

MN Agriculture: Shepherd's Way, Sheep and Cheese



Day 11 of my "30 Days of MN Agriculture" is Steven and Jodi Ohlsen Read, Shepherd's Way Farms from Nerstrand. Nerstrand is located about an hour south of St. Paul.

What I found interesting is their mission statement:

At Shepherd's Way Farms, we believe there is a way to live that combines hard work, creativity, respect for the land and animals, and a focus on family and friends. We believe the small family-based farm still has a place in our society. Everything we do, everything we make, is in pursuit of this goal.

Social Media Sites:

Website: [Shepherd's Way Farm](#)

Facebook: [Shepherd's Way Farm](#)

Instagram: [Shepherd's Way Farm](#)

Twitter: @shepswayfarms

Tell me a little about your farm and/or business?

"Shepherd's Way Farms is a small, family-based sheep dairy located approximately one hour south of Minneapolis/St Paul."

How long have you farmed or been in business?

"The farm was established in 1994 as a sheep dairy and we began making cheese in 1998."

Tell me a little about what you grown/raise/produce or service provided.

"We raise pasture-based sheep and handcraft artisan sheep milk cheeses. We also raise whey-fed pigs and sell specialty meats and wool products (wool-filled comforters, pillows, and mattress toppers)."

Where do you sell or provide services to? Who is your end consumer?

"Our cheeses are available at co-ops, specialty cheese shops, and grocery stores (Bylerly's/Lunds, Kowalski's, HyVee, Jerrys) and restaurants locally and in select national areas. You can find our cheeses, specialty meats and wool products at the Mill City Farmers Market and St Paul Farmers market. We also have a cheese CSA for Minneapolis, St. Paul and Northfield members."

What makes your farm/business unique or special? What are you proud of?

"There are very few sheep dairies that produce their own cheese in the U.S. Our cheese is all made by hand, on the farm (Jodi is the cheesemaker) and many of our cheeses are repeat American Cheese Society award winners."

Why do you grow/raise/produce? What went into your decision to do what you do?

"We chose to go into farming as a way to combine a focus on family, creativity, hardwork and a love of animals and the environment. We raise dairy sheep because they are beautiful animals that produce lovely, rich milk, have gorgeous wool and are a benefit to the land they graze."

What is one thing you wish consumers knew about what you do or your farm/business?

Dairy farming is a 24/7, 365 day a year responsibility with variables that change unpredictably (animals, weather, economic conditions). Farming challenges in new ways over and over, requiring farmers to be innovative, adaptable and deeply dedicated. The costs of a pound of cheese barely reflect a portion of the risk and work farmers take on to produce that milk and cheese.

Who are your customers? Or what would you like to tell your customers?

Minnesota Farm Living

A guide for navigating where your food comes from
<http://www.mnfarmliving.com>

"We are profoundly grateful for our customers and their dedication to our products and farm – we wouldn't be here without them."

What is one thing about Minnesota that people from other areas do not know about or are missing because they don't live here?

"The range of beauty in our changing seasons deepens the experience of farming. Our winters can be brutal at times but that makes us all the more hardy – and the crisp, clear blue winter days filled with sparkly snow have a beauty that can't be matched."