

# Lost River Market & Deli



## Enjoy Artisan Cheeses from Kenny's Farmhouse Cheese

Kenny Mattingly and his family in Barren County Kentucky must be doing something right. While many family farms have had a tough time surviving these economic times, Kenny's Farmhouse Cheese has enjoyed 40% annual growth since they started producing their popular artisan cheeses in 1998.

In the 1990s Kenny and his family had serious concerns about making a living on their 200-acre dairy farm. A farm trip to Europe offered the inspiration they needed. Kenny saw that many small family farms in Western Europe were finding ways to add value to their products and market to their local communities.

He and his family started using some of their milk to produce Gouda cheese using Old World, handmade techniques. That first year, the family made about 4,000 pounds of Gouda--one of the few true, raw-milk handmade Goudas made in America. Last year they produced more than 64,000 pounds of cheese, including 25 varieties ranging from Cheddar, Colby, and Jack cheeses to Asiago, Swiss, and Havarti. You'll even find some Bries and Bleus in the mix!

Most of Kenny's Farmhouse Cheese is marketed within 150 miles of the family farm to restaurants, co-ops and health food stores in Kentucky, Southern Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, and Virginia.

It all starts, of course, with the cow. As an art form, fine cheese is directly influenced by the milk that produces it. Mattingly's herd consists of animals that the family has raised from birth to production age without synthetic hormones. The animals are kept on pasture and their diet is supplemented with grain and hay grown on the family's farm.

The raw milk is piped directly to a sanitary, all-white “cheese lab” where Kenny fills a large stainless steel vat with the fresh, unprocessed raw milk, constantly stirring, heating and adding bacterial cultures that naturally begin the conversion to cheese.

Because the milk is so fresh, pasteurizing is not necessary. The cheese-making process preserves naturally beneficial enzymes in the milk, aiding digestion of lactose and absorption of calcium. Just as important, raw milk cheese has a much richer depth of flavor.

Right now, Kenny uses about a third of the milk from his 120 dairy cows to produce his artisan cheeses. He hopes to continue to build this market, using more of his farm-fresh milk in cheese production.

But, he stresses, he is not willing to sacrifice quality for quantity. “That’s one thing I don’t want to lose,” he says, “chasing growth so much that we lose in quality.”

Instead, Kenny intends to focus on servicing existing customers better, faithfully following the centuries-old techniques of cheese makers.

“We are still making cheese in the same vat we started with,” says Kenny. Each block is still hand-cut and packaged, then aged to perfection.

You can learn more about the cheese-making process and find fantastic tips and recipes for using Kenny’s Farmhouse Cheese by visiting [Kenny's website](#).

Better yet, you can meet Kenny in person at the co-op on May 16 to taste his fine cheeses and find out for yourself how cheese can become an art form!