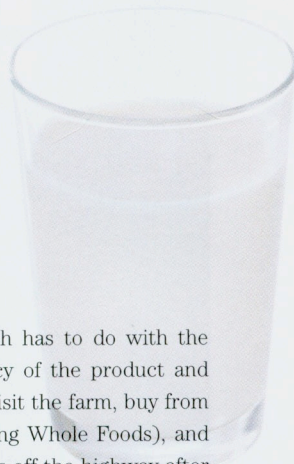


# Drink It Raw

*Milky Way Farm in Starr finds its niche producing unpasteurized milk*

{ Written by **Stephanie Burt** }



**T**he cows know what time it is. They line up outside the milking barn, vying for a spot. Then the doors open as they do multiple times a day, and the first twelve Jersey cows file in to be milked and, of course, get a reward bucket of feed. This is the pace of life at Milky Way Farm, a dairy operation set among the rolling hills of Starr, S.C., but the milk produced here is, as owner L.D. Peeler and his son Davis put on their labels, “as nature

intended.” The milk is unpasteurized, otherwise known as raw milk (straight from cow to carton), and part of a growing movement since some people claim health benefits from it, including fewer allergies and better overall vitamin absorption.

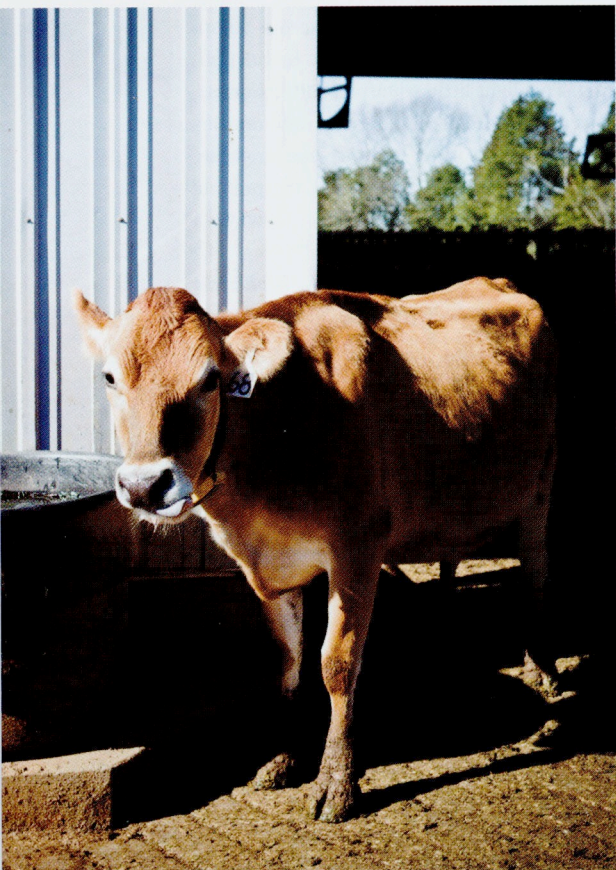
Though many states outlaw raw milk for human consumption, South Carolina is not among them, and the Peelers take pride in offering their customers the best product, building a side of their business that has doubled since January 2008.

Much of this growth has to do with the quality and consistency of the product and loyal customers who visit the farm, buy from local retailers (including Whole Foods), and even meet L.D. at exits off the highway after contacting him online. The high-quality milk stems from two factors: the fact that the Peelers milk only Jersey cows, and the farm’s attention to detail for food safety.

“Jersey cows are smaller and don’t produce as much, but they are more efficient, and the milk is richer with more protein, more butterfat than Holstein cows,” L.D. explains. The 120 cows also spend their lives on grass, out to pasture, not in concrete pens, which gives the milk its rich flavor—and gives the cows food they were designed to eat.

As for the safety aspect, the milk flows directly from the cows to a plate exchanger that lowers the liquid in seconds to a safe refrigerated temperature. In addition, the milk is tested monthly by the S.C. Health Department, and Milky Way’s cows don’t receive any hormones or steroids. “The plate exchanger is a really big seller for me since my young kids and my pregnant wife drink it,” says Chef Keith Snow, author of *Harvest-eating.com* and a member of the Greenville chapter of Slow Food USA. Snow enjoys using the milk to whip up homemade crème fraîche and make sun-dried-cherry rice pudding, and in the warmer months, he freezes the milk and feeds it into his juicer with fresh fruit for nutritious smoothies that his children love.

Milky Way is creating a loyal following, so much so that customers from as far as Raleigh, N.C., regularly make the five-hour journey to the farm. Says Davis: “Once people have our milk, it’s hard for them to go back to ‘regular’ milk.”



**Farm Fresh:** Customers drive to Milky Way Farm from other states to buy raw, or unpasteurized, milk, which some say has more vitamins, minerals, and proteins than store-bought milk.