



Meet the Grower

Capriole

Greenville, IN

On a gray winter day in 1976, Larry and I and our three small children drove up a muddy woodland drive to a southern Indiana hill farm. What greeted us was the long-abandoned foundation of a burned-out cabin, a pond overgrown with dead water lilies, a weathered ramshackle barn, and broken glass and bed springs. Surrounded on one side by overgrown pasture and on the other by hillsides of 300 year old oaks, I thought it had "good bones". Larry said, "It feels like home". The children were horrified.

The title on the property surprised us. This had been Larry's great, great, great grandparent's 1850 farm, and we had come home! For the next 3 years, we worked to re-erect 2 historic cabins over the foundations of the first Schad homestead. Our first old goat, the bright idea of a nosy neighbor, was soon replaced by another, and another. Yes, I brought them into the house, slept with them in the barn during kidding season, and of course, ended up dragging them to goat shows, where I met Mary Keehn and Jennifer Bice--friends for a lifetime. Larry did the milking each morning, then put on a suit and went to his law office, came home and did it all over again. Family and friends thought we'd lost all sanity.

In the mid '80s, with over 50 animals and swimming in goat milk, I was canning, preserving, and making goat cheese in the farm kitchen for family and friends. By early 1988, we decided to take the next plunge, built a commercial dairy, and hauled our 70 gallons of milk twice a week to nearby Huber Orchard and Winery to try out our home cheesemaking skills in small, show-and-tell facility. The journey into commercial cheesemaking had begun. By 1990, we had outgrown the Huber space, expanded the herd, and built a small creamery on the farm. 30 years later, we're still here, still limited by space and geography, and still ladling 400 gallon vats of cheese curd by hand.

In the '90s, domestic cheeses were still very much a question mark in the US--and especially in Indiana. There were no farm markets, 'local' was anything but cool, and the market required to support small productions reached far beyond our immediate area, even beyond the Midwest. We sit on the edge of both the Midwest and the South but there was literally no Southern cheese or a Southern cheese market. As demand for our cheeses expanded nationally, the herd came to number over 500 animals. Capriole had reached a tipping point by 2012. There was neither space, time, labor, nor energy to manage both animals and cheese, and Larry had long decided that his barn routine was no longer fun. That year, we sold the herd to the Indiana farmers who now supply Capriole with milk. For 36 years goats had been a vital part of our farm family, and this was a hard but necessary page to turn. Ultimately, it's allowed us to concentrate on cheesemaking and improve both the quality and consistency of our cheeses.

Like so many other stories, ours is made of hundreds of moments. A childhood memory of picking warm strawberries under July sun, an abandoned farm on a cold winter evening, the gift of a cantankerous, old goat that no one else would want, and the first, tart taste of a milky, fresh cheese. Beginnings are hardly ever just one thing, but for Capriole a new story is always, if slowly, in the making. Our vision is still based on family, but that family now includes Capriole's Team of passionate cheesemakers and employees, as well as our grandchildren, all who love the family farm and the cheeses that are its legacy.