not for human consumption) or through "cow shares" (a farmer sells you a share of a cow, and can then lawfully give you the milk that comes from your own cow).

Schad finds herself in an odd position with respect to raw milk today—on the one hand she's long been an activist to preserve the ability of American cheese makers to make raw milk cheeses. Large-scale cheese producers who would prefer to dispense with competition from artisanal producers like Schad, and health advocates who fear that 60 days isn't enough to safeguard the cheese supply, would like to see the law changed to make 60-day-old raw milk cheeses illegal.

On the other hand, these days Schad finds herself on the anti-raw milk side of the fence when it comes to"pet milk" and "cow sharing." She scrupulously tests her own goat milk and knows that no matter how careful a farmer is, harmful bacteria can invade a batch of milk. The illness of just one person who consumed unregulated pet milk could undo the modest gains won by advocates of raw milk cheese making.

Political concerns aside, though, "cheese is just the perfect food," says Schad. "You don't need to do anything to it. It's magical. It's the mistakes you make that are sometimes the best cheese, but you have to know what you are doing and recognize it." These days the bad mistakes are rare and she's feeling good about her cheeses. "They are at least twice as good as when we first started," she says. "We are finally getting it." Luckily, here in Bloomington, so are we.

"Capriole cheese tastes the way it does because it is made in southern Indiana and it wouldn't taste just that way if it were made anywhere else."

(clockwise from top left) Intern Dominika Pretkiel from Poland milks the goats; two curious goats pose for the camera; fresh milk; the farmhouse and pond; Magdalena Popowicz, also from Poland, cuts the cheeses for wrapping.

THE CAPRIOLE CHEESES

Fresh Goat Cheese

Fresh goat cheese is soft and creamy and though it has a tangy edge, it can be used in cooking like cream cheese, mixed with herbs or flavorings, or eaten plain. It comes in rounds (plain or with herbes de provence), logs, buttons, or thimble-sized aperitifs. Buttons and aperitifs are delicious marinated in olive oil, chopped herbs, and roasted garlic. Keep them refrigerated.

Surface-Ripened Cheeses

These goat cheeses, allowed to dry a bit from their fresh curd state, develop a soft mold that is entirely edible and contributes to their distinctive flavor. They are best eaten as part of a cheese course, with fruit or bread. Surface-ripened goat cheese is excellent with grapes and figs but has unusual affinity for watermelon as well.

Wabash Cannonballs. These little rounds are dusted with ash and soft white mold. Judy Schad suggests pairing them with chilled sweet or crisp white wines or dessert wines.

Sofia. Named after a longtime Capriole cheese distributor, Sofia is layered with gray ash, shaped into small loaves, and sliced. Schad pairs it with chilled sweet or crisp white wines or dessert wines.

Piper's Pyramid. This cheese is dusted with paprika, making it look like the red hair of Schad's granddaughter Piper, and softened with mold. Schad pairs it with sauvignon blancs when young, sweeter wines as it ages.

Juliana. Herby and firm, like a European tome (a round, flat cheese), Juliana is named for a former Capriole intern.

Aged Raw-Milk Cheeses

Semi-hard and a bit stinky as they ripen, these cheeses are worth holding your nose for.

Old Kentucky Tomme. Mushroomy and bloomy, this aged cheese is firm and complex, and gets drier and stronger as it ages. Schad pairs it with soft reds: Zinfandels and Cotes du Rhone.

Mont St. Francis. A washed rind cheese, it's like one of the true beefy European "stinky cheeses." Of this favorite, Schad told the *New Yorker*, "The French have seven hundred years of experience, they've got experimental cheese stations, and their milk supply is subsidized, but my Mont St. Francis can kick a French Muenster all the way across the Atlantic." Schad pairs it with bourbon, fortified wines, and bitter beers.

Specialty Cheeses

O'Banon. Once named Banon, after its French cousin, Schad renamed this cheese to honor the late Indiana governor Frank O'Bannon. It is wrapped in chestnut leaves and soaked in Woodford Reserve Bourbon.

Fromage a Trois. There are two varieties of this flavored goat-cheese spread, one layered with pesto, sun-dried tomatoes, and pine nuts, the other with chocolate, pecans, and bourbon-soaked raisins.

Capriole Cheeses are available at Bloomington outlets mentioned in the article, by mail order, and at the farm. The farm store is open from 9 am-3 pm Monday-Friday. Call first to be sure someone is there. 812-923-9408. 10329 New Cut Road, Greenville. Directions available at capriolegoatcheese.com.

Summer Melon Salad with Capriole Goat Cheese

David Tallent, Restaurant Tallent
Serves 6

Goat cheese quenelles
8-10 oz fresh Capriole goat cheese, softened
2 cups fresh herbs, chopped
Olive oil

Salad
1 small, sweet watermelon (red or yellow), cut into dice or balls, as preferred
1 small to medium cantaloupe, cut as preferred
1 cup kalamata olives, pitted and chopped
½ pint cherry tomatoes, cut in half
4-5 oz baby salad greens and herbs (arugula, basil, tarragon, parsley, mint, or a combination)

Dressing
Extra virgin olive oil, to taste
Chopped tarragon, to taste
Minus 8 vinegar (or other vinegar, as preferred), to taste
Salt and pepper to taste

Blend goat cheese and herbs in processor or by hand. Add a small amount of olive oil to moisten and smooth the mixture. Set aside.

Mix melon, olives, tomatoes, and greens together. Toss with salt and pepper and chopped tarragon to taste. Drizzle with olive oil, and toss gently. Add vinegar to taste, and toss again.

Plate as desired, individually or family style, with a heap of salad garnished with goat cheese quenelles (goat cheese shaped in ovals with two spoons) or scooped with a melon baller. If desired, drizzle with herb oil (1 cup of herbs puréed with canola or grapeseed oil—do not use olive oil for this as the heat generated by the blender will make it bitter). Serve cold.

Photo by Christine Barbour

Capriole Goat Cheese Tart with Indiana Corn and Oven-dried Tomatoes

Jeff Finch, Trulli Flatbread
Serves 6

Crust
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon salt
4 Tablespoons butter, cold
1½ Tablespoons vegetable shortening
3 Tablespoons ice water
2 Tablespoons mixed herbs, chopped

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
Combine flour and salt. Add butter and vegetable shortening, and mix into flour by squeezing it between your fingertips until it resembles coarse cornmeal. Add fresh herbs and water and continue to mix until dough forms a ball. Do not over-handle (you can use a food processor for this step). Flatten the dough into a disk, wrap with plastic wrap and chill for at least 30 minutes (dough can be made ahead to this point and refrigerated overnight).

When ready to roll the dough, let it sit out for 20 minutes to soften. Roll the dough out on a floured board until it is large enough to fit into a 10-inch round tart pan with a removable bottom. Place the dough in the pan and press it up against the sides. Remove any excess dough. Line the crust with foil and weight it with pie weights or beans. Bake at 375 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove the weights and foil and bake for 5 more minutes. Let crust cool completely in the pan.

Custard
7 oz fresh Capriole goat cheese, softened
6 Tablespoons unsalted butter
½ cup sour cream
2 large eggs
⅔ cup corn kernels, removed from cob (approximately 2 cobs worth)
1 cup cherry or pear tomatoes
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper

Preheat oven to 200 degrees.
Slice tomatoes in half and place on a parchment-paper-lined baking sheet, cut side up. Roast at 200 degrees for 2 hours. Cool.

Raise oven temperature to 350 degrees.
In a bowl, whisk together the cheese, butter, sour cream, eggs, salt, and pepper. Mix the corn kernels and oven-dried tomatoes into the custard. Pour custard into crust and smooth top with a rubber spatula. Bake for 30 minutes until filling is set. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Photo by Christine Barbour