



MILK	Pasteurised cows milk
RENNET	Vegetable rennet
MADE BY	Joan Cross
REGION	Barnard Castle, County Durham
FLAVOUR & TEXTURE	Cotherstone's flavours are fresh and citric, lemony, lactic and a slightly yeaty and its texture is moist and crumbly.

Cotherstone is related to Wensleydale and Swaledale, and named after a local village. Joan Cross learnt cheesemaking from her mother and has been making Cotherstone for about thirty years now. Her production is tiny, they make to order, and having played with maturing the cheeses, we've settled on a second dry-salting followed by a drying stage then high humidity stage which seems to suit them well.

Cotherstone belongs to a group of cheeses we refer to as 'Dales Style' cheeses. These cheeses include Swaledale and the original style of Wensleydale and they come from the Yorkshire Dales and Pennine Hills in the North of England. They are all crumbly and lemony cheeses and tend to be eaten younger than cheeses like Cheshire and Cheddar. The most simple of these that we sell, is Cotherstone. Technically, Cotherstone is not very complicated in that there is no cloth binding, long maturation or complicated treatment of curds in the vat. Basically the milk is soured, set, milled and moulded. We keep it in until it has developed a natural mould rind, then it's ready to sell.

Simply-made cheeses like this were common, before the Second World War, up in the more remote areas of North England like Yorkshire

and the Pennines. Here, the climate is colder and the landscape, although beautiful, can be bleak. It does not lend itself to supporting large Dairy herds as the Cheshire plains or the rolling Somerset hills do. Consequently you get a very different type of farmer, a different motivation for making cheese and a different type of cheese being made. The cheeses are intended to be eaten young, often originally intended only to feed the farmer's family and perhaps there'd be a bit to sell at market if you were lucky. As such, production tended to be on a small scale.

When we first bought cheese from Joan Cross, she used to make cheese in her kitchen, according to the method she'd learnt from her mother. The milk was soured naturally and left to set overnight in a milk churn. In order to keep it at the right temperature for the bacteria to work, she immersed an orange juice container filled with boiling water into the churn to act as a hot water bottle, put the lid on and then covered the churn in the family's coats to insulate it. Things have moved on a bit now, the days of cheesemaking in the kitchen are over, but the cheese still tastes good.

