

# FAQs

## **What is the difference between this and regular whole milk?**

The raw milk in the vending machine comes straight from our cows. Milk bought in shops is bottled at dairies that handle milk from a great many farms at any one time.

Our raw milk is unpasteurised (not heat treated) and not homogenised (it has a cream line). It is an unprocessed natural food.

It tastes fantastic!

Farmers can sell unpasteurised milk direct to their customers. Raw unpasteurised milk cannot be sold through another retailer.

## **Is this from today's milking/how fresh is it?**

The milk is from today's or yesterday's milking.

## **Do the cows go outside?**

Yes, the cows eat grass in the fields between late March and early November, weather and conditions permitting.

## **Does the taste of the milk vary?**

The cows are housed in winter when the grass stops growing and the fields are wet. The cows eat silage which is grass that has been cut in the summer months and then fermented. The taste of the milk is subtly different when the cows are grazing on grass.

Raw milk from this farm will taste different to milk from another farm in another part of the country. This is down to the soil, the topography and climate. The French have the word terroir, which is often used in relation to wine, to describe how environmental conditions influence flavour.

## **What are the health benefits of drinking raw milk?**

For every claim about the health benefits of drinking raw milk there is a counter claim. The best option, as with most things, is to become informed. For us on the farm raw milk is milk – it's what we have always drunk and thrived on. It is a live product containing microbes that contribute to a healthy gut.

## **What are the health risks?**

The Food Standards Agency requires all producers of raw milk to provide a health warning about the risks associated with consumption:

**This milk has not been heat treated and may therefore contain organisms harmful to health.**

We are licensed to sell raw milk by the Food Standards Agency. We run our business in accordance with our HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) which is a personalised, systematic preventative approach to food safety that has been drawn up with feedback from our local Environmental Health officer and the Food Standards Agency. Our HACCP system is used at all stages of production including dairy set up and preparation, milking the cows, cleaning and personal hygiene. All the family and employees that milk the cows hold at least a Level 2 certificate in Food Safety for Manufacturing awarded by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

## **How often is the milk tested?**

Samples of the milk are tested every week for total viable bacteria count (TVC) E Coli and coliforms (tests that establish the cleanliness of the milk). The Food Standards Agency does its own identical tests every 3 months and our local Environmental Health Department takes samples at random intervals.

Every month we test for the following organisms: E-coli, Salmonella, Coagulase positive staphylococci, campylobacter and listeria.

## **Have you had any problems?**

Yes, unfortunately we have. We worked with the Food Standards Agency to find the source of the harmful bacteria. Changes were made to the milking parlour equipment and cleaning chemicals, to teat hygiene, milking practices and to the testing regime. We will always do our utmost to provide wholesome nutritious milk and to ensure that customers can enjoy it with confidence.

## **What about TB?**

TB is not endemic in Cumbria (as it is in the South & West of England). TB develops over a period of time. All UK herds are tested annually. Any positive test result on an animal means the affected farm is placed under tight controls. In addition, animal movements and 6 monthly testing takes place on all farms within 3 km of the affected farm.

### **A. How do cows get TB?**

TB is spread by an infected animal joining a herd and through wildlife. TB is not in the badger population in this area.

### **B. How do you reduce the risk of getting bovine TB in the herd?**

We breed our own cows and don't buy any animals in from anywhere else. Our heifers (young stock, before having their first calf when they join the herd) are reared over in the Yorkshire Dales, in Buckden, which is also a low risk area. As a precaution, all the animals are tested before they come back to the farm.

## **Is there a risk of brucellosis?**

The UK is brucellosis free.

## **Could there be antibiotics or other medicines in the milk?**

Every UK dairy farm has to supply milk that is free of antibiotics. Milk is tested every time the tanker comes to collect the milk. We use antibiotics when necessary to treat disease but the milk from that cow is discarded until the recommended withholding time has passed. The Food Standards Agency monitors our use of antibiotics every 3 months as part of our license to supply raw milk.

## **Do you sell all your milk in this way/what else is it used for?**

Our cows produce over 1 million litres per year. Some of our milk goes to Chris Sandham near Preston who pasteurises it and makes our own Kendal Creamy, Kendal Crumbly and Kendal Crumbly with Red Onion cheeses.

Windermere Ice Cream Company uses our milk in its ice cream, but 98% goes to Dale Farm in Kendal, a dairy cooperative that makes desserts for supermarkets.

## **Can I freeze the milk?**

People do, but it definitely tastes best fresh.

## **Is it organic?**

In March 2017 we began to farm organically again. We are inspected by the Soil Association. It will take 2 years to be certified as organic.

## **Do other places sell raw milk?**

There are less than 200 places in England that supply raw milk direct to consumers. There is a directory at [www.rawmilk.simkin.co.uk](http://www.rawmilk.simkin.co.uk)

Over the past 30 years the number of farms bottling on-farm for direct sales has diminished, though it has always been permissible for an individual farm to supply their own raw milk (subject to being licensed to do so by the Food Standards Agency).

## **The machine**

**Is the machine plumbed directly into the milking parlour?**

The milk goes from the cow's udder to a big bulk tank in the dairy where it is quickly cooled. The vending machine is supplied from this tank.

**What is the capacity of the tank?**

The tank in the vending machine holds 200 litres. The big tank in the dairy next to the milking parlour holds 10,000 litres.

**Why does one machine give change and the other not?**

Unfortunately, this is the way the machines were supplied from the Italian manufacturer.

**Can I use the plastic bottle again?**

It is not advisable to re-use plastics.