



Courtesy of Stuyt Dairy

Anastasia Stuyt, cheesemaker at Stuyt Dairy Farmstead Cheese Co., holds a handcrafted 20-pound wheel of Gouda cheese next to Holstein Licky Lou. Rick Stuyt, right, is co-owner with his wife, Ansally Stuyt. The cheese operation began in 2015.

Stuyt Dairy family adds cheesemaking to its menu

By **JULIA HOLLISTER**
For the Capital Press

Ansally Stuyt, co-owner of Stuyt Dairy, really knows the business. It is part of her family history.

“My husband, Rick, and I both grew up on a dairy,” she said. “Our great-grandfathers had a dairy and then our grandfathers, then down to our parents.”

Her family has farmed at the current location in Escalon, Calif., for more than 50 years.

She grew up involved in 4-H and FFA, and he grew up in the Netherlands and came to California for an internship. Rick had become interested in making cheese and in California he started by making it for friends and family.

“After we were married 31 years ago, we both worked for my parents,” she said. “Growing up, our three children helped with the chores on the dairy, feeding calves, milking, driving tractors and more. They were also in 4-H and FFA and the two girls — Anastasia and

Michelle — were District 5 dairy princesses.”

They bought out her parents’ ownership of the farm in 2005, and today the business is family-operated. The herd consists of 500 Holsteins. The dairy is Stuyt Dairy and the cheese plant, adjacent to the farm, goes by Stuyt Dairy Farmstead Cheese Co. LLC.

The dairy crafts farmstead cheese in small batches. Anastasia works full-time in the cheese plant as a cheesemaker. Her father, Rick taught her the cheesemaking process from start to finish.

Michelle is working at California State University-Monterey Bay and will come home the end of the year in a marketing, technical and distribution role.

Son Nicholas is an assistant agriculture instructor at Modesto Junior College and helps out on the farm.

“We made our first batch of cheese in September 2015 and sold it in late December of that year,” Ansally said.

The cheese is a raw milk farmstead Gouda sold with

several different flavors: smoked, cumin, garlic herb, onion parsley, crushed red pepper, jalapeno and chipotle.

“We age it over 60 days and up to 18 months,” she said.

The cheese is sold through local stores in the area, where it retails for \$11 to \$12 a pound.

The company is expanding, but Ansally acknowledges the California dairy industry faces major challenges.

“The two main factors are low milk prices and the pricing system,” she said. “Also, California is no longer an ag-friendly state with all the rules and regulations: water and air board fees along with all the paperwork.”

She also said that the state has “other small, hidden fees, that you could call taxes, because they will never go away. These factors, plus the fact that the state has lost many dairies, make it a challenge to dairy in California.”



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