

Cowbella Dairy Products

The opportunity to share their love of everything Jersey is a dream-come-true for the family that makes Cowbella products. The butter and yogurt-making enterprise of Danforth Jersey Farm preserves a family legacy that encompasses seven generations of the Danforth family. The farm in the heart of the Catskill Mountains, in Jefferson, N.Y., has been operated continuously since 1817 and milked Registered Jerseys since the 1930s.



Cowbella Dairy Products, in its fourth month of existence, is operated by Shannon Mason and her mother, Gail Peake. Danforth Jersey Farm is managed by Shannon and her uncle, Russell Danforth, who is the fifth-generation to work the family farm.

The inspiration for Cowbella was Shannon's great-great grandmother, Martha Danforth.

"When her husband died young, leaving her with five little girls and an 11-year-old son to care for on her own, Martha made butter to keep the farm alive until Everett was old enough to run it," noted Shannon. "Skilled at her craft, she even sent butter to the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893 and won an award. The elegant award is proudly displayed in the kitchen where we experiment with butter seasonings today."

Milk is transported from the dairy barn to the processing plant on the farm using a small bulk tanker. Milk is pasteurized and separated at the plant. Cream is used for butter. Nonfat milk is used for yogurt. Batches of 400 lbs. of milk are processed three times a week. Each batch yields 25 lbs. of butter and 360 lbs. of yogurt. Every batch is made by hand with natural ingredients, without the use of fillers, thickeners or preservatives.

Butter is produced in salted, garlic-oregano and seasonal varieties, including lemon-dill, cranberry-orange, fig-vanilla, honey-cinnamon and maple. Yogurt is made in plain, maple and fruit flavors in season.

Cowbella products are currently sold to 15 retail markets and restaurants in upstate New York and will soon be carried in an additional six locations, including two major supermarket chains.

Quality begins with the milk, which comes from the Danforth Jersey Farm's herd of 30 milking cows. The herd is enrolled on REAP and has a 2010 lactation average of 20,321 lbs. milk, 924 lbs. fat and 734 lbs. protein. The herd also ranks among the top 50 in the nation for Jersey Performance Index (JPI), with an average JPI of +49 after the February 2011 genetic evaluations.

"Jerseys have so many assets that make them great," continued Shannon. "But their milk is especially perfect for making butter. The quality can be seen in the rich, goldenrod color and sweet, creamy taste of our butter."

"We love to promote our herd as being all-Jersey and educate consumers about the breed. More and more people want to become informed about the food they eat and develop a personal connection with the people that produce their food."

"We encourage consumers to visit the farm to get to know us, our home and our cows."

The ultimate goal of Cowbella is to enable the next generation—Shannon and Hamilton Mason's children, Daisy and Gus—to continue the Jersey journey that began nearly eight decades ago.

