

As published in



Who: Brian Fiscalini

What: Fiscalini Farms

Where: Modesto, CA

If a traditional cheddar from California repeatedly takes “super gold” at the World Cheese Awards in England, then that cheese began as milk from the Holsteins at [Fiscalini Farms](#) in Modesto.

Fiscalini Bandaged Wrapped Cheddar is a farmstead cheese made in traditional 60-pound wheels, bound in cheesecloth to protect it during aging, and hand-turned daily for the first two months of the 14-month aging process. It's one of 11 Fiscalini cheeses that are the specialty of one of the San Joaquin Valley's most distinguished family dairy farms, now more than 100 years old.



“This farm has been in our family since 1912,” says Brian Fiscalini, who oversees operations with his sister, Laura Genasci, and father, John Fiscalini. “Our great-grandfather, the son of a Swiss immigrant, settled on 160 acres near Modesto.”

John Fiscalini was educated in irrigation at the California Polytechnic School, founded in 1901, which became Cal Poly University. He chose Modesto for his farm because of the planned construction of the Don Pedro Dam. He farmed crops initially, then began a dairy operation with 10 cows in 1914.

Producer Spotlight

**“Happy cows
produce
tastier
cheese”**

“Four generations later our farm has grown to include 540 acres, a herd of 2,800 dairy cows, and the farmstead cheese processing plant. Today you will find the homes of three generations scattered across our property,” says Brian.

Both Laura and Brian graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo just like their great grandfather a century ago.

“Like our great-grandfather,” Brian says, “we believe in the sustainability of agriculture and want future generations of Fiscalinis to continue to support our rich and fertile land.”



Fiscalini Farms crop land produces forage for the dairy herd. Manure returns to the land as fertilizer, following best management practices and the philosophy “to give back to the earth in natural form to keep it productive.”

“We also have a methane digester that allows us to convert livestock manure, whey from the cheese plant, and leftover feed and green waste into methane. The methane is then piped to an internal combustion engine, which produces electricity and heat.

“There is enough left over to sell back to Modesto Irrigation District to power over 300 homes. The heat generated by the engine is used to heat the digester tanks, heat the water used to sanitize the milking barn and the cheese plant, and to make the cheese.”

Along with a consulting nutritionist and veterinarian, Manny Soares and other Diamond V Dairy Advisors are among the experts assisting Fiscalini Farms.

The commitment to take good care of the Fiscalini cows goes all the way back to Brian’s great grandfather, who rode from Wisconsin to California in a railcar with his Holsteins to ensure their safety.

“Our herd is given the freedom to roam large lots when the weather is good, but is kept indoors when the lots are wet to prevent infection and keep them clean. Their stalls are raked twice a day to maximize their comfort.

“We have passed the qualifications of a third-party independent auditing agency for animal welfare, environmental compliance, food safety, sanitation, and production of our cheeses.”

“Our family,” Brian says, “truly believes happy cows produce better milk and that leads to tastier cheese.”



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