

Love at first bite

After a taste of Belle Chevre goat cheese, a young woman finds herself back home in an idyllic setting of goats and grasses—something she never planned. BY **LINDA WRIGHT**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SARAH DUNLAP**



R SMALL-TOWN GIRL leaves home in search of success and excitement in the big city. Not an unusual story, but this girl provides a new twist to the ending. While involved in a fast-paced career in the world of technology, Tasia Malakasis returns home to explore her passion at a slower pace.

While shopping at Dean & DeLuca, an upscale specialty-foods store in New York City, Tasia picked up a log of goat cheese and was surprised to find where it came from. “It was fateful, I believe, that out of all the grand cheeses in that store I would pick up one from a creamery that is located just 20 miles from my home in Alabama. It was love at first bite,” she says with a grin.

Tasia’s discovery spurred her to find out more about the cheese she loved, Fromagerie Belle Chevre, and its maker, Liz Parnell. After many phone conversations, Tasia returned



Above, Tasia Malakasis happily poses, but Belle finds the treats in Tasia’s hand much more intriguing than the camera. With her busy schedule, Tasia doesn’t often get to play with the goats. Left, hands of a passionate cheese maker shape slices of the Montrachet-style goat cheese into logs.



Rows of hand-made logs of goat cheese await wrapping. Then, once wrapped, each log receives Belle's seal of approval, her portrait on the label.



home and convinced Liz to teach her how to make cheese—and eventually to sell her the creamery. Leaving the glamour of the big city behind, Tasia now travels down a dirt road and past two trailers to her new business.

Tasia increased the creamery's staff but has kept the company small. Its passionate cheese makers still make and shape each



chevre by hand in a friendly family-like setting. The menu of goat cheese products includes award-winning items such as the spreadable Moroccan Gold, cheese logs, Chevre de Provence medallions, and Tuscan Chevre, a goat cheese with an Italian flair.

Tasia's imagination and taste buds are always exploring new items for today's market. The creamery now offers Belle Bons, a savory cheese biscuit that's a Southern classic with a twist. Another new product, Southern Belle, is a cheese disk dressed with bourbon pecans. Tasia suggests it's a perfect complement for mint juleps on Derby Day. Pimento Chevre and Belle and

the Bees Breakfast Cheese will be available soon.

"I compare today's specialty-cheese industry with the wine industry 15 years ago," Tasia says. "My passion is to introduce goat cheese with its fresh taste and health benefits to a mass audience while leaving the snobbery of the cheese world behind."

And Tasia seems to be succeeding. Internationally known cheese authority Steven Jenkins has declared Belle Chevre an "American treasure." And as Tasia continues to follow her passion, our palates continue to appreciate her worth.

For information about ordering, contact bellechevre.com or 800-735-2238. 🍷