



CHEESE REPORTER

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New Carmel Valley Ranch Creamery Captivates Turophiles, Ag-Tourists

Carmel, CA—Carmel Valley Ranch, a summer-camp-inspired upmarket resort, debuted its new Market & Creamery this summer, designed to provide guests with interactive cheesemaking and other culinary experiences.

Carmel Valley Ranch is situated on 500 acres in the foothills of the Santa Lucia Mountains along California's Central Coast near Big Sur and Monterey.

The Carmel Valley Ranch resort features an on-site farmstead with an organic garden, four-acre pinot noir vineyard, apiary, salt house, hen house, goat barn and equestrian program.

Guest activities include beekeeping and honey harvesting,



CARMEL VALLEY RANCH

hilltop yoga, hiking and foraging walks, cooking classes, and surprise pop-up tastings, pairings, and demonstrations from resident cheese maker Charlie Cascio.

Carmel Valley's farmstead creamery is run by four employees, and Cascio serves as head cheese maker.

"My cheesemaking experience started back in 1972 when I lived a year in a desolate area of the French Alps with an old French shepherd and 50 goats," Cascio said. "He, like all the shepherds around the area, made Crottin and only Crottin."

I also studied with numerous goat cheese makers in Quebec, and have taken multiple workshops with Gianacis Caldwell of Oregon's Pholia Farm and Dairy Connection's Dave Potter, Cascio continued.

In 2016, Cascio's goat farm, Sweetwater Ranch in Big Sur, was almost completely destroyed by the Soberanes Fire. Not much beyond his goat herd survived.

When my farm was destroyed by a wildfire, I was refused a grant from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Charlie Cascio continued.

"One of my best customers, Carmel Valley Ranch's executive chef Tim Wood, suggested I bring the goats to The Ranch and they would build the necessary barn, milking parlor, and creamery. I would be head cheese maker," Cascio said.

Chef Wood checked with the owner of the ranch, who thought it was a great idea, and here I am, he continued.



Charlie Cascio has been tapped as resident cheese maker for the new Creamery at Carmel Valley Ranch, which kicked off this summer. The Ranch is the latest upscale resort to feature an interactive culinary experience like cheesemaking demonstrations for its guests.

Cascio said he would like to continue production of cheeses he made before a fire destroyed his farm – fresh Chevre, Crottin and Valencay.

His aged cheese line includes Peppercorn Caprino Romano, raw goat milk Guyerier with fenugreek, and goat milk Manchego salted in red wine brine, marinated in honey, and rolled in lavender.

"I have experimented with many different types of cheese recipes, and I found that not only were these my most popular, but they are fun to make," Cascio said.

I'll also be making whatever chef Wood directs me to make, he said. Since we've just started the creamery, I can't say at this time how much of which particular cheeses we'll produce.

The Creamery also serves farmstead yogurt and ice cream.

The goats are purebred Saanan, and Carmel Valley currently has a

small herd of eight purebred Saanan goats. With milking twice a day, five goats are producing about eight or nine gallons of milk per day.

We hope to expand the herd to 10 goats in the future, Cascio said.

Carmel Valley Ranch is one of the latest inclusive resorts in the US to feature farmstead cheesemaking with an overall culinary bent.

The popular Blackberry Farm in Walland, TN, began making cheese in 2004 and has since won major awards at the American Cheese Society for its Hawkins Haze, Magnolia and Brebis cheeses.

"I believe eco-tourism is finally catching on in the US. I saw how successful this idea was in Europe, and I see it starting here," Cascio continued.

For more information, visit www.carmelvalleyranch.com.