

square-foot space features climate-controlled rooms for the aging, storing and selling of fine cheese. In the summer of 2010, Sylvan Star Winery will host a market on-site, where local producers can sell their food products.

Schalkwyk's story is inspirational but he says about people who care

his wife Janneke came to Canada from the Netherlands, where they'd lived for 30 years. Their son, Jeroen, moved to Alberta before his parents, so that John and Janneke would be able to enjoy their children, grandkids and the fresh country air.

John is waxing on (making cheese) for 30 years and that was his mother's knee.

John Schalkwyk, who learned to wax from his mother's knee, shrugs, and shakes his head. "The cheese here ..." he says. "It's quality cheese."

John, not to mention hunger, drove back into the cheesemaking. For 10 years he's been building his business here, and Schalkwyk has become a household name in his country for award-winning cheeses, including Grizzly Gouda (so named for its bite). John also makes Gruyere and Edam.

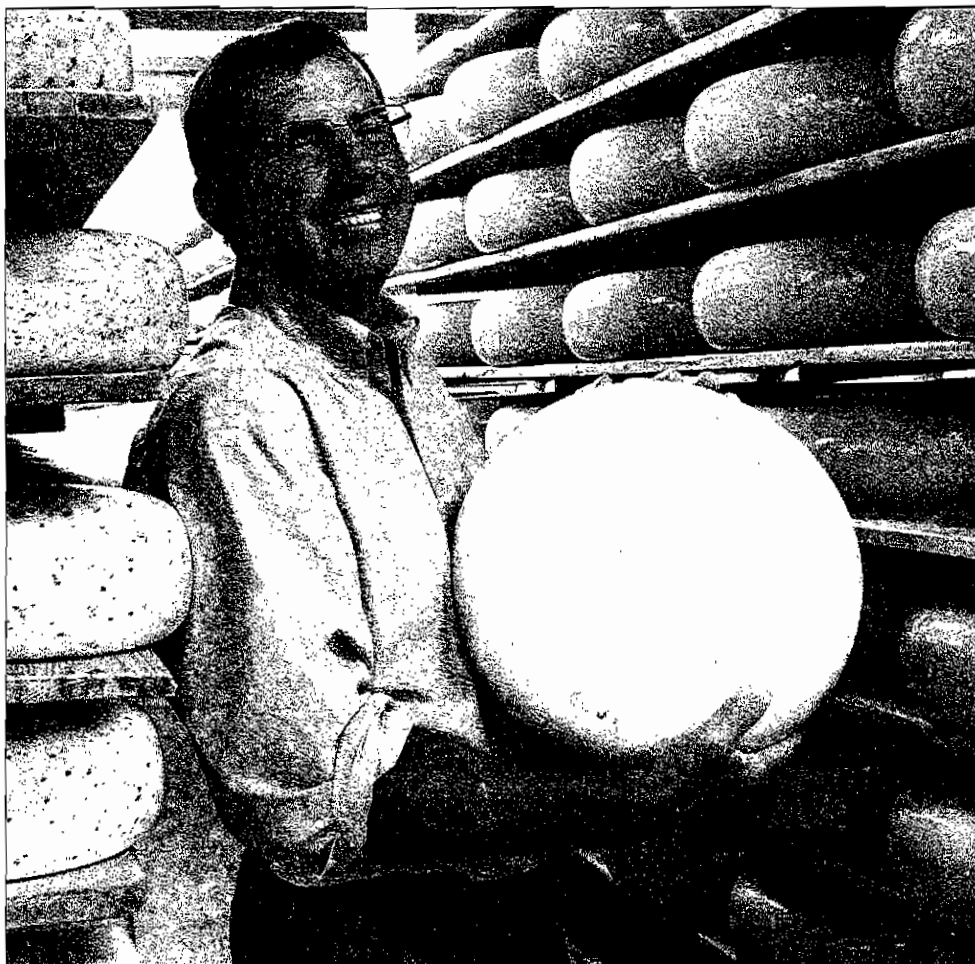
John's devotion to the quality of his cheese is evident when you watch him wax a wheel.

John dips a wheel in a bucket of yellow liquid and coats the cheese with it. It forms a thin wax coating that lets the liquid seep into the cheese as it ages.

John waxes it every other day for three weeks - that's five coatings," he says.

John's attention to detail pays off, as we can taste in his Gouda. His flavour comes from a few ingredients. Sylvan Star has 40 Holstein cows to make sure the product is just right. "The most important for cheesemaking is what you feed the cows," says Schalkwyk.

John can make the cream softer and smoother, and you can taste that later



Cheesemaker John Schalkwyk of Sylvan Star Gouda, just out of Red Deer, holds up a 10-kilogram round of cheese for close inspection by food writers on a pilgrimage south.

■ Oct. 28 in Bistro: The foodies road trip arrives in Calgary

in the cheese."

At the end of our tour, one of the foodies asks how best to store cheese. Schalkwyk says to store it, wrapped, at room temperature for a few days.

The questioner is persistent: What about after that, should it go in the fridge?

He looks at her as if she's lost her mind.

"You must eat it," says Schalkwyk, shrugging

as if to suggest that those who don't eat cheese promptly are just plain crazy.

After the Sylvan Star tour, we piled back on our bus, and headed south along Highway 22 (also known as the Cowboy Trail). It wasn't long before we arrived at Ravenwood Farm Fresh Meats in Caroline. This little butcher shop and eatery is a bright spot on the rural landscape; an example of the power of the local food movement outside of the trendy city-market setting.

See ROAD TRIP / E2

Wine picks

8th Generation Riesling, Okanagan Falls, Okanagan Valley, BC, 2006, \$19. Classy, off-dry Riesling with bright citrus fruit on the nose and ripe apples on the palate. Perfectly balanced acidity helps make this a great complement to many dishes, especially fish and poultry. Winery owner Bernd Schales is an eighth-generation German winemaker and his wife, Stephanie, a 10th-generation wine grower.



Sibling Rivalry Red, VQA, Henry of Pelham, Niagara Peninsula, Ont., 2007, \$18. As



the hand-written label suggests, the three Speck brothers must have had a lot of fun creating this blend of dark, juicy Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Gobs of blueberries, blackberries and cedar, all wrapped in delectable oak. There's also an easy-drinking Sibling Rivalry White that is fresh and bright and full of citrus and mineral notes.

Estampa Reserve Assemblage, Colchagua Valley, Chile, 2007, \$18. Deep ruby-red-coloured, well-priced wine that

will pair well with most red meats. Think burgers, steaks and lamb chops. Nose suggests ripe red fruit, anise and wisps of smoke, with hints of coffee and herbs. Sweet raspberries, soy and spice on the robust palate. Aging in French oak adds notes of toast and pencil shavings. The finish is long.



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