

PLANNED CHEESEMAKING FACILITY WILL ADAPT TO ADORING PALATES

TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN (and the Mediterranean, too!) – When you talk with Dave and Joy Omar about their rapidly growing business, [Saltless Sea Creamery](#), you are left with two seemingly disparate but closely connected impressions.

One, they love what they do with unbridled passion.

And, second, time is what makes cheese special.

Dave and Joy make artisan cheese that has Mediterranean roots and the wholesome goodness of locally sourced milk. The mention of their cheeses stirs the palate, steeped in Dave’s Lebanese heritage, love of Italy and his knowledge about the facts as well as best-kept secrets about cultivating cheeses. As a customer, you quickly see that they made the most of their inter-continental heritage as well as experiences closer to home – from Zingerman’s Deli to the Traverse City Farmer’s Market.

Close your eyes and imagine...

ParMichigano – traditionally made in the style of Parmigiano Reggiano, cave aged for at least 8 months. Nutty and rich, a classic parmigiano that tastes like home.

Late Bloomer – A cow’s milk version of Italian Robiola with a bloomy rind around a creamy interior, this cheese ranges from semi-soft and buttery to oozy and peppery. Aged 30-60 days.

Mozzarella – hand pulled, fresh, milky and mild. Also available smoked over applewood.

White Gold – a blend of cheese, garlic, wine and olive oil, inspired by the Mediterranean tradition of garlic oil spreads and Italian fonduta.

And so much more! From fresh Ricotta to Alpine-style cheeses; from a Provolone style to one washed in the malty depths of a local ale.

Enough to cause weak knees!

How fortunate we are to have Dave and Joy in our midst, including their well-placed values about local sourcing and insistence upon unimpeachable quality (yes, aging).

Their biggest challenge in meeting spiraling customer demand?



Saltless Sea Creamery

Buy it year-round at:

[Oryana Co-Op](#) (10th St.)
Traverse City, MI

•
[Lakeview Hill Farm](#)
Traverse City, MI

Available seasonally:

[Sara Hardy Farmers Market](#)
Traverse City, MI

Saturdays, 7:30 – noon
May – October

[Order/Sat. pick-up](#)
November - April

•
The Village at
Grand Traverse Commons

Saturdays, 10 – 2 pm
November - April

•
[East Bay Corners
Farmers Market](#)

Thursdays, 3 – 7 pm
May – October

Restaurants/Wineries:

[NOBO MRKT](#)
Traverse City

Their cheese production facility is located 60 minutes from home in leased space. Their problem is compounded by the critical, universal shortage of licensed, commercial and well-equipped commercial kitchen options.

Enter Dave and Joy's burst of inspiration: to build out a facility and market their cheeses much closer to home in East Bay Township.

Their ambition is taking the form of action, including a successful crowd-funding program, a Michigan Dept of Agriculture and a Dairy Business Alliance Dairy Grant and, last but not least, [Venture North Funding and Development](#) and Annie Olds.



Dave and Joy Omar look forward to an end to commuting and more time with their two sons once their own facility is up and running.

"We are eternally grateful to all who have dedicated their time, good will and resources to support our vision," says Joy. "Including of course, Venture North and Annie Olds for their capital and advice in planning our new production facility."

Venture North is providing over \$136,000 in loan capital to build out the cheese production facilities. They are also providing no-cost consulting in marketing, bookkeeping and how to use a new accounting system, and of course, ongoing business coaching.

"Their first three attempts to secure funding failed for various reasons until they met with us," said Annie Olds, Business Development Manager and Business Consultant for Venture North. "But they fit a number of our criteria for financing and were very receptive and positive about engaging with our ongoing Business Development Services. They are an important part of the 'buy local' foods initiative that we want to support and, last but by no means least, they make great cheese."

Olds added that "this project was a really cool full-circle moment. The Omars source their raw milk from De Vor Dairy Farm & Creamery (also an artisan cheese maker) in Kalkaska which is where my family operated the former Shetler Family Dairy. By supporting the local dairy industry as well as a secondary processor like Saltless Sea it's a win-win for everyone!"

"With a team effort, we're proceeding with the steps toward a fully equipped facility nearby with the bells whistles to ramp up cheese production and grow our business," said Dave Omar.

And there's local support for bringing Saltless Seas cheeses closer to home.

"East Bay Township residents support local food and local businesses," said Claire Karner, Director of Planning and Zoning for East Bay Charter Township. "This sentiment was reaffirmed through recent community input received during the 2023 master plan process. The Township is currently working to support economic development and support existing and expanding local businesses in several ways. We are thrilled that Saltless Sea Creamery, along with other local vendors, will be participating this summer at the new [East Bay Corners Farmer's Market](#), located at the Township Hall. We look forward to working with Saltless Sea as they advance their facility plans."

As the adage goes, good things come to those who wait.

In this special case, it's about wonderful cheese of just the right age.