Dawn and Ken Peterson operate a business based on one cow - a pampered Jersey named Clarabelle.

Skin Care Products Made From Jersey Milk

"Clarabelle's Creamy Creations" is a business based on one cow – a pampered Jersey named Clarabelle. While she may not be the only cow on Dawn and Ken Peterson's farm at South Range, Wis., she's the only one whose milk is made into soaps, facial cleansers and moisturizers.

Dawn Peterson skims off the rich, "certified organic" cream, using it as the base for her all-natural, unscented skin care products, which she sells at craft fairs, the local feed store, and by mail order. Her products come in custom-sized containers to suit everyone's needs.

"Living about a mile from Lake Superior, our winters are more harsh here than many other places, and before I started making and using Clarabelle's products, I had deep, dry cracks on my feet that were painful and seemed impossible to get rid of," Dawn says. "I tried almost everything, including moisturizers and commercial goat's milk soap I bought in a store. Nothing helped."

This experience motivated the farm woman to take matters into her own hands, and develop a personal recipe for soaps and moisturizers, using her pet Jersey's high-fat milk.

Once she tried her new moisturizer on her feet, Peterson says it took only a matter of a few days, and the cracks all healed up. "My moisturizer heals grand canyon cracks fast, and my soap keeps your skin from drying out again," she points out.

Since Clarabelle's milk fat level varies depending on her diet and the time of year, Peterson uses a recipe that's adjusted according to the current milk fat level.

"I want my products to be consistently beneficial, so I have to do a lot of calculating to get the recipe right," she explains. "I add lye and oils to the cream to create glycerin, which is the moisturizing component. The lipid proteins in milk are insoluble in water and work to seal moisture into the skin and prevent drying. Commercial soap manufacturers remove the glycerin and that's why my soap is more useful to heal skin damage."

Peterson uses cow, rooster and other farm animal molds to make her 5 to 6-oz. soap bars. Because they're handcrafted, they're more solid and last a lot longer than commercial soaps. They sell for $5.99 each, plus S & H.

According to her recipe, the milk must first be heated, and then frozen, before the rest of her work begins. Six cups of milk makes a 20-bar batch. "My moisturizer contains Clarabelle's cream, lanolin, grape seed oil, almond oil, wheat germ oil, natural beeswax, and comfrey infusion," she explains. "It's not greasy'– it absorbs into the skin."

The ambitious farm entrepreneur uses her computer to make all her own labels and brochures, and is also starting a newsletter.

Until Peterson finishes putting together her own website, products can be ordered by email or phone.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dawn and Ken Peterson, 3032 S. Hanson Rd., South Range, Wis. 54874 (ph 715 398-0275; clarabellescream@aol.com).

How To Reach Us

To submit a "Made It Myself" Story Idea, New Product, Shop Tip, "Best or Worst Buy", or other information, send a note along with photos, drawings and literature, if available. We'll get back to you later if we need more details. Send to: Editor, FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665; fax 952 469-5575); email: editor@farmshow.com. You can also submit information through our website: www. farmshow.com.

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Home-Built Honey Extractor

Amateur beekeeper Duane Houser of Butler, Ind., used the brine tank from an old water softener to build his own "radial" honey extractor.

He says the home-built unit is more than adequate for his 12-hive operation. "To tell you the truth, this may be the only thing I've ever made myself that works perfectly. A store-bought one couldn't work any better," he says. "It's great for a small beekeeper."

The open-topped plastic tank has a capacity of roughly 30 gallons. Houser plugged the overflow hole partway up the tank, and then added a honey-draining hole at bottom.

Next, he built a rack to hold six shallow frames of honeycomb. This rack sits in the tank during the extraction process, and frames can be removed and added as needed. When it's time for clean-up, it can be completely removed from the tank.

The rack consists of a circular 1/16-in. steel base with a 1/2-in. steel rod standing vertically in the center. Welded to the top of the center rod, are steel spokes that are actually bolts that came out of electric motors. These need to be about 8in. long, according to Houser, and they are welded to a washer that's welded on the vertical center post.

The bolts are threaded on the outer end and slide through holes in a round band. This band can be made out of anything that can be bent in a circle (plastic, metal or composite wood). The bolts are secured to the band with washers and nuts on both sides of the band. This allows for whatever adjustments are necessary to keep the band as perfectly round as possible.

"The band keeps the frames in place as they spin, and it has to be very round. Otherwise, it will throw the extractor out of balance."

To further secure the wooden honeycomb frames, Houser cut small rectangular holes in the base of the rack, big enough for the frames' corner protrusion to rest in.

Between the spokes at the top, a U-shaped metal bar is bolted on. The wooden frames slide down inside the U-shape, and hook into the base's holes.

"Radial" honey extractor was built using the brine tank from an old water softener.

To allow the rack to spin inside the tank, Houser made a bearing from a block of hardwood and bolted it in the bottom center of tank with four bolts. Across the top, he installed another wooden bearing, held there with two wing nuts. The rack's center rod comes up through a hole in the middle of tank's top wooden bearing, and this protruding rod is what Houser slides his 1/2-in. variable speed electric drill onto.

"The drill has to be variable speed because you can't spin the rack at the same speed all the time or it gets out of balance," he says. "If you spin it too fast to start with, you would throw the comb out. When you get almost all the honey out of the comb, then you can speed it up without damaging the comb.

"The project didn't cost me anything, since I just used scraps and I already had the drill for other purposes. You could make one of these extractors in a couple of days, easy. I've used it for six years already with no problems, and I've extracted up to 700 to 800 pounds of honey with it at one time."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Duane Houser, 5625 County Rd. 22, Butler, Ind. 46721 (ph 260 868-5259).

Tractor Art Sells Like Hotcakes

Dale Heinen knew he had found a good thing when his painting of a rusty, old Farmall F14 was the first thing he sold at an arts and crafts show years ago. Since then he has painted and sold more tractors than anything else.

The former 6th grade teacher credits his tractor-restoring brother with helping him get serious about tractors. "He gave me a list of classic tractors he thought I should paint," says Heinen.

The tractor artist says his payback is more than money. "A guy will ask, 'Can you paint a Farmall H or a John Deere H for my dad?'" says Heinen. "Later they will come up and tell me,"'When I gave it to him, he had tears in his eyes.'"

Heinen has painted a few tractors on canvas, but his best-sellers are painted on barn board. He also paints on 'shelf' fungi, handsaws, milk cans and slate. One of his most unusual pieces was an old wooden dustpan he found at an estate sale. He painted a John Deere tractor on the inside and mounted a 1/64- scale toy on top.

"Christmas tree ornaments really sell well in the fall," he says.

Heinen says he doesn't get rich on his paintings. He expects he averages only $5 to $6 an hour. But he enjoys the interaction with people and the'"Yankee" trading that goes on.

"My neighbor, who collects Allis Chalmers tractors, makes homemade wine, so I traded a painting for some," he says. "One guy asked me to paint three Corvettes on a big 2-man saw he had shined up. I painted an old gas station with hand pumps and an old billboard next to them. He gave me eight saws just like the one I painted, and I said "'We're even.' Life is too short to worry about the monetary part."

Tractor artist Dale Heinen says his best-sellers are painted on barn board.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dale Heinen, 140 S 1st St., Kiel, Wis. 53042 (ph 920 894-3093).