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“One of the things I love about cheese,” says Rose Grimond, “is that it’s always made with the same ingredient – milk – but so many things influence the final result.”

For Rose and her team at Nettlebed Creamery in south Oxfordshire, those influences include a herd of holstein friesian, Swedish red and Montbéliarde cows, grazing on the varied pasture of Rose’s family farm. “I can’t exaggerate the importance of being organic,” she says. “It’s about nature, animal welfare and respecting the soil. The ecosystem on the farm is vibrant and thriving, there’s an amazing range of grasses, hedges and herbs, and that makes for very happy cows. You can taste the health of the system in the cheese.”

It’s not just Rose who thinks so, either – Nettlebed Creamery’s triple-cream soft cheese, Waitrose & Partners No.1 Bix (£5/100g), was crowned Best Organic Cheese at the 2019 British Cheese Awards. It has a fresh sweetness, which mellows to a complex creaminess as it matures. “It leaves us at about ten days old and is at peak deliciousness between two and five weeks’ maturity,” explains Rose. “The soil and climate here are very similar to champagne country – and bix is not unlike chaource, the classic cheese of that part of France. Bix pairs well with a glass of sparkling wine too!” Other great accompaniments include fresh pears or roasted beetroot, or you can bake it whole in its little wooden box like a camembert.

“The road to cheesemaking is not a straight one,” admits Rose, whose CV includes studying drama in New York, working with ex-offenders and importing artisan goods from the Orkney Islands. “There are always challenges, but there is such an appetite now for food with provenance, for seasonal ingredients and great British produce. We are so pleased to be part of that rich landscape.” »

