

ICE CLIMB • ELMORE MOUNTAIN FARM • VALLEY SKI TOUR • *CHRISTMAS NIGHT FIRE*

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STOWE

GUIDE & MAGAZINE



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ELMORE

Mountain Farm

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At first glance, Elmore Mountain Farm appears to be the quintessential, storybook Vermont homestead. A handsome, yellow 19th century Greek Revival house stands shoulder-to-shoulder with a magnificent red barn, both surrounded by neatly fenced pastures and vast alpine vistas. A cadre of dogs, some of seemingly indeterminate mix, barks an exuberant welcome as barn cats slink warily in the background.

Then, from the barn comes not the expected lowing of cattle or neighs of horses, or even the crow of rooster or baa of sheep, but the unmistakable, high-pitched rat-a-tat bleat only goats can muster. Inside, the anticipated aroma of an alluvial mix of fresh manure and sawdust combines improbably with the scent of sweet lavender and citrus—a vivid reminder this is the headquarters of Elmore Mountain Farm™, maker of natural body products.

In a remarkably short period of time, this small, family-run company is on the fast track to becoming a preeminent player in the competitive business of natural skin-care products. Country stores, health-food co-ops, body-



Hundreds of soaps cure on racks . . .



Elmore Mountain Farm Natural Products

www.elmoremountainfarm.com

Vermont Goat's Milk

Bergamot Rosewood
Cedarwood Spruce
Citrus
Fennel
Cinnamon Spice
Geranium Lemongrass
Grapefruit Lime
Key Lime
Lavender
Patchouli Orange
Peppermint Eucalyptus
Rosemary Lime
Spearmint Bergamot
Spruce Orange
Unscented with Oatmeal

All Natural Bubble Bath

Citrus
Lavender

All Natural Shampoo

Grapefruit Lime
Lavender

Bunny's Bath & Body Oil

Citrus
Lavender
Unscented

Lip Lift Balm

Citrus
Spearmint Bergamot

Face Favor

Grapefruit Bergamot

Foot Favor

Tea Tree with Peppermint and Lavender

Gift Bags

Large: Vermont Goat's Milk Soap (2 bars),
Bunny's Bath & Body Oil, All Natural Shampoo,
Lip Lift Balm

Less Large: Goat's Milk Soap (1 bar),
Bunny's Bath & Body Oil, All Natural
Shampoo, Lip Lift Balm

Goat Cards

Goats on the Go for Cancer Research
10 assorted cards and envelopes; all profits
support cancer research



care stores, spas, high-end retail shops, and even farm centers throughout northern New England covet its popular goat-milk soaps. While the soap constitutes over 50 percent of sales, other recently introduced products are beginning to climb the charts, including shampoo, body oil, face cream, bubble bath, foot balm, and lip savers.

The products are all made by hand and packaged on site, with the exception of the lip balm, by the husband-and-wife team of Bunny and Peter Merrill, neither of whom had the slightest idea about making natural body products before this venture. "We sort of fell into it," says Bunny. "Friends gave us a bar of natural soap that we loved and we thought, 'Well, we have the goats, why not give it a try?' But we knew, too, we wanted to do something sustainable and natural that would be healthy for the end user—a soap that would be gentle, lather well, and smell great. It also gave Peter and I the chance to be creative in entirely different ways. In addition to milking the goats, my favorite part of the day, I oversee production and new product development and he handles the marketing, artwork, packaging, sales displays, tags, brochures, and website. He has an innate instinct for it."

Fun was also a criterion. When is the last time a bar of soap made you laugh? Peter's labels with his femme fatale does (female goats) are irresistible whether the ladies suggestively peek out behind a shower curtain, lounge in a bubble bath, weed a garden, or stretch on a yoga mat. Peter says, "We work hard, but also have fun and don't take ourselves too seriously. Working together is incredibly rewarding for both of us. It's a dream come true." Inspired by Bunny's sister, Margaret, Peter also has designed note cards, *Goats on the Go for Cancer*, the profits of which are donated to cancer research.

While the company was Peter and Bunny's inspiration, the three ladies peering inquisitively over the wall of their communal stall make it a reality. Twice daily, in exchange for two cups of grain, Lucy, Helen, and Clarice provide the fresh milk for the all-natural soaps that are the mainstay of the company. The rest of the crew watches attentively—the pygmy goats Rufus and Angus, who along with Rudolph, are neutered

Good things come in gift bags . . .



sus synthetically derived fragrances. The shampoos contain no sodium laurel or laureth sulfate, additives, or detergents.

Each batch of soap, equating to approximately 72 bars, is poured into molds and set in an insulated box for several days. Then the soaps are cut on a homemade piece of equipment designed by Peter and placed on racks to cure, not unlike aging a fine wine or wheel of artisanal cheese. Hundreds upon hundreds of soap rounds line the racks, each carefully annotated with date, time, and type. The scent is ambrosial. Any leftover or misshapen wheels are made into—what else?—goat balls and sold at retail or donated to local food shelters.

Once mature, the soaps are individually hand wrapped in cheesecloth and tied with house twine (Peter was going to use bailing twine until he found out it is often soaked with rat repellent). In another example of minimizing the company's carbon footprint, the soaps are shipped in recycled boxes (hot-dog castaways are ideal, according to Peter). The company prides itself on its prompt and efficient order fulfillment.

After spending 20 years in the financial industry, Peter is thrilled to be on the other side of the table. "It is such an incredible experience to wrap your arms around everything from start to finish and to produce something sustainable and natural. Whenever possible, we source locally. We are benefiting from two strong trends: the growing interest in natural products, and their implications for our health and well being, and the growing interest in local products. Our packaging also has helped us bridge the gap between a useful, utilitarian product and the gift sector. Private labeling also is becoming more in demand, so our options are growing daily." Never mind that many customers purchase the soaps as sachets for lingerie drawers and linen closets.

As Peter patiently wraps the soaps one by one, Bunny finalizes details for new theme products. Soon to be released are soaps for serious gardeners and hand-stained workmen (pumice is a main ingredient), as well as goat lotion and liquid hand soap. As long as Lucy, Helen, and Clarisse remain cooperative, it looks as if Elmore Mountain Farm will be bathing in the limelight for some time to come. ■

males and fondly referred to as the company's lawn ornaments; that leaves Lucy's two newborns, Lupine and Lilac, frolicking members of the Swiss Oberhaslis breed.

Once Bunny has milked her girls at the crack of dawn, she pasteurizes the strained milk, places it in airtight bags and freezes it for future use. The new production room/office, built entirely out of locally sourced and recycled products, is part laboratory, part Julia Child's kitchen, and part wine-and-cheese cellar. On the shelves, jar upon jar of mysterious, colorful ingredients recall the early alchemists and like a mad scientist, Bunny carefully measures beakers and then pours a little of this, adds some of that, and then turns to the stove top. Out comes the plastic spatula to mix the natural oils—coconut, palm and olive—along with cocoa butter in a large stew pot that is heated to a specific temperature. Once the lye, milk, water, and various essential oils are added, a vigorous whisk by hand makes sure the concoction is the correct viscosity and amalgamation. No Cuisinarts allowed here. This is country cooking at its purest and reminiscent of a line from *My Life in France*: "She [Julia Child] stands there surrounded by a battery of instruments with an air of authority and confidence. . ." Bunny confesses a background in chemistry would have been a confidence boost early on, but she has managed her own recipes with precision, originality, verve, and on occasion, a Hail Mary or two.

Many of Bunny's concoctions appear simple, but are rich in complexity. For example, Face Favor combines natural oils of sweet almond, apricot, coconut, grapeseed, wheat germ, and jojoba with water, Vermont beeswax, aloe vera gel, vitamin E, and pure essential oils of grapefruit and bergamot. Bunny keeps detailed notes on every batch she produces. The basis for all of the soaps is natural essential oils ver-

