

As published in



Who: Ron and Evie Locke, owner-operators

What: Top O' The Morn Farms

Where: Tulare, CA

Top O' The Morn Farms is nostalgic for baby boomers and totally cool for millennials. All generations love fresh milk in sturdy glass bottles from [the family-owned dairy](#) in California's San Joaquin Valley. The bottles are returnable and refillable – totally sustainable.

"We are 'old school'," Ron Locke says. "The highest quality and just about the freshest milk you can drink."

You can sign up for local home milk delivery in a growing area around Tulare. The farm also has a Dairy Drive Thru location in Tulare. And, you can find products in about 100 stores throughout the Valley, all along the Central Coast, and as far south as San Diego.



Evie and Ron Locke with son and daughters and their '61 DIVCO

Producer Spotlight

Award-winning "old school" style and quality



Evie Locke's family operated the original Top O' The Morn Farms in Ontario, CA, which her father, Fred de Boer, bought in 1962. Fred had emigrated from Holland in the 1950s, settled in the Golden State, married, and started dairy farming, which resulted in the family moving to larger and larger farms. Fred also began importing Royal Friesian horses, eventually becoming one of California's top Friesian breeders.



Fred de Boer in the 1960s with one of the original Top O' The Morn Farms delivery vans

By contrast, husband Ron married into the dairy business. "My background is the construction industry," Ron says. "I didn't become a dairy farmer until I was 38 years old."

In 2004, Evie and Ron re-established Top O' The Morn Farms in Tulare with 1,500 Holsteins. In 2012, they started up the bottling barn and home delivery. They brought back the 1960s retro style and re-invented the "cash and carry" business that proved successful for the de Boer family three generations ago.

Today, Top O' The Morn Farms has a closed herd of 1,950 milk cows and rears all its own calves and replacement heifers. Twenty-five employees are involved in dairy production. Milking takes place three times per day in a double-32 parallel parlor.

The free stall barns have sand beds with the sand washed using recycled manure flush water from a three-stage lagoon system.

"We use a quarry materials washer," Ron says, "so that the washed sand has no organic matter. The system returns 90% of the sand back to the barns. Testing shows no pathogens coming back in the sand."

To cool cows, the dairy uses orchard-type wind machines with 7-foot props along with drip soakers. An automated system starts the soakers at a set-point temperature, followed by the fans at a higher temperature.

For dairy feedstuffs, Top O' The Morn Farms has 450 acres of cropland devoted to corn and winter forages, including triticale. Currently, most of the farm's silage is in bags and conventional above-ground bunkers. However, Ron is experimenting with drive-over piles. The farm buys alfalfa, distillers, soy hulls, cottonseed, almond hulls, and other commodities of relatively consistent quality.

“We want the most consistent ration possible,” Ron says. “There’s a lot of fresh byproducts close by, but mold and moisture can be a challenge. Considering our investment in quality, such ingredients are not a good deal for us.”

Diamond V’s John Miller has helped ration consistency at Top O’ The Morn Farms through the TMR Audit®. Steve Batty has helped make other technical services available. The farm has had success with SmartCare® for calves, Original XP™ top-dressed for heifers and other applications, and Original XPC™ in the TMR.

Evie and Ron can be proud that old school style and quality wins awards: Two years in a row – 2013 and 2014 – in the Championship Dairy Product Contest at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, WI.

