



Starters



Locavore

- someone interested in locally produced food, not moved long distances to market

Tish and Andy Jeffrey; they took on Farrington's in 1992

CARRY ON FARMING

It's not a difficult equation - look after the land and the animals that graze it and, in return, they'll give you excellent produce. It's certainly a philosophy that Andy Jeffrey has lived by on Farrington's Farm. **SOPHIE RAE** meets the team, and gets a lesson in field-to-fork dining

Farrington's may look like any other working farm from afar, but pop on your Hunters and stomp through the muddy footpaths, and you'll notice there's something special happening amidst these 400 acres of lush Somerset countryside. But first you'll see the farmhouse, home to Andy and Tish Jeffrey and their four children, who moved to the estate back in 1989. It was Andy who took over the farm from his dad in 1992; pop had held the tenancy as an arable farmer since the 1960s.

"We had grown potatoes for years and sold them at the door," remembers Andy.

"But when the new bypass went through the village, our farm entrance became much safer, and we could actively encourage the public to visit the farm.

"We started in 1991 by selling any local farm produce we could lay our hands on" - Blackacre Farm eggs and Marshfield Ice Cream were amongst their first - "but the modern culture of producing specifically for local markets just did not exist in those days. So we started making cakes and ready meals in the farmhouse, and then got other local farmers' wives involved to help out. But when our new shop opened in 2001 the existing set-up just couldn't cope with the demand, so

we had to build a new kitchen especially to supply the shop."

You only have to look at the shelves, groaning with homemade and local produce, and the number of customers visiting the farm, playbarn, shop, bakery, ice cream parlour and two cafés, to know that the neighbouring communities have taken Andy's venture to their hearts, and with some gusto.

"Much of this is to do with customers trusting the food - knowing that it has proper ingredients, not a huge list of E numbers, and that it has not been produced in a factory on the other side of the world by exploited workers. All



You could make these Scotch eggs at home with our recipe, or you could just go and pick some up at Farrington's. (Either way, they'll be yummy!)

of our homemade products are produced right here on the farm, and anyone can come and see that for themselves."

Drop by and you'll notice the family are all keen animal lovers too – they tend to a herd of cattle, seven cats, two goats, two donkeys, two KuneKune pigs, six rabbits, 19 ducks, a goose, an aviary of cockatiels, budgies and a java sparrow – not forgetting a vast collection of hens! When Tish isn't making pastries in the kitchen or serving in the café, you'll probably find her keeping check on all the beasts, and running Food Safety Training courses with their catering manager, Pat Brook.

With milk and cream supplied by Kim and Geoff Bowles from Ivy House Farm in nearby Beckington, and butter from Barber's Cheesemakers at Maryland Farm over in Ditchat, it's no wonder the 60 cakes made on site every day are popular with the visitors.

The team, led by head cooks Julie, Steve and Harry, lovingly make over 400 products in house, from chocolate to jam and chutney, ready meals to salads, cakes, soups, quiches, desserts and tray bakes. Then there's our new favourite day of the week – Thursday steak night!

"Harry is a master of the griddle, and his steak and homemade chunky chips (made from our homegrown Wilja potatoes) are the talk of Farrington's!"

If you're passing any other day of the week though, fear not, as there's plenty to see and sample.

"Barber's 1833 Vintage is our best-selling cheese on the deli counter," Andy says, "while our coffee is supplied

by Bristol-based Brian Wogan, and Bath Bakery are creating some really innovative products for us – including a new gluten-free range.

"We also work with Farrington Gurney Primary School, who have an allotment on the farm, and we support ten other businesses here within our shopping village. The newest one is Oliver's Ice Cream, and we're delighted to have just had planning permission for the new Seasons Fish Kitchen, which will open at the end of March. Chef Alex Venables, formerly of the The Toll Gate in Holt and Lucknam Park, will offer fresh fish daily, cooked to order and boxed for visitors to enjoy here or take home."

So, with the FARMA 'UK Farm Retailer of the Year 2012' award proudly perched next to Gert, the farm's bovine mascot, what's next for the team?

"In April we're hosting a Big Deli Weekend," Andy says, "where you can come and meet Chris, our new deli manager, sample homemade goodies and meet many more local producers and suppliers."

"Our aim is to provide everyone with the knowledge to make informed choices about what they eat – armed with facts about what is good for them and where they can get fresh, wholesome food. At the heart of Farrington's are family values, and it's these that have helped create an environment where 'healthy food and healthy play' share equal importance. One visit and I'm sure you'll leave us with a full stomach, a smile – and a heavy bag!"

* www.farringtons.co.uk

APPLE and BLUE CHEESE SCOTCH EGGS

(MAKES 4)

INGREDIENTS

400g sausage meat
125g grated blue cheese
(try Colston Bassett or Bath Blue)
125g Bramley apple, peeled and finely chopped
4 large hard-boiled eggs
2 large eggs, beaten
breadcrumbs
1 litre sunflower or vegetable oil

METHOD

– Put the sausage meat, grated cheese and chopped apple into a bowl, season with salt and pepper and mix well.
– Divide the mix into four even ball-shaped portions. Flatten each ball into a round shape and put an egg onto the sausage meat. Wrap the egg in the sausage meat, covering it all evenly, and making sure there are no gaps. Repeat for the remaining eggs.
– Beat the eggs in a bowl and put the breadcrumbs into another bowl. Dip the ball into the egg mixture, shaking off the excess, then roll in the breadcrumbs and place on a tray or plate. Repeat to cover all remaining balls.
– To cook, pour the oil into a large, deep saucepan. Heat until a small chunk of bread browns when dropped in. Carefully lower in a Scotch egg and fry for about 5 minutes, turning gently, until evenly browned. (You may be able to cook two at once.) Lift out on to a plate lined with kitchen towel. Eat within 24 hours of frying.