



Tasia Malakasis

Like many artisanal food producers, this owner of an acclaimed creamery learns how to balance quality and quantity.

# Cheese course

“JUST LOOK AT THAT POOR sign,” says Tasia Malakasis, stopping her Land Rover by a roadside post in rural northern Alabama. The pale blue plaque hanging on the post announces the Fromagerie Belle Chèvre—Malakasis’ small goat cheese creamery. The sign is grimy, dented, and pockmarked.

“I think some kids with BB guns were just having fun,” Malakasis says, unconcerned, as she turns up the rutted, hilly, twisty drive. “But it could have been gravel sprayed by a passing truck.”

Semis may rumble past Belle Chèvre near the town of Elkmont, but they could never make it up this steep drive. So Malakasis goes out to meet distributors in the parking lot of a nearby country store with deliveries of her goat cheese logs, fromage blanc, and other products. From there, the cheese travels to eager fans all across the country.

The story of Belle Chèvre parallels that of a number of America’s artisanal food makers (see “Artisanal Food Success Stories,” page 112). Since its beginnings in 1989, the label has earned the kind of cult status that puts small artisans on the map. It has won scores of American Cheese Society awards, starred at a White House dinner, and procured a spot on the shelves of the

FOOD STYLING: MIKE WILSON



## Goat Cheese Grits

The addition of goat cheese makes this traditional Southern side dish smooth and satisfying. Garnish with an extra sprig of fresh parsley.

- 4 cups water
- 1 cup uncooked quick-cooking grits
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (4 ounces) goat cheese
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh basil
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

whisk. Reduce heat, and simmer 5 minutes or until thick, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat; stir in cheese and remaining ingredients. Yield: 10 servings (serving size: about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup).

CALORIES 99; FAT 3.6g (sat 2.4g, mono 0.8g, poly 0.2g); PROTEIN 3.8g; CARB 12.8g; FIBER 0.3g; CHOL 9mg; IRON 0.8mg; SODIUM 237mg; CALC 38mg

1 Bring 4 cups water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Gradually add grits and salt to pan, stirring constantly with a

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