

## Low-Cost Outdoor Brick Oven Helps Launch Bakery

Country Cottage Bakery is an on-farm operation that's made possible by a 7 by 9-ft., 10-ton outdoor brick oven that the owners built themselves.

Dianne and Brian Hughes say the brick oven greatly lowered the start-up costs for a new bakery operation.

Combined with a growing demand for healthier types of baked goods, the couple's new business is off to a successful start.

The Hughes made the decision to build a brick oven after consulting with the proprietors of another thriving on-farm bakery.

"We had been planning to build an old-style clay oven, but were told that brick would hold up far better for a commercial bakery," Dianne explains. "Brian read a book about making brick ovens and then spent about 6 weeks of long days to complete it. It cost \$3,244 (Can.). That compares to the \$15,000 to \$25,000 (plus wiring) that it would have cost to install a conventional commercial oven of the same size."

The couple also built a "bake shop" addition onto their mobile home. This facility houses a 60-quart commercial mixer, a proofer (for rising the bread), a cooling rack, a bread slicer, deep freezers, fridges and three sinks.

According to Dianne, the oven can bake 30 loaves of bread at a time. They currently sell 80 to 120 loaves of various types per week. She also regularly produces many other baked goods such as cinnamon buns, doughnuts, long johns, and hamburger and hot dog buns.

"Brian keeps enough wood in the yard to supply the oven and then starts the fire between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., depending on how much I'm planning to bake the next day. Then, when the fire goes out at about midnight, he rakes out all the ashes, sweeps the brick floor up, damp mops it, and closes it up so it's ready for me. I get up at 3 a.m. and start mixing my mixes. I put my first load in at 7:30 a.m.," Dianne says.

The oven's bricks retain the heat long after the fire has gone out, and that stored heat is what cooks the bread.

The temperature in the oven can vary anywhere from 800 to 1,000° F once Brian has finished cleaning it out. According to



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**Wood-fired oven can bake up to 30 loaves of bread at a time.**

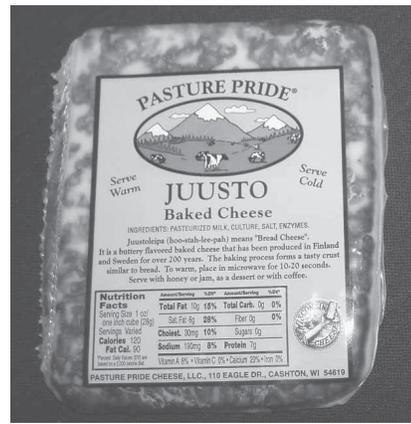
Dianne, it usually drops about 100° per hour, and then it holds constant once it has reached baking temperature. She uses a thermometer and begins baking when it's at 450 or 460°, at the most.

When she removes a batch of bread, she lets the oven stabilize for a good half-hour before putting in another batch.

Country Cottage Bakery bread products are made from 100 per cent whole wheat and unbleached white flour, rye, spelt and kamut specialty flours, as well as several types of rice flours (gluten free).

"To enable us to offer nutritional value labels, we found a software program on the internet called NutriCoster. We purchased this kit and it has been a very economical method for us," says Dianne.

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**Juusto baked cheese slabs can be served warm with jam or honey and even dipped in coffee.**

## Rare Baked Cheese Brings In Business

K&K Cheese, in Cashton, Wis. is one of only a few cheese plants in North America that make Juusto (oo-stoe) cheese. The baked cheese slabs that originated in Finland are drawing attention to their Pasture Pride cheese brand that also includes more traditional cheeses.

"We make all the regular cheeses like cheddar, Colby and even some pepper jacks, but when we go to wine and food shows, we focus on the Juusto," says Kim Everhart. "No one else has it."

Kim and her husband Kevin process 120,000 pounds of milk every day from 250 area Amish farmers. A small, but growing share of that milk is used to make about 1,000 lbs. of Juusto a week. The couple contract with the Amish, who own the building and land, while the Everharts own the cheese-making equipment. Traditional cheeses are made for the Pasture Pride label and for other companies. In addition to the cheese plant where the Juusto and other cheeses are processed, the couple also operates a store.

"Kevin was at the University of Wisconsin for a cheese makers class when he saw some shelf life experiments with Juusto," says Kim. "He thought it was unique and learned to make it."

The full name of this very special cheese is Juustoleipa (oo-stah-lee-pah), which means cheese in Finnish. In Scandinavian countries, it is known as bread cheese and served warm with jam or honey and even dipped in coffee. Other ways to eat it include with all sorts

of salsa, spreads and other sauces, as well as any way other cheeses are used.

Once the cheese has been made in 40-lb. blocks, Kevin cuts it into slabs like thick slices of bread. It is baked for 6 to 7 minutes at 500°. Before eating, slices can be reheated in a microwave oven, in a pan on the stove, or over a grill. The lightly browned slices may look a little like French toast, but they taste more like a caramelized mozzarella with a buttery flavor.

"A lot of work goes into it," says Everhart, who admits the specialty cheese doesn't sell itself. "The hardest part is getting people to try it, but once they do, they find out they like it."

Everhart loves taking it to food and wine shows and watching people try it. She says people go nuts about it, and that's good for the rest of their cheese business.

"There are shows or stores where I go back after a year, and people come back or send their friends to try it," she says. "Once they order the Juusto and like it, they want to get our other products in their stores."

They also market their cheese from their website with prices ranging from under \$4/lb. for most of their common cheeses to \$2.65 for a 6 oz. package of Juusto.

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## He Restores Deere Garden Tractors

Restoring older lawn and garden tractors (LGT) is catching on, and Mike Taylor is carving out a niche with John Deere versions. So far he has specialized in mostly the 100 series, but has also worked on others.

"A guy I worked with mentioned the old 110 with its rounded fenders, and I started looking for one," recalls Taylor. "I found a 1965 model five years ago and then just kept picking them up."

He has bought and sold around 40 tractors and has about 20 in his collection now. He has restored a number of them, including several model 112's, as well as mower decks and other attachments. Others have been sold as is or for parts. One owner of a 318 gave Taylor a second 318 in exchange for restoring the first.

"Rebuilding motors and transmissions is the most difficult part of a restoration," acknowledges Taylor, who is a machinist by trade. "A total restoration takes so much

time and money that it's hard to get it back."

A full restoration includes sandblasting, priming and painting every part from the frame up. The motor is overhauled and new seals put on the transmission. Of course, any broken or damaged parts are replaced. Starter, battery, tires and wiring harness are replaced as well as decals.

Taylor says prices vary, and he has paid from \$50 to \$280 for the round fendered models he specializes in. Fully restored models can sell for \$1,500 to \$2,000 depending on options and rarity of the tractors.

"The big payoff for me is to take something old and make it look new again," says Taylor. "Plus, my wife Lou Ann and I and our 13-year old son Caleb enjoy driving them in parades and taking them to tractor shows."

Taylor says lawn and garden tractor collecting and restoration is growing in popularity. A new magazine for John Deere collectors called LGT News is being published (www.hapcoparts.com; ph 812 985-7640)

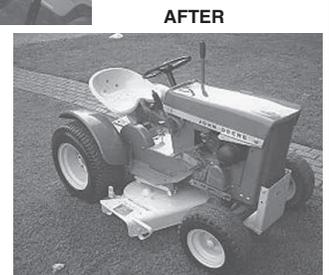


**BEFORE**

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and, Taylor says, claims more than 1,000 subscribers. He also recommends a website: [www.weekendfreedommachines.com](http://www.weekendfreedommachines.com). He says it offers lots of information and forums for collectors of John Deere LGTs.

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**AFTER**