

Bruton business Wyke Farms loses man with £5 million nose to retirement

Nigel Pooley doing what he does best - grading cheese. His nose was insured for £5m in 2009.



A man whose nose was once valued at £5 million is handing his role as a master cheese grader over to an apprentice after 53 years in the industry.

Nigel Pooley – better known to some as 'Nige the Nose' – helped Wyke Farms near [Bruton](#) produce tasty and consistent cheese for 20 years. The firm's products are now sold throughout the country.

In 2009 the business recognised just how important Mr Pooley's ability to grade cheese was and in an extraordinary move insured his nose for £5m.

After his recent retirement [Somerset Live](#) asked the cheese expert how it felt to have his nose valued so highly.

Mr Pooley said: "Wyke Farms recognized that my nose and sense of smell was a valuable asset and was the guardian of the Wyke brand for over 20 years. I was able to ensure its consistency and that each product delivers what it promises on the packaging.

"It has been an honour to work with the Clothier family – these guys live and breathe cheese."

Typically Mr Pooley would grade up to 100 cheeses per day for three days a week. He would carry out the grading in the morning because this is when the taste buds are most sensitive.

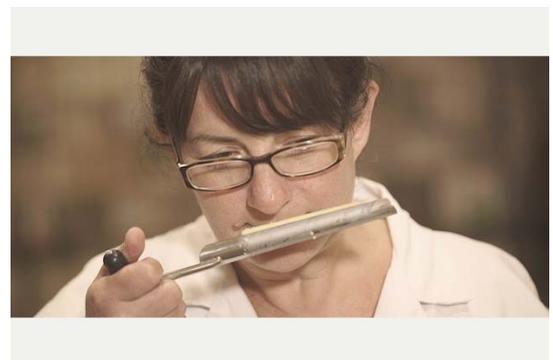
WHICH CHEESE DOES NIGEL THINK IS THE BEST?

"Nothing beats a Somerset cheddar. I would suggest Wyke Farms' Ivy's Vintage Reserve. Named after Grandmother Ivy Clothier and matured for over 15 months for a sweet, nutty, almost caramel flavor - short and crumbly texture with a slight crunch."

After this initial assessment of a cheese Mr Pooley would decide whether to make subtle changes to the cheese making process to determine how it would mature over time.

Later on in the maturation process Mr Pooley would assess the cheese again to select which flavour and texture profile was the most appropriate.

He would then categorise that cheese as a product of the Wyke Farms cheddar range.



Diane Cox has replaced Nigel as the master cheese grader. It took her ten years to prepare for the role.



What did he find was the key to a good cheese?

"When it comes to producing quality cheese you simply can't rush.

"Cheese is a living thing and there are many variables that can affect the flavours in the finished cheese – such as the cow's diets, the area the milk has come from, the season and how the cheese is produced – so attention to detail is key."

Mr Pooley's role was so crucial that he began training his successor – Diane Cox – more than ten years ago.

He said: "Like myself, Diane has a wealth of experience in the dairy industry and I recognised very early on after joining the team that she had the skills and fastidious attention to detail to be able to take on the responsibility."



Richard Clothier, managing director of Wyke Farms cheese.

So what's next for 'Nige the Nose'?

"I plan to continue my work with the cheese shows as well as spending more time with my wife Lyusya and two grown up children and three grandchildren.

"I play skittles for a local team and in the Doutling and Shepton Mallet league. I also plan to take plenty of holidays and cruises", Mr Pooley said.

Online-Technology.co.uk – 3 Key Points

- Identify all single risk factors, i.e. by carrying out a Business Impact Analysis
- Assess the level of risk, i.e. Risk workshop
- Manage identifiable risks, i.e. Business Policy for key personnel shared travel