



# Jumping Good Goat Dairy

## 'Breaking The Trail'

### In Heart Of The Rocky Mountains

Despite a few disappointments in Colorado's artisan cheese industry over the past several years, goat cheese maker Dawn Jump sees the current market as a favorable opportunity.

As owner and head cheese maker Jumping Good Goat Dairy, her decade of cheesemaking experience and optimistic attitude helped launch Colorado's newest specialty cheese venture.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm breaking trail, and I'm doing it up here in the high country," Jump said.

In February 2006, Bingham Hill Cheese Company, one of Colorado's largest specialty cheese manufacturers, announced it was closing – predicated on the loss of a major customer and a concurrent need to invest in a new facility.

And in July 2008, Haystack Mountain Goat Dairy made the decision to shutter its 15-year-old facility in Niwot, CO, just two years after plans were made to increase the size of its Longmont creamery, and build a cheesemaking facility in Ada, OK.

Despite these setbacks, Jump remains positive about the future of her company.

"I think the door is wide open for me; it's one of the reasons I chose this spot," Jump said. "I learned to make cheese here."

Jumping Good Goat Dairy is located in Bueno Vista, right in the heart of the Rocky Mountains – Denver is just over one mountain, Colorado Springs is over another, and the upscale towns of Vail and Breckenridge are both within a 30-minute drive.

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—Dawn Jump,  
Jumping Goat Dairy

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In less than an hour and a half, I can be in a major city or beautiful town like Aspen or Vail or Breckenridge, Jump said.

She first began making cheese over 10 years ago as an employee at a historical museum, where Jump provided real-life demonstrations depicting pioneer life in the 1800s.

"As my interest began to take hold, I tried milking a goat in the pasture one day and the milk was very distasteful because all they had eaten was mustard and bitterwheat," she said.

So Jump began passionately pursuing dairy science – studying how cheese is made and practicing recipes literally on her kitchen stove for more than five years.

She also enlisted the help of cheese consultant Marc Bates and fellow members of the American Cheese Society (ACS), as well as Jim Schott, former owner of Haystack Mountain Goat Dairy.

Jump soon realized her land in Colorado did not provide enough space to realize her dream cheese factory, so she relocated to the Washington coast and built a small start-up operation in 2003.

In 2006, Jumping Good Goat Dairy earned an award for its four-month-old Pacific Porcini at the American Cheese Society's (ACS) Cheese Competition. Jump entered some of that same cheese – now almost four years old – into this year's ACS contest.

"We served some of it at our grand opening and it was a great hit," Jump said.

The company earned second place honors in the Fresh Goat's Milk – Cheeses Flavored with Herbs, Extracts, Truffles & Truffle Oil category at the 2009 ACS contest with its Rocky Mountain Dawn Lemon Dill Chevre.

By 2007, the dairy had 48 producing does and was making 7,000 pounds of cheese annually. The operation was exclusively family-run, from milking and cheesemaking to marketing and distribution.

But Jump missed her Colorado roots, and made the decision to return to Colorado – dairy operation in tow – at the end of 2008.

"It was a difficult decision, but I desperately missed the high altitude and climate of the Rockies," Jump said. "I first began making cheese here. It was a painful and difficult journey, but well worth it. We're really glad we made the move."

The area is not unlike the altitude in France or the Alps, she continued.

Settling in, the dairy received tremendous support from the community, Jump said. Volunteers helped out with an early kidding season hindered by snow, and by March of 2008, floorplans for the operation

were complete.

"It took seven or eight tries to get my floorplan exactly the way I wanted it – successful and efficient, as well as being open for visitors and agri-tourism," Jump said.

From up here in the valley, all of the old dairies are long gone, Jump continued. Bringing it back was a passion of mine; we also received great support from the community and county government.

With additional locally-sourced milk, the new 4,200-square foot facility is slated to produce about 250,000 pounds of cheese this year.

"I'm really glad I gave such thought to that floorplan, because I allowed myself plenty of space – as well as equipment space – for growth," Jump said.

The operation now has 101 producing does, and makes exclusively goat's milk cheese. However, Jump is encouraging other local dairies to bring in sheep for future mixed milk varieties.

#### Selection Changes With The Season

In spring, Jumping Good Goat Dairy kicks off its cheesemaking season with fresh chevre – Rocky Mountain Dawn Chevre, Lemon Dill, and Chili Cumin Garlic. As spring continues, Jump will add flowering chives to her fresh chevre.

Greek-style yogurt is also available in the spring, flavored with mixed berries and honey, or plain.

The dairy's warm weather lineup also includes Buffalo Peak Feta, which Jump said is a favorite with local restaurants because of its versatility. After that, a Queso Nuevo – a pressed, fresh Cheddar-style cheese.

Mid-summer, Jumping Good will come out with its first medium aged Cheddars, followed by Jack styles and both fresh and aged Garlic Goat cheese.

"That's been a big hit over the years," Jump said. "It's a nice, medium Cheddar, and some of my aged Garlic Goats get really sharp and crystallized."

The dairy also experiments with rotating flavors like Hot Chocolate – chevre with chipotle and cocoa. Mid-summer is also when Jumping Good's first batch of Rustic Blue and washed rind Tallegios hit the market.

"Many of my mentors have mentioned that I might want to 'dial it in' and just come out with three or four of the best cheeses, and really focus on those," Jump said.

But here at the dairy, we've created Jumping Good's Country Store – the company's onsite, rustic log-

built retail store, she said. It's fun to be able to offer so many different kinds of cheeses.

"Also, when restaurants come in and want a specific format – if I get orders for those cheeses – we have the capacity to bring in the numbers," Jump continued.

The dairy sells a good portion of its cheese through the retail store, and ships products back to restaurants and specialty stores on the West Coast. It is also looking at the possibility of delivering products through a distributor.

Along with Jump, the dairy is run by general manager Laurie Hanrahan; cheese maker Andrea Bartone; production personnel Dan Kanagy and Danny Gaunce; packaging personnel Brenda Allgood and Thomas Vigil; bookkeeper Cathy Pollock and retail sales associates Bethany Pollock and Erynn Hickins.

"I have a wonderful team of people here," Jump said. "There's been a lot of support and interest in the dairy, so I've been able to pull together a great team."

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"There's windows all around the cheesemaking plant. When you're in there milking the goats, you can turn right around and see where the milk is going, how it's being processed from one vat to the other, how the cheese is being pressed – it's a wide open floor plan," Jump said.

Aging caves, naturally ventilated and lined with river rock, have been constructed on the other side of the plant. The caves can store 3,700 wheels of cheese at a time.

Eventually, Jump said she would like to see her products achieve nationwide distribution. She would also like to see more caves in which to age cheese.

"I'm already feeling the building coming on again, because the country store needs to be bigger. We're just packing people in there on weekends," Jump said.

For more information, contact Jumping Good Goat Dairy at (719) 395-4646 or visit [www.jumpgoodgoats.com](http://www.jumpgoodgoats.com). **FR**