

# She Created A New Career Right On The Farm

Gianacis Caldwell and her husband Vern returned to her parents' farm to start a goat dairy. It turned out that was just the beginning of a new career. Today she is an author, speaker, teacher, consultant, blogger and innkeeper, as well as a cheesemaker and dairy goat breeder.

Caldwell says the diversity of their farm-based business has allowed them to grow without expanding their goat herd too fast for the land they farm. She knows they could make more money by concentrating on making fresh chevre (a soft goat cheese), but she likes having something different to do every day.

The diversification didn't just happen. After 20 years as a military family, her husband Vern retired from the Marines. They expanded their goat herd slowly, then built a small dairy and began to make cheese. Today Pholia Farm has 70 head of Nigerian Dwarf goats on 24 acres. They make aged, raw milk cheese with names like Brown's Gulch, Hillis Peak and Elk Mountain.

The goats have been carefully bred for quality and productivity. "It means we need fewer, but it also makes them more valuable to others," says Caldwell.

Vern has been a member of the state cheese board and is currently running for the national board. Gianacis started writing a book, "The Farmstead Creamery Advisor", a complete guide to building and running a small, farm-based cheese business (2010). Next came "Mastering Artisan Cheesemaking", the ultimate guide for home scale and market producers (2012). Her latest book is "The Small Scale Dairy", a complete guide to milk production for the home and market (2014).

Her blog tackles technical subjects and issues like testing for Listeria and somatic cell count limits, once-a-day milking, and details about cheesemaking. She shares information on everything from cheese

mites that consume cheese rind to animal care and health, milk and milking to creamery design and business.

Their farm website covers a wide range of topics. It even offers detailed instructions for building a Nigerian Dwarf goat-sized milking stand out of pvc pipe.

"When we started our dairy, we turned to the internet and a couple of books on developing business plans for small farms," recalls Caldwell. "For our situation, advice just wasn't there. I want to share what we have learned."

Things she says she has learned include:

- Have a business plan, but be open to change
- No matter how well you plan, expect some poor decisions
- Every situation is unique; you can't anticipate everything
- Evaluate current and growing markets and find the niche where you want to spend your life, whether it's farmers markets, retail or other

Caldwell says the business plan she and her husband started with was spot on in some areas, but way off in others. Mistakes made include using concrete block for the dairy building because she always wanted one like it when she was growing up.

"It wasn't the best choice," she says.

She also recalls ordering and planting 500 forage willows in an attempt to produce

browse for the goat herd. The fact that none survived was one mistake. Another was realizing that since they were willows, she could have bought one and planted more from cuttings.

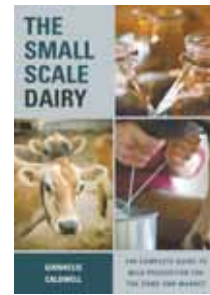
Adding a Farmstay Experience was a major change and diversification. The Caldwells installed a refurbished 1970 Airstream Land Yacht on the farm. Like other aspects of Pholia Farm, it does more than simply add another income stream for the farm

"We like to see people come and stay, and stay longer, not just for our benefit, but for the community," says Caldwell. "It puts money into the local economy. We encourage them to

eat at local restaurants and spend time in the area. Urban people need the rural connection, and they help us to not lose sight of what we have."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Pholia Farm, 9115 W. Evans Creek Rd., Rogue River, Ore. 97537 (ph 541-582-8883; gianacis@gmail.com; www.pholiafarm.com; gianaciscaldwell.wordpress.com).

Caldwell's book can be ordered at Chelsea Green Publishing (ph 800-639-4099; www.chelseagreen.com).



Artisan cheese is just one of the products offered by Gianacis Caldwell and her husband, Vern, after they returned to her parents' farm to start a goat dairy. They also offer "farmstays" in a remodeled 1970 Airstream trailer. In addition, Caldwell wrote a book about making a go of it with a small dairy.

# Caviar Farming Catching On In North Carolina

Last year, Atlantic Caviar & Sturgeon near Lenoir, N.C., sold its first caviar after more than 10 years of research and development in collaboration with North Carolina State University. The impressive indoor aquaculture farm has 32 20,000-gal. tanks. Each tank supports about 10,000 lbs. of fish.

Size is important. The fish — Russian, Siberian and Atlantic sturgeon — don't produce caviar until they are at least 7 years old and weigh 20 to 40 lbs. After sonograms (to confirm eggs) and biopsies (to confirm egg size and firmness), it's a one-time harvest with females producing 2 to 4 lbs. of caviar. That's why caviar is so expensive, at about \$590/lb. wholesale.

Just 10 years ago, farmed caviar was still scorned, says Elisabeth Wall, marketing, media and sales manager for the company. Now with wild caught sturgeon endangered, 90 percent of caviar is farmed and the taste is considered equal to wild caught.

Beluga caviar is considered the best, with Russian sturgeon caviar, Ossetra, right behind it. While there are high overhead costs and risks, farming for caviar holds economic potential. It's one of those luxury foods that tend to remain stable through all types of economic climates.

Wall says the caviar is sold to distributors who sell to cruise lines, restaurants and hotels. The company also sells directly to customers.

"Our first Christmas season was very busy," she says.

Besides adding an export market for the caviar in the future, Wall is developing a market for sturgeon meat. With no external

sex organs, males can't be culled out until they are about 4 years old (after sonograms).

"We call sturgeon 'the pork of the sea' for its texture," says Wall.

Because it doesn't have a pronounced flavor (or a strong fishy taste), chefs prepare it in a variety of ways and with different saucing. The other half of the market has been for smoked sturgeon, which is becoming a delicacy in the South, she adds. It has always been popular in New York City and other urban areas.

As markets develop, research continues at the farm, including an internship program, to help it become even more sustainable. Fry are currently imported, but Atlantic Caviar & Sturgeon plans to have its own breeding stock, and possibly expand to other farms.

Located in rural Happy Valley, area cropland also benefits from the aquaculture facility. Filtered water from the tanks is used for irrigation.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Atlantic Caviar & Sturgeon, 3232 Indian Grave Rd., Lenoir, N.C. 28645 (ph 828 851-3210; www.atlanticcaviarandsturgeon.com).



Last year, Atlantic Caviar & Sturgeon sold its first caviar after more than 10 years of research and development in collaboration with North Carolina State University.



Farm-raised caviar is sold to distributors who in turn sell to cruise lines, restaurants and hotels. The company also sells directly to customers.