

MEET THE MAKER

Cheesey grins at Nannygoat Junction

FOR this month's chapter of Meet The Maker, Southerly Magazine travelled to Lowlands to learn more about the cheesey goings-on at David Beadell and Julie Howe's Nannygoat Junction.

Southerly Magazine: What is your and David's story in agriculture?

Julie Howe: David comes from Sydney. I actually came from Albany originally but we were townies. When I finished school all I wanted to do was agriculture, so I went to Northam to Muresk. I did an Associate Diploma up there. But your life evolves around work, but I never stopped wanting to come back to Albany.

SM: How did you meet?

JH: I met David in Bindoon and I was so lucky. One of the reasons we gelled was he loved the country. On weekends we would go driving. He had a son and I had a daughter and we raised them together. We would come down here camping at least twice a year – always winter months because of our work, but you either love Albany's weather or you don't. We loved it, the kids loved it. We'd be out swimming and fishing in the pouring rain.

I said I wanted to retire in Albany and David never had an issue with it.

SM: What prompted the permanent shift south?

JH: As the years rolled by living in Bindoon, it got hotter and hotter. We had the goats, we were travelling and we worked very hard. One day we were down here camping and I said to David "Are we leaving to go home, or are we leaving home to go back to Perth?". So we went and put our house on the market.

SM: Did you have an idea of what you were looking for down here?

JH: We had seen this property fleetingly, loved it and got things in motion, but we couldn't afford it. It was really expensive but we went home and started to plan things. It took three years and then when we finally had the money, we still couldn't afford this. We had been looking at other properties in Albany and we got "jack" at the prices. So we started looking at Tasmania. For our money we could own



something twice as big and twice as beautiful. David was a truck driver so that is work guaranteed and I can turn my hand at anything. We had a friend over there looking, but I still couldn't forget Gilge Road. Later on, the real estate agent said the owner would accept a written offer. We got up in the morning, drove down here, drove through that gate and it was ours. Nothing here but the house, the shed and the old shearing shed. No infrastructure. That was in 2013.

SM: So what sort of acreage do you have here?

JH: Just 60 acres, so it is a hobby farm, and it's hard to make a living off a hobby farm. So David was driving trucks, I moved down here, we had the mega mortgage from hell and we were separated for 6 months while we sold up there. I came down with the kids

and no money. The kids went to school and they didn't care, they loved it.

SM: At that time, what was your plan for the place?

JH: We had goats in Bindoon on three acres. David did some cheesemaking courses and we put a plan into the Council about doing something with our goats. They said: "Beautiful plan, but you can't do it because you have too many goats." Under the dry stock equivalent you can only have X amount of animals on three acres that is residential rural. So we had to lease five acres down the road to move the goats. When we looked at this place originally they had it set up to sell it as a business. It had the shed there for slaughtering goats, cool rooms, smokers and a room for processing food in there. So it was all set up.





■ Julie Howe with some of the Anglo-Nubia goat herd from Nannygoat Junction at Lowlands.

SM: Did the infrastructure, as little as there was, help you make the decision?

JH: Definitely. And at the same time we looked at this property we stopped at Duckett's Mill for lunch and the lovely guy who started it used to make all the cheese. He got talking to David and when he learned we had goats he said if we ever moved here we would buy all the milk we could ever produce. So we thought there was a market. Look, I just wanted to move to Albany. Although most of my family have moved to Perth, I still have family here. The pull to Albany has never left me. So we had plans of setting the farm up, but in the short term you have to have money so David got a job driving trucks, I worked on the farm and started the process of getting all the Health Department stuff organised. It got approved the weekend Prince Charles came with

Camilla to visit Albany.

SM: Was that good timing?

JH: It was because Oranje Tractor had them for lunch there and they had a big platter of local produce, and our cheese was part of it. Because up until then I'd only been making cheese to see if people liked it. And we had swapped a lot of baked cheese for fruit. Oranje Tractor's owner Murray Gomm asked if we were just about up and running. I said the approval came through yesterday, he said "Oh good because we have an important visitor coming next week for lunch". Bingo. And that was when we started selling.

SM: What did the business plan look like at that early stage?

JH: The year after that was when we

made educated choices that didn't go well for us. We bought the big van and we were processing our meat – plus purchased meat to sell – eggs, making soap, plus the cheese and doing four markets a week. We ran ourselves into the ground



emotionally and financially for the next two years. It was a backpacker who was here and he said "I wish you guys would slow down and enjoy what you've got". We went to Cambodia for three weeks and saw how people lived with nothing and are happy doing it. We came back and David went back to work where he is now, I stopped everything except for the one Farmers Market. I said I'd do as much as I could on the farm to keep it going. And it's been going really well.

SM: COVID-19 has created some rough patches for some businesses, but it seems at the moment that buyers are flocking to local produce. Has that been your experience?

JH: COVID has been good to us because people are suddenly realising the importance of knowing where your food comes from and want simple foods and good food. And we don't have to sit in the supermarket trawling for the cheaper stuff.

SM: Has the business side of things been better since you pared back and simplified things?

JH: Absolutely. At the Farmers Market now we only take soft cheese, feta, fresh milk, herbed cheese and at various times if we have spare milk I make butter. I can't keep up with the butter. The problem is that from 10 litres of milk, I get under a litre of cream and from that I get 500 grams of butter. So you do the maths.

SM: Tell us about the properties of goat's milk.

JH: People who can't tolerate lactose tend to tolerate goat products very well. Goat's milk is naturally homogenised which means the fat particles go through the milk which is why you don't get a big layer of cream. It does have its own flavour. People say it tastes different. Of course it tastes different – it is from a goat not a cow! It is very mild, and fresh goat milk/cheese is beautiful. What you buy in the shops is

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not fresh because it has a process to get to the shops. I bottle milk Friday for Saturday's market, so that is as fresh as you are going to get. I make the cheese every week. It would be fine to only make it every couple of weeks but I make it every week because that is how I am happy to present it. It's versatile and it's easy.

SM: These goats of yours have a striking look to them. Where are they from?

JH: Okay my Anglo-Nubians. They are a British breed developed from a mix of British, Middle Eastern and North African goats a long time ago. They were originally a dual-purpose goat. Over the years they have been pushed toward the milking side. The Anglo-Nubian goat is not a commercial goat. It is like the Jersey cow. The dairy is all Friesians but they will put a few Jerseys in because that will increase the butter fat content of the milk. So the Anglo-Nubians have really creamy milk and really high butter fat content compared to the British Alpines which is your commercial breed. They pump out good milk but it doesn't have that butter fat that the Nubians do.

SM: So you're happy to compromise the quantity for quality?

JH: My goats aren't big producers, but I actually don't care for what we do. I'm happy that we don't have machines walking around. I'm not knocking any dairy but that is not what I wanted. I have always said with our meat, our eggs and our milk that I can't change the world but I can change my world. And my animals raise their babies, they live most of their whole life here. They are happy goats because I know how they've been raised, I know what has gone into them.

SM: Do they also have good meat qualities?

JH: The Anglo-Nubian goat crosses with the meat goat really well. I've spent a lot of money registering and buying very good stock, but there is no money in them and we are a farm. So I got a Boer buck because in the Boer babies the carcass grows quicker. People also want them as pets, but



David Beadell enjoys spreading the Nannygoat Junction news each Saturday morning at the Albany Farmers Markets.

they don't want to pay for a pure bred. So here is a cross bred – \$100, excellent. But my purebreds are for a very specific market. At the moment I'm waiting for some purebreds to be born. But the Anglo-Nubians are a beautiful, big-boned breed. They aren't really a cold-weather goat. When the old ones get rugs on them, they all come into the shed at night which creates a bigger workload.

SM: In terms of nutrition for them, what

does your year look like in order to keep them fed and healthy and well?

JH: They obviously have access to permanent pasture, another plus of Albany. The minus is the parasite and worms. They have access to hay all year round and I try to feed the working girls with lupins because there is very much a market of people who say they do not want grain-fed animals. But you cannot produce milk without grain. But lupins are legumes, so it is marketing. For the general population, the



paddock-goers get a big bulk pellet and they do well on that. Our feed bill is a wage each week. At one market half of it goes for feed then a portion goes for packaging, electricity etc and then there is a little bit at the end for me. Plus the satisfaction.

SM: How many goats are you milking each day?

JH: Not as many as you would think. It depends on their lactation, the time of year and how much they are producing. At the moment I've only got eight and I'm struggling to get enough milk. We were going to have a break but the Farmers Markets have been going really well for us, so we thought we'd better keep going. I didn't have any having kids, so I've got the end-of-lactation girls and I'm saying to them: "Come on girls, give me some milk". But the next lot kid in about a week. In peak production there would be about 15.

SM: Where do your products end up?

JH: Only at the Farmers Markets at the moment. The restaurants come and go depending on changes to their menu.



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■ Managing the Anglo-Nubia goat herd at Nannygoat Junction requires close attention to nutrition.



Anna Gare does a few shows a year in Denmark. She loves our cheese. I just took a big order up to the Weld Club and the chef there told me he loved it. But we've had Royalty taste our cheese, so I'll live on that for the rest of my life.

SM: Given the choice if you could have one product or one dish featuring one of your products what would it be?

JH: Possibly just the fresh chevre tossed on a pizza. Everyone loves pizza. I don't know anyone who – if you put a pan of pizza down there in front of them – wouldn't pick up a slice. Lovely slices of sausage, a bit of onion, really crispy crust and all this lovely goat cheese on top, sort of melting because it holds its form. That is simple food and a feel-good product. Also, soft cheese with beetroot is just the best combination. Dribble a bit of honey on it. We put the herbed soft cheese through your mashed potatoes or pasta.

SM: Tell me about your famous goat curry.

JH: It's really good. A personal

favourite is vindaloo because we like hot curry. I grow lots of chilli in our garden and I make chilli jam and I pickle them. The vindaloo I love because it is really, really hot. We found when we were doing our meat that with our goats don't have the big carcass weight that the sheep do, so we were losing a lot. When you start making chops and this and that there is a lot leftover and I hate waste. We both hate waste. So now we get the goats cut up – apart from a few choice cuts – we just cut them into crock pot packs. Just chunks, meat on the bone. So when we make up a curry I just do the crock pot in the morning. Sauce in, throw in an armful of veggies from the garden. You can't taste the kale that way! Simmer it all day and dish it up with cauliflower rice and flatbread. Rendang is the most popular because if we have people coming down, the rendang is what I will do because it is a really dry curry. Bones in, finger food. Sit there round the table chatting. The rendang isn't particularly spicy. We have a bowl of chillies just for us and we just put in what we want. It is a really easy, tasty curry.



SM: You look like someone who is pretty happy being here.

JH: Look where we live! Every day is a good day here. We have had a lot of rain – the wettest winter since we moved down. Our veggie patch flooded which was very sad, but when

I grew up here that was a normal winter. But then there are always these sunny days so it's like Mother Nature is making up for it: "I'm really sorry about all the wet, but you need it for summer. But here, have this, get your Vitamin D. Get out there, go and enjoy it. Don't sit inside. You'll love it." **S**



Check out the Retravision Recipe on the following page where we feature delicious Goat's Cheese and Berry Flatbreads.



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