

Got (Raw) Milk?

Urbanites join forces to bring home really, really fresh dairy.

By Jane Black



Photo by Carl Tremblay.

Each Thursday afternoon a stream of cars begins arriving at Jill Ebbott's Brookline home. Their drivers are here to raid her fridge. One by one, they step into the garage, check their name off a list, and pick up their allotment of milk.

It's less convenient than heading to the grocery store, but this milk is special. It's raw—unpasteurized—and it's not otherwise available within the city limits. Though stores in nearby Maine and Connecticut offer raw milk, in Massachusetts only certain dairy farms are permitted to sell it directly to consumers. To get their fix, Ebbott and other raw-milk lovers are banding together into buying clubs: In Ebbott's group, part of a collective called Just Dairy, each member pays a weekly \$10 fee, which covers the driver's delivery run to central Massachusetts, plus \$5 for each gallon.

Fans say it's worth the trouble. Raw milk tastes creamier than the supermarket stuff and, many claim, is also better for you, since pasteurization destroys valuable vitamins, enzymes, and proteins. "I think of healthy milk like a layaway plan," says Ebbott, a holistic health counselor who orders up to eight gallons each week for her family of five. "You can pay now, or you can save money with industrial milk and pay later when your health falls to pieces."

The suggestion that pasteurized milk is unhealthy may surprise most consumers. ("When people hear I have raw milk, they act as if I have a loaded gun in my refrigerator," says Ebbott.) Pasteurization, in which raw milk is heated to 145 degrees and then rapidly cooled, was instituted in the 1930s to make milk safer by killing bacteria and other germs. But according to raw-milk advocates, today the process is used almost exclusively to compensate for unsanitary conditions on factory farms.

The demand for raw milk keeps growing. Just Dairy now has 10 Boston-area pickup points, from Beverly and Brookline to Rockport and Roxbury. And smaller clubs are popping up, too: A dozen families in Lincoln and Concord take turns doing a weekly commute to western Massachusetts to buy from a dairy in Gill, while Andover massage therapist Liz Anderson makes the trip twice a month to Robinson Farm in Hardwick for her 15-family Andover-Tewksbury group. "From a health perspective," says Anderson, "it makes complete sense."

Raw milk is available at Oake Knoll Ayrshires, 70 North St., Foxboro, oake_knoll_ayrshires@lawtonsfamilyfarm.com; Robinson Farm, 42 Jackson Rd., Hardwick, 413-477-6988,

robinsonfarm.org; Upinngil, 411 Main Rd., Gill, 413-863-2297. For a list of Massachusetts' raw-milk dairies, go to nofamass.org/programs/organicdairy/rawmilk.php. To join Just Dairy, go to justdairy.org.

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