



Flowers Creamery is a family-owned farmstead cheese producer that takes ownership of the entire process. From left to right: Tennessee Valley Co-op Outside Salesman Larry Dickey, Flowers Creamery Owners Brian and Morgan Flowers, and Tennessee Valley Co-op Lynnville location Manager Kyle Doggett.

Cheese artists

Flowers Creamery's Brian and Morgan Flowers make the farm-to-table process visible through the careful crafting of their farmstead artisan products

By Cara Moore
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There are cheese artists at work in Etheridge, Tenn. Tucked away in rural Amish country, Flowers Creamery is quickly building a reputation for producing high-quality, hand-crafted cheeses — start to finish — right there on the Giles County farm. By taking ownership of the entire cheesemaking process, owners Brian and Morgan Flowers demonstrate the concept of “farm to table” at its finest.

Having grown up on his family's dairy farm, Brian Flowers is no stranger to the industry. He began his own operation, Flowers Dairy, at the age of 20, and always had a desire to be a part of the entire farm-to-table process.

“Ever since I started dairying, my ultimate goal was to complete the ‘full circle’ of producing my own feed all the way to selling cheese

in the store,” says Brian. “That goal became more of a reality when I met my wife, Morgan.”

Brian and Morgan spent the last 10 years learning the art of cheesemaking by attending classes at multiple universities and touring creameries across the U.S. before launching Flowers Creamery in June 2020. The couple decided to focus on “farmstead artisan” cheese, which is partially defined by the American Cheese Society as “primarily made by hand, in small batches, with milk from the farmer's own herd on the farm where the animals were raised.”

“Making farmstead artisan cheese is both a science and an art,” says Brian. “It's not just a recipe. You've got to feel the textures and know when it's just right. We waited three months to try our first batch of cheese, and when it turned out so good, it was truly rewarding.”

Although Brian and Morgan are equal owners of the operation, Brian handles the farm-side of the dairy while Morgan focuses

on the creamery. The couple agrees that they are blessed to be able to work together, share the same goals, and use their individual strengths to support their respective side of the business.

“Morgan is public relations, and I'm cow relations,” Brian says with a laugh.

The creamery currently consists of 50 Jersey cows and 100 Holsteins. Jerseys produce milk that is high in butterfat content, so their milk is used in the creamery's small-batch cheeses. The milk of the high-volume producing Holsteins is sold in traditional commodity fashion.

“Our girls are the real MVPs,” says Morgan. “Brian and I are just the staff. We work for our cows 24/7.”

Brian row crops over 1,000 acres to feed the cattle on his farm. He began producing silage and corn when he first started his dairy operation and has been raising and roasting high-protein soybeans for the

past two years. This allows him to control the quality of the feed and mix his own ration. The only ingredients not grown on the Flowers' farm is cotton seed purchased from a local gin. The dairy's calf starter feed and mineral are supplied by Tennessee Valley Co-op in Lynnville.

Brian has deep roots with the Co-op and worked for several years at the Lynnville store. Today, Tennessee Valley Co-op continues to play a role in supplying the Flowers with many of their farm necessities.

"In addition to our calf feed, we purchase fencing supplies, hardware, muck boots, and other supplies from Co-op," says Brian, who has known Lynnville branch manager Kyle Doggett since the two were in kindergarten together. "It feels like we call the Co-op every day to order something."

Today, Flowers Creamery produces a variety of farmstead artisan cheeses, including White Cheddar, Southern Sharp Cheddar, Middle Tennessee Mild Cheddar, Old No. 7 Jack, Nashville Hot Pepper Jack, Liberty Hill Gouda, and Giles County Colby, as well as four flavors of fresh cheese curds and four cheese gift box sets.

Products are distributed to consumers through the Flowers Creamery storefront, farmers markets, online orders, and wholesaling to retailers. Currently, their wholesale business moves the most volume of product, while the creamery's online sales reach customers who do not live near a retailer.

"Our wholesale operation allows us to get our product to the customer instead of them having to come to us," says Morgan. "We



Flowers Creamery is home to roughly 50 Jersey cows whose milk is used in the crafting of the dairy's artisan cheeses. Jerseys are known for producing milk that is high in butterfat and protein content, making it ideal for extra rich and creamy dairy products.

currently sell our cheeses through more than 30 retailers across the state of Tennessee, and we are also talking to national grocery store chains and distributors to scale our business even larger."

The Flowers Creamery storefront allows Brian and Morgan to catch local traffic and to educate consumers on the farm-to-table process. They host in-person tours every Wednesday and Saturday for families and field trips, sometimes having over 100 students at a time visit the farm.

"It's really gratifying to know that we can help people make a connection in their minds between the food they eat and agricul-

ture," says Morgan. "We want to show people the entire process, from the seed we put into the ground to the cheese they're eating on their sandwich."

During the pandemic, Morgan has found new ways to spread their message.

"We host a lot of virtual tours and live events on social media for those who cannot be here in-person," she explains. "We have also been filming content for our local school systems to use during Ag Week, since many of their events were cancelled due to COVID-19."

Even though the dairy industry has taken a sharp decline in recent years, Brian and Morgan are pushing new products out into the market and are currently installing the necessary equipment to begin bottling their own Grade A milk.

"This is the life we've chosen, and we are constantly working on new ways to grow our business," says Morgan. "Our measure of success is to start efficiently using the milk from both our Holstein and Jersey herds, as well as to support other local dairies."

Morgan adds that she and her husband are passionate about the farm they have built and are excited for the future.

"We want to use our business to serve the community not only by providing food, but also by educating consumers about where it comes from and how it's made," says Morgan. "This is a challenging business, but Brian and I truly love what we do and would have it no other way."

To learn more about Flowers Creamery or to schedule an on-site tour, call 931-292-2455 or visit www.flowerscreamery.com.



Brian and Morgan Flowers currently produce seven types of cheese. Each block is carefully monitored in a refrigerated storage room as it ages to the desired texture and taste.