



ROB INTERVIEWING BENJAMIN HENRY AT LE BUISSONNANT FARM

Rob: I'm on the farm of the Le Buis Sonnant with the owner, Benjamin Henry.

Benjamin: Well, I am Benjamin Henry, but I am not the owner. I work at the Le BuisSonnant but this farm belongs to 250 people. When we started this business five years ago we asked people all around here, what people we knew, we asked them if they were ready to become shareholders of our farm. Instead of borrowing plenty of money from the bank, spending 30 years giving back money to the bank, we thought we might just as well ask people if they want to be some kind of farmers with us. So we do the job every day but they own the farm so it is their farm.

Rob: So it's a collective, in a sort of way?

Benjamin: Yep. It's an SC, it's called Société Civile Immobilière so people have got shares of 250 Euros each share and that share will always be the same amount of money in five years if they want to have their money back, they have their money back and we just find new shareholders.

Rob: Okay, so the Le BuisSonnant, what is actually on your farm?

Benjamin: We've got pigs, we bring up our pigs outside so they are in the middle of the fields and otherwise we have dairy cows so we sell all the finished product. So we sell the sausages and we sell the cheese, the butter, all the cream or cottage cheese, or whatever.

Rob: Okay. And there - we are having a little contribution from one of the special kind Pie Noir. They're actually a special breed. Now, tell me about this special breed.

Benjamin: We've got special breeds here. The pigs are called Porc blanc de l'Ouest which is a local breed from the west part of France, and with very long ears so they don't really know where they're going but, and the cows are Breton Pie Noir which is the shortest cow we can have in France. One meter seventeen.

Rob: They certainly look almost like toy cows, in a way. Apart from the fact they are small what else is good about them?

Benjamin: So they are very short so they eat less, but they make less milk as well. Even if they make less milk they make a very rich milk because it's really a very rich and specific milk in fact. They were the most common breed, Breton Pie Noir all over France until the war, in fact, and after that it was the Agricultural Revolution, we said okay we have to produce plenty, feed everybody after the war. Well, feed everybody was a good idea but why do you have to get rid of this little cow who does part of the job so I don't know, they decided it wasn't the cow convenient for the industry needs.

Rob: And what are the differences then? So, you are talking about Holsteins?

Benjamin: Compared to Holsteins they probably produce three times less milk. A Holstein makes up to 9,000 to 10,000 litres a year and when our little Breton Pie Noir here, she does 3,000 litres in one year, but, compared to what she eats, she eats maybe three-quarters of what the other one eats as well. She doesn't weigh as much so she can stay outside until in middle of December, even when it's raining she doesn't destroy all the land so she can still spend her time outside eating so she really is a cow of interest.



- Rob: Is it very common to find Pie Noir au Bretonne.
- Benjamin: When we started there were a bit less than 2,000 Bretonne Pie Noir left and now there are a bit more, but there are only 30 of us who work and ...
- Rob: They are all having something to say.
- Benjamin: So yes, we are 30 farmers like us, like this farm who live with the Breton Pie Noir and we are only 15 who do milk with it, with that specific breed and 15 who look for the meat.
- Rob: And I presume it's all organic?
- Benjamin: It is all organic, yes. And you were talking about the specificity of the milk. It's got to do with the breed but it's also got to do with what they eat. And here, they only eat grass. Grass or hay during the winter and just grass outside all year around. That does make a big difference with the product you have at the end, and no silage. According to us there is a special taste you can find when animals eat silage and, well, food like that so ... I mean cows are good at eating grass so just let them eat grass and they give us the milk and that's it. Let's make it easy.
- Rob: I think many of our English listeners are particularly interested in your milk products because you produce the nearest we can get, in Central Brittany anyway, to the famous clotted cream of Devon and Cornwall. I don't know whether you are aware of the popularity of this product?
- Benjamin: Well, it's all got to do with the milk, and we sell fresh milk. That's another thing many British customers come and see for the fresh milk. We don't deliver in the front of the door but we've got fresh milk, enough to ... yeah, we've got clotted cream or something that looks like it, or double cream or whatever you call it.
- Rob: And you do this other thing which I am particularly interested in, which is gwel. Now, what's this stuff?
- Benjamin: It's got nothing to do with cottage cheese. It's not cheese, it's more like a yogurt if you want. It's fermentation, so we keep our gwel, that specific ferment. A bit like people do with kefir, for example, it's nothing to do with the taste but the process is the same. It's like a yogurt, but nothing to do with a yogurt, it's got a different taste, a different texture, quite hard to explain like this, the best thing would be to taste it.
- Rob: And so how can people taste it? I understand here in Plouguernevel your farm is open to the public on a Friday afternoon.
- Benjamin: Exactly. Yup.
- Rob: Where else can the people find your produce?
- Benjamin: Well, really specific areas is the Kreiz Breizh around Rostrenen. So we sell on the market every Tuesday in Rostrenen, and otherwise we work with Nicolas at Aux Quatre Saisons, a small grocery in Rostrenen as well, and otherwise we work with Folavoine in Mellionec, in Trémargat as well.
- Rob: Are you a part of this group that does the food boxes?



Benjamin: And also in K.B.T.P.

Rob: I'm sorry, you'll have to repeat that as we were interrupted.

Benjamin: Yes, we do work with K.B.T.P. as well which is a part of this group which is called Kreiz Breizh Terre Paysanne and people book their basket on the web until Wednesday evening, and then they come and collect it in different farms and different places nearby.

Rob: Okay. Well, Benjamin Henry thank you very much indeed.

Benjamin: Thank you very much, my pleasure.