

People & Places

Cheesemaking a lifestyle and passion

Tamara Hicks, David Jablons create niche with farm, creamery

By JULIA HOLLISTER
For the Capital Press

WEST MARIN, Calif. — Husband and wife team Tamara Hicks and David Jablons grew up on opposite sides of the U.S. — he in Manhattan and she in rural San Diego County.

Health and healthful eating lured them into farming.

Longtime lovers of the West Marin landscape north of the Bay Area, Hicks and Jablons were so inspired by the region's agricultural history that in 2003 they purchased their own farm with help from the Marin Agricultural Land Trust and a USDA rural development grant.

The couple purchased a non-functioning old cow dairy and have extensively restored the soil and water systems as well as the buildings. The 160 acres of rolling pasture a few miles from Tomales Bay was dubbed Toluma Farms.

They milked goats for 8 years, then added sheep. They started making cheese 5 years ago as Tomales Farmstead Creamery.

"David still works at University of California-San Francisco (as an oncologist and lung cancer researcher). I am a clinical psychologist and have recently given up my private practice but still provide coaching focusing on life/work balance and creating the life you want," Hicks said.

Hicks said the couple wanted to be part of the solution to several problems, such as unhealthful eating and the disappearance of the local ag economies.



Courtesy Toluma Farms

Tamara Hicks and David Jablons began their dairy 15 years ago as part of the Slow Food Movement. Today they raise several sheep and goat breeds for their high-quality milk and cheese.

Small equals good

"The U.S. was all about small-scale farming until the World War II and that system worked extremely well. We believe it is important to return to small-scale farming," she said.

Today, the family raises several animal breeds recognized for their high-quality milk, including Alpine, La Mancha, Nubian, Oberhasli, Saanen and Toggenburg dairy goats and East Friesian sheep. The creamery's cheeses bear Coast Miwok Native American names in honor of the land's first inhabitants. For example, Atika, meaning "two," is an award-winning aged cheese made from goat's and sheep's milk.

The creamery's farmstead cheeses are produced exclusively with milk from Animal Welfare Approved herds raised on certified organic pastures.

"The food buyers and chefs

from San Francisco and the Bay Area seek out high quality, sustainable and local foods, so we have never had to do any marketing," Hicks said.

They also are bringing their cheese operation to the city.

"We are in the process of expanding our creamery," she said. "This will be the first cheesemaking facility there. We will be making cultured butter, cream cheese and quark along with making bagels — how can we not, with making cream cheese and David being from Manhattan and (talking) about there not being enough good New York-style bagels in San Francisco?"

Farmers' market

They sell their cheeses at the Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market as well as the farmers' markets in San Rafael and Oakland. Their cheese is also available in many cheese shops and restaurants.

"We've been proud to host

Toluma Farms at the Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market, with their delicious, award-winning cheeses and their commitment to sustainability and education," said Marcy Coburn, executive director of the Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture, known by the acronym CUESA, the non-profit that runs the market. "They've also been a cornerstone partner in CUESA's Goat Festival, bringing their adorable baby goats to our farmers' market to educate urban dwellers about humane animal welfare and cheesemaking."

"David and I took cheesemaking classes in Vermont and I received a cheesemaking certificate from the College of Marin," Hicks said. "David has a knack for it since he is a scientist. However, we went from knowing nothing about cheesemaking to knowing next-to-nothing



Western Innovator

Toluma Farms

Owners: Tamara Hicks and David Jablons

Home: West Marin County, Calif.

Occupation: Sheep and goat farm, cheese dairy

Quote: "We are trying to be smart about how we expand, not by adding more animals but by moving aspects of the operation into San Francisco. This way we can educate the urban population about buying local, knowing where your food comes from."

so we hired cheesemakers who really know what they are doing."

Hicks manages the land and farm education aspects while David focuses on cheese production and animal health.

The average day begins with milking at 7:30 a.m.

The cheesemakers make deliveries several times a week. They offer cheese-tasting classes, tours, cheesemaking or farmstays.

"These 'activities' have been a great extra revenue stream," she said.

Hicks admits there are challenges.

"It is really challenging for a dairy of our size to become profitable," she said. "So much of the food industry has been built to succeed only within large-scale operations. We want to stay small."

Longtime volunteer Bob Spinney receives 2018 OWA Service Award

Dinner auction fundraiser scheduled for April 21

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

Oregon Women for Agriculture, an all-volunteer organization dedicated to promoting the importance of agriculture statewide, has presented its 2018 Service Award to Bob Spinney of Albany, Ore.

Spinney has worked most of his career as an agronomist and crop protection specialist. He has also assisted with crop research for Oregon State University, OSU Extension



Oregon Women for Agriculture

and local growers. He has also been an active volunteer for OWA for decades, according to the organization's press release.

His most recent contribution to agricultural education has been the placement and up-

keep of crop identification signs around the Willamette Valley and Interstate 5 corridor. OWA described Spinney

as a tireless advocate for agriculture, and OWA.

The award was presented to Spinney on March 18 at the Cascade Grill in Albany.

Meanwhile, OWA is gearing up for its 31st annual auction and dinner Saturday, April 21, at the Linn County Fair and Expo Center in Albany. The event begins at 4:30 p.m. with a silent auction, followed by dinner at 6:15 and a live auction at 7:45.

Tickets are \$50 per person before April 7, and \$60 per person after April 7. Dinner will include appetizers, a no host bar, grilled oysters, lamb, baron of beef and roasted pig.

For more information, visit www.owaonline.org or call 503-243-3276.

Calendar

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301 or emailed to newsroom@capitalpress.com. Write "Calendar" in the subject line.

Through April 30

Wooden Shoe Tulip Fest. 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm, 33814 S. Meridian Road, Woodburn, Ore. The colorful annual festival includes a wide variety of activities. Cost: \$5 per person for 13 and older. Maximum per car charge of \$20. Website: <https://www.woodenshoe.com/>

Through April 7

Idaho FFA State leadership Conference. College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls, Idaho. Website: <https://www.idahoffa.org/conferences-conventions/>

Saturday, April 7

28th Dayton FFA Alumni Auction and Dinner. 5:30-9 p.m. Old Dayton High School Gym, 801 Ferry St., Dayton, Ore. The auction is the largest fundraiser the Dayton FFA Alumni does each year. If you or your business would like to donate an item, time, money or services to this year's auction, or if you are interested in joining Dayton FFA Alumni, please contact Mitch Coleman at (503) 864-2080. The silent auction starts at 5:30 p.m. The first table closes at 6:30 p.m. and dinner featuring local foods will be served at 7. Cost: \$10 at the

door or from the Dayton Ag Shop at 503-864-2080.

Basic Irrigation System Design and Operation. 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Dunbar Farms, Medford, Ore. This class will look at a variety of irrigation systems suitable for different crops. The class will be particularly useful for those planning to build or alter their irrigation systems. The day of instruction includes a trip around Dunbar Farms to look at a wide variety of pump stations and irrigation methods in operation. These systems will include overhead sprinklers for hay, drip irrigation in wine grapes, high uniformity rotator sprinklers for row crops, large volume canons for infrequent irrigation purposes and flood irrigation in hay. Directions to the farm will be sent to registrants upon receipt of a submitted registration. Registration options other than on line, contact Paula, 541-776-7371. Register online: <http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarms> Cost: \$35 per person. Website: <http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarms>

Tuesday, April 10

Southern Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame induction. 6:30-9 p.m. Turf Club, 734 Falls Ave., Twin Falls, Idaho. This year's inductees are: cattle rancher Jim Baker of Filer; sheep and cattle ranchers Ed and Emily Baker (posthumously) of Filer; cattle ranchers Scott and Sarah Bedke of Oakley; dairy producers Harry and Flora Bokma of Buhl; long-time Bureau of Land Management supervisor Dean Brown of Jerome; and cattle ranchers Wade and Gwenna Prescott of Carey. Cost: \$25

Saturday, April 14

Small Acreage Expo. 8:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m. Heritage Farm, 1919 N.E. 78th St., Vancouver, Wash. A full day of workshops will be offered, and representatives from a variety of agricultural organizations and agencies will be on hand. Cost: \$15 in advance, \$25 at the expo. Website: expo2018.brownpapertickets.com

Understanding and Maintaining Farm Equipment. 1-5 p.m. Dunbar Farms, Medford, Ore. This class offers an introduction to farm equipment maintenance and repair including: how small gas engines and larger gas and diesel engines run, basic maintenance and tuning; trouble-shooting problems and how to tell whether you can fix a problem. Register online at <http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarms> or send an email to paula.burkhalter@oregonstate.edu or call 541-776-7371. Cost: \$20 each person Website: <http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarms>

Thursday, April 19

In the Field: Salem Agriculture Seminar. 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Willamette Heritage Center, 1313 Mill St. SE, Salem, Ore. A no-cost seminar for a discussion specifically designed to provide agribusiness owners and their managers with the tools they need to get organized. Topics include the new tax cuts, finances and financial statements, regulatory updates on water and wetlands, organizing an agri-business and estate planning for farms and ranches. Sponsored by Schwabe, Williamson and Wyatt. RSVP at <http://bit.ly/2FwaRPV>. Cost: Free

Shepherds' Extravaganza. 2-10 p.m. Washington State Fair, 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. Sheep and Fleece Show, vendors of supplies, used fiber-related equipment, demonstrations, workshops. Cost: No cost after admission to the Spring Fair. Website: www.shepherds-extravaganza.com

Friday, April 20

Changing Hands: A Workshop on Farm Succession Planning and Access to Land. 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Harmony West Campus, Clackamas Community College, 7726 SE Harmony Road, Milwaukie, Ore. Rogue Farm Corps' workshop will bring together aspiring and retiring farmers for a full day of training on land access and succession planning. We will also have some facilitated networking on regional issues throughout the day so we can begin to build a community that will last beyond the workshops. If you are an aspiring farmer, come learn about creative ways to start your farm business with topics on finding, leasing, financing and buying agricultural land. If you are a retiring farmer, come learn from experts about what it takes to pass on your business to the next generation — keeping it in the family or finding others to carry it on. Cost: \$20 Website: www.roguefarmcorps.org/planning

Thursday-Sunday April 19-22

Puyallup Spring Fair. Washington State Fairgrounds, 110

Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. Website: <http://www.thefair.com/spring-fair>

Saturday, April 21

Oregon Women for Agriculture and Dinner. 5:30 p.m. Linn County Fair and Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road, Albany, Ore. This exciting event is a fundraiser for Oregon Women for Agriculture, which advocates for all things involving agriculture in the state. Web: owaonline.org

Tree School East. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Baker High School, 2500 E St., Baker City, Ore. This year the school will offer 29 classes on everything from multi-aged forest management, forest insects and disease, controlling weeds, how to survive in the wild, ownership succession planning, to geology of Northeast Oregon, wildflower identification and small scale harvesting for the "do it yourself" folks. The goal is to provide a wide variety of topics valuable for family forestland owners, professional foresters and forest contractors. Sponsored by OSU Extension, the Oregon Forest Resources Institute and the Oregon Small Woodlands Association. Cost: \$50, \$20 for 18 and younger with an adult family member. Website: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/baker/>

Sunday-Wednesday April 22-25

California FFA State Convention. Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, Calif. Website: <http://www.calaged.org/stateconvention>

Capital Press

Established 1928
Board of directors
Mike Forrester
Steve Forrester
Kathryn Brown
Susan Rana
Mike Omeg

Corporate Officer
Heidi Wright
Chief Operating Officer

Capital Press Managers

Joe Beach Editor & Publisher
Elizabeth Yutzie Sell Advertising Director
Carl Sampson Managing Editor
Jessica Boone Production Manager
Samantha McLaren Circulation Manager

Entire contents copyright © 2018
EO Media Group
dba Capital Press

An independent newspaper
published every Friday.

Capital Press (ISSN 0740-3704) is published weekly by EO Media Group, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem OR 97301.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, OR, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to Capital Press, P.O. Box 2048 Salem, OR 97308-2048.

To Reach Us

Circulation 800-882-6789
Email Circulation@capitalpress.com
Main line 503-364-4431
Fax 503-370-4383
Advertising Fax 503-364-2692

News Staff

Idaho
Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise
Brad Carlson 208-914-8264

Cent. Washington
Dan Wheat 509-699-9099

W. Washington
Don Jenkins 360-722-6975

E Washington
Matthew Weaver 509-688-9923

Oregon
George Plaven 406-560-1655
Mateusz Perkowski 800-882-6789

Graphic artist

Alan Kenaga 800-882-6789

To Place Classified Ads

Ad fax 503-364-2692
or 503-370-4383
Telephone (toll free) 800-882-6789
Online www.capitalpress.com/classifieds

Subscriptions

Mail rates paid in advance
Easy Pay U.S. \$3.75/month (direct withdrawal from bank or credit card account)
1 year U.S. \$49.99
2 years U.S. \$89.99
1 year Canada \$275
1 year other countries call for quote
1 year Internet only \$49.99
1 year 4-H, FFA students and teachers \$30
9 months 4-H, FFA students & teachers \$25
Visa and Mastercard accepted

To get information published

Mailing address:
Capital Press
P.O. Box 2048
Salem, OR 97308-2048

News: Contact the main office or news staff member closest to you, send the information to newsroom@capitalpress.com or mail it to "Newsroom," c/o Capital Press. Include a contact telephone number.

Letters to the Editor: Send your comments on agriculture-related public issues to opinions@capitalpress.com, or mail your letter to "Opinion," c/o Capital Press. Letters should be limited to 300 words. Deadline: Noon Monday.

Capital Press ag media

www.capitalpress.com
www.FarmSeller.com
marketplace.capitalpress.com
www.facebook.com/capitalpress
www.facebook.com/farmseller
twitter.com/capitalpress
www.youtube.com/capitalpressvideo

Index

Dairy 9
Markets 13
Opinion 6

Correction policy

Accuracy is important to Capital Press staff and to our readers.

If you see a misstatement, omission or factual error in a headline, story or photo caption, please call the Capital Press news department at 503-364-4431, or send email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.