

## Organic Milk From Orchard Valley



Mr. Johnny Que's office in Iloilo is lined with shelves of books on home decorating, interior design and architecture, being an architect by profession. But what is an architect like Mr. Johnny Que doing in an organic farm? The answer is: over and above his love for designing buildings, he loves to eat and to eat the healthiest food available.

Johnny Que may be the "Johnny come lately" farmer of the dairy industry in Iloilo, but already, his Orchard Valley Farm, located in Bgy. Tigum, Pavia, Iloilo is already producing organic fresh milk.

Since his family owns the Iloilo Supermarket chain of grocery stores, they are very sensitive towards their customers' growing needs for organic food. This urged Johnny to transform their 22 hectare farm into an organic vegetable farm, which has been certified as a truly organic farm by the Negros Island Certification Services, a recognized third party certification agency. The making of an organic farm and the expense involved often makes people give up. But if one is true to his desire of eating healthy food and serving good produce to his customers, the expense does not really matter. It was not long before customers asked for organic milk.

In the Que dairy farm, they do not use urea as fertilizer. Unsold vegetables are recycled either as food or as fertilizer. His 39 dairy animals are fed with forages such as napier, paragrass, signal grass, centrosema and stylosanthes. The cows are also fed malunggay and kakawate which are rich in calcium and protein. Cows are not given any antibiotics, but are treated with herbs.



**Mastitic animals, are isolated and are massaged with warm compress and cows are only vaccinated when there is a disease outbreak and only when it is absolutely necessary. An NDA veterinarian's opinion is that the vaccination of animals helps maintain the organic nature of the farm and to prevent diseases thus requiring no chemical –based medicines or antibiotics.** The abundance of legumes and other forages in the farm makes the cows yield as much as 16 liters/per cow.

Perhaps the name of the animals also help as they are not named after movie stars but after saints, as based on a Catholic calendar which indicates which saint was born on a certain

date; one might say that each cow has an “intercessor.”



Cows are also fed with fermented fruit juice from bananas, mixed with molasses. Animal grazing is practiced in a pasture area with abundant shady trees, and nonstop flowing water. The animals are confined to their pastures by electric fences. The farm has a mango orchard which will soon be utilized as an additional grazing area for the dairy cows, while the cow shed is under construction.

Seven (7) hectares of the farm is planted with forages and the remaining area is used for growing vegetables such as lettuce, Chinese kangkong, mint, okra, papaya, eggplants, garden tomatoes, pepper and

malunggay as well as other medicinal herbs.

Milk produce is brought to the Que restaurants’ commissary, processed and bottled and distributed to the various food outlets owned by the family like Waffle Time, Green Mango Restaurant, Days Hotel, and Iloilo Supermarkets , among others. There is also a Research and Development division which is now looking into the possibility of producing pastillas de leche and various cheeses.



Mr. Que is envisioning to develop a medium size which is easier to manage. A maximum of fifty dairy animals would be manageable. Male calves are castrated and fattened for organic beef.

Johnny is no the ordinary businessman who cares and invests in the environment. He and his family planted acacia trees in a 540 hectares of mountainous area in the

town of Ajoy, Iloilo.

There may indeed be significant competition from other milk brands in the local market, but Johnny is confident of his market niche that Orchard Valley organic milk and vegetables has already carved for themselves. A niche, so well entrenched that it can withstand and outlast competition, as well as greatly contribute to the development of the local dairy industry.

