

Lisa Schwartz kept her hands in

her pockets when she bought her first goat five years ago. She was embarrassed about her smooth city-slicker hands. "It was the last time I had manicured nails," she says with a laugh.

Now she has working hands. Twice a day, they milk the dozen goats she keeps at Rainbeau Ridge, her 35-acre farm in Bedford Hills, New York, 50 miles north of Manhattan, where she crafts fresh farmstead goat cheese that's sought by such top local chefs as Dan Barber, who uses it at the café of Blue Hill at Stone Barns.

Before making this life change, the 51-year-old Schwartz spent 10 years as a management consultant and another 10 raising her children and working with nonprofit organizations. Then she and her husband, Mark, who is in finance, moved to Tokyo for four years in the late 1990s. Having only a tiny refrigerator meant daily trips to the market, which opened Schwartz's eyes to even subtle changes in seasonal eating. She turned to food as a means of exploring Asia, visiting markets and learning from chefs and home cooks.

When her family returned to the United States, Schwartz started buying the land adjacent to her Bedford Hills farmhouse to parcel back together what was originally a gentleman's farm and bring it back to life. After deciding to raise goats and make cheese, she spent two weeks studying cheesemaking in Châteauroux, France.

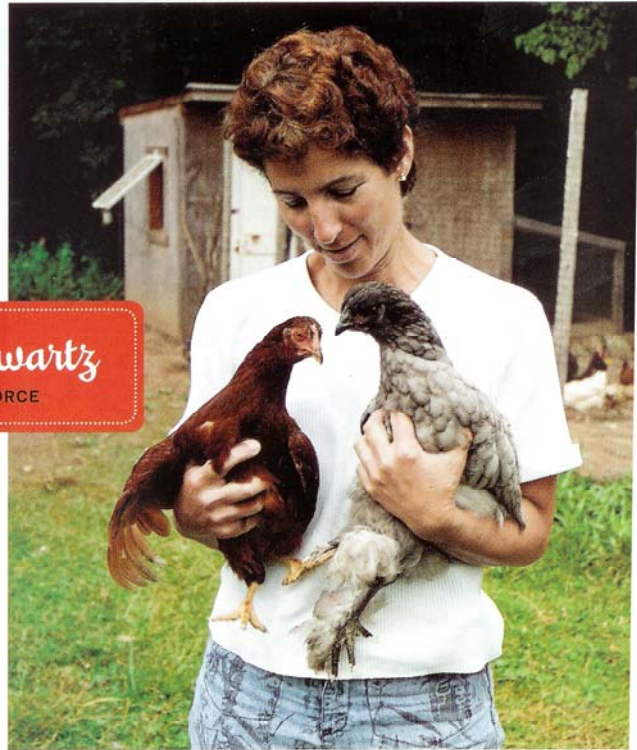
With the help of four employees, Schwartz also sells honey, eggs and organic vegetables to 50 local families that take part in a community-supported



agriculture program. In addition, she holds cooking classes and gardening workshops as well as children's programs. "Some people might question my sanity," she says. "My kids are grown and I've saddled myself with this? But it's incredibly satisfying." —Elizabeth Johnson
Rainbeau Ridge; 914-234-2197 or rainbeauridge.com.

lisa schwartz

FARM FORCE



"A voice inside me said, 'I need to cultivate, I need to grow, I need to cook. I need to be involved in food.'"

lisa's favorite goat cheeses

Goat Gouda A mild and sweet cheese from Holland that's aged for two to four months and is good for melting. "Gouda is normally made from cow's milk, so this is a nice twist on tradition" (\$11 per lb from Murray's Cheese; 888-692-4339 or murrayscheese.com).

Jacquin Valençay d'Indre "I learned to make this dense, creamy style in France. It's aged for one to two weeks, giving it a slight rind and a fresh, goaty taste" (\$10 each from Murray's Cheese).

Monte Enebro "This semisoft Spanish cheese is injected with the same mold as Roquefort, which gives it a gray-white rind and a pungent flavor" (\$28 per lb from Artisanal Premium Cheese; 877-797-1200 or artisanalcheese.com).