

VALUE ADDED

Name: **Paul and Rachel Candy**

Herd size: **Frome, Somerset**

Adding value: **On-farm gelato**

processing and sales



Rachel Candy: “Gelato is much more luxurious than ice-cream”

‘High-end’ processing

text Rachael Porter

A taste of Italy – or rather Somerset – is available from Paul and Rachel Candy’s dairy unit, based at Pyle Farm near Frome. The pair began processing some of their 200-cow Holstein herd’s milk into gelato in March and already they have a strong customer base and big plans to grow their diversification.

“Investing in processing has been gradual,” explains Rachel. “We knew, from speaking to other people, that you have to learn to run before you can walk.” So this year has been about getting the product right. “It’s a high-end product. And it’s made using milk, rather than cream, which is what initially attracted us to the idea,” says Paul.

The all-year-round calving herd, which is grazed for at least six months of the year, currently averages 8,800kg of milk at 4.2% butterfat and 3.3% protein. Nearly all the milk is sold to cheese maker Barbers. “And we use about 120 litres a week for gelato,” says Rachel explaining that the product is much more ‘luxurious’ than ice-cream and sold under the

business’ ‘Palette and Pasture’ brand (Rachel is also an artist by trade).

“Ice-cream contains up to 50% air, but gelato contains between 20% and 30%, which gives it a richer taste.”

The catalyst for their diversification was farm-gate milk prices. “We wanted to mitigate some of the market volatility that we face. But we’ll never process all our milk into gelato – we don’t want to see it being sold everywhere,” says Rachel. “For us, it’s about making a top-quality product that we can sell through our own on-farm ice-cream parlour, our events trailer, and a few local shops and cafes. We can add value to some of our milk – four times the liquid price. And selling gelato directly to consumers also encourages positive engagement with the public and that’s something we’re also passionate about.

The Candy’s gelato certainly brings people to the yard! They had 1,500 visitors on Open Farm Sunday in June. “And we’re holding another ‘mini’ open day in August,” adds Paul.

“It’s been a crazy summer so far, and it’s also been fantastic – probably helped by

the hot and dry weather. The business has got off to a better start than we could have hoped for,” adds Rachel.

With help from Paul’s parents, Diana and Terry, they make six ‘basic’ flavours: white gold, which is plain milk; salted caramel; coffee and walnut; summer fruits; strawberry; and mint choc chip.

“We produce a natural product – no colourings or artificial flavours are added. Strawberry gelato is made with fruit puree and mint choc chip is made with mint from the garden.”

Another USP is their trailer, which can be hired for shows and events, with flavours chosen by the customer. “We’ll make whatever they want. Pink gin has proved popular this year.

“People like the trailer. Whenever we’ve taken it out we’ve made one or two more bookings as a result. We’ve a few slots booked this year, but I think we’ll be flat out with it next summer,” adds Rachel.

➔ For more information visit: www.paletteandpasture.co.uk