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helping to make *Galapagos* deliciously sustainable

BY SUZANNE MORPHET

The Scene

Tucked behind pink-flowering hibiscus hedges, leafy banana palms and towering hardwood trees, Enchanted Galapagos Lodge houses an inconspicuous one-story building with a sloping tin roof. Once a storage space, it's now home to artisanal cheesemakers who are putting Galapagos on the map with a product these volcanic islands are not known for—aged cheese.

Enter Media Luna Lacteos (Half Moon Dairy). It took top prize at Latin America's 2023 Copa America in Ecuador for its camembert, a creamy, semi-ripe cheese. Named after the Half Moon crater on Santa Cruz Island, it's rapidly becoming a favourite among both locals and tourists.

The Backstory

Tatjana Angermeyer and her husband Dustin Kinakin started their cheesemaking journey during the Covid lockdown of 2020. With tourism shut down and food imports suspended, the Swiss dairy farmer up the road was dumping milk down the drain because he couldn't sell it.

"And Rodolfo always had this dream of making some cheese and aging it in a lava tube," explains Dustin, referring to Tatjana's stepfather, who was born into a cheese-making family. In fact, Rodolfo's father, who emigrated from Switzerland to Ecuador in 1949, may well have been the first person to make aged cheese in Ecuador, a country where queso fresco has long been the only style of cheese consumed.

When Rodolfo, now retired, and his wife Judy, who owns Enchanted Galapagos Lodge, couldn't leave Galapagos during Covid (they live parts of the year in Canada and Aruba), Tatjana jokes that she "kidnapped him to make him teach me how to make cheese!"



Added to this multi-family/multi-generational story is Rodolfo's son, Mattia, who is a master cheesemaker in Germany. Between Zoom calls with Mattia, hands-on help from Rodolfo, an old cheese press that Rodolfo's father imported from Switzerland, and a place on the property from Judy, Tatjana and Dustin began experimenting.



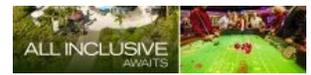
Hits

Media Luna Lacteos now produces six varieties of aged cheese, each named after notable Galapagos locations. Cerro Dragon, for instance, is farmhouse cheddar inspired by Dragon Hill, known for its land iguanas.

Dustin credits the island's rich volcanic soil for creating "happy cows" that graze on grass year-round, imparting unique flavours to the cheese.

The Takeaways

Starting a cheese business from scratch in Galapagos hasn't been easy. However, locals no longer need to rely on imports to satisfy their growing taste for aged cheese. And visitors can enjoy a product unique to the



islands. The couple believes that their passion for old-world cheese and their newly honed expertise in making it will help them overcome any hurdles ahead.

TRAVEL PLANNER

Stay at Enchanted Galapagos Lodge and call ahead to see the cheesemakers at work. enchantedgalapagoslodge.com

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5863 Leslie St., Suite
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1J8

416-725-3353

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