

## Delivering on Cornwall's quality promise

Lynher dairies has expanded rapidly to keep pace with appetite for its distinctive cheeses

### Overview

Most people think that "Yarg" must be an old Cornish word - after all, it's the name of a delicious, creamy white cheese from Cornwall, matured in a distinctive wrapping of dark-green nettle leaves. But Yarg in fact dates back only a couple of decades, and it's called after the people who came up with the recipe (by the name of Gray - Yarg backwards!). The fact that it's taken supermarket deli counters by storm is a tribute not only to the scrumptiousness of the cheese, but also to the inspired thinking of the company that makes and markets it: Lynher Dairies.

The company started out as a small farm, producing and bottling milk in the beautiful Lynher Valley in East Cornwall. Its owners saw an opportunity to diversify when they met cheesemakers Allan and Jenny Gray, who were looking for bigger and better equipped premises. Together, they obtained funding to convert an unused farm building and started making Yarg. To make an impact, Lynher knew they had to differentiate their product from all the others jostling for



space on the nation's cheeseboards. Without the luxury of a massive advertising budget, they've worked largely through wholesalers to get their cheese first into specialist cheese shops and then into the supermarket majors. In doing so, they've made the most of Yarg's appealing "story" - in which its Cornish origins play an essential part.

Lynher's product range now extends to seven different cheeses, and for all of them quality is a key part of the brand promise. It's a promise that the company has delivered on, sourcing premium milk from selected Cornish farms, using the most advanced equipment in its dairies, and even imposing strict criteria on the size and shape of the locally picked nettle leaves used to wrap the cheese. Commercial Director Catherine Mead says: "By strengthening the links in the supply chain there is greater traceability and more ownership of the product, both of which are increasingly important."

### Workforce

Following recent expansion, Lynher now employs around fifty people, twenty of these at its new, purpose-built dairy at Pengreep Farm near Truro and thirty at the original location at Lynher Farm. Training is a high priority, and staff undertake frequent courses at institutions in Cornwall and beyond.

### Clients

Lynher now sells to most of the supermarket majors, including Tesco, Sainsbury, Waitrose and M&S. It also continues to sell to wholesalers supplying the independent deli sector, and in recent years has been opening up export markets, particularly the US and Canada.

### Technology

In response to surging demand, Lynher recently opened a new unit at Pengreep Farm that will allow it to more than double production to 300 tonnes a year. Mead says:

"This really is a state-of-the-art facility, built to the highest specifications in the expectation that hygiene demands will rise in the coming years. As a small producer that gives us a very strong advantage, particularly with some of our supermarket customers."

The environmentally friendly building heats its own water by recycling energy from the chilling system, and uses a natural reed-bed filtration system to dispose of dirty water.

### Support

The new dairy facility was built with the help of a £155,000 grant from the agricultural fund under Objective One and a similar sum from the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).