

Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. In today's episode, we are diving into the very hot debate in the homestead world, dairy goat versus milk cow. Which one is better? Stay tuned for my thoughts as well as some pros and cons for you to consider as you decide what is right for your homestead. I'm your host Jill winger, and for the last 10 years I have been helping people just like you who feel a little uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills. So when we started this whole homestead gig 10 years ago, goats were our gateway animal into the world of home dairy. I will never forget the day we brought home our goats. I was about eight and a half months pregnant and I felt as big as a house and we drove down to Colorado with our truck and stock trailer to get these goats.

Speaker 1: [01:21](#) Now mind you, I had never had goats or sheep before. So, even though we had horses, you know, this was pretty much our entry into the world of livestock. And to top it all off, we got two goats. They were black Nubian goats. One was named Cinnamon and the other was named Gisele, which considering her personality, I just think it was hilarious to name her after a supermodel because she was the dorkiest clumsiest goat. But anyway, I digress. After we picked them up, we had a family get together at my inlaws house, so we proceeded to take the goats in the stock trailer to their house in town and park it on the side street of their neighborhood. So it was pretty exciting and made quite the splash. And that was our first day as goat owners. And I continued to milk Cinnamon and Gisele and breed them for several years before we finally purchased our first milk cow.

Speaker 1: [02:32](#) Now even though my goats have been dried up for awhile and we ultimately sold our original pair and we're exclusively milking cows these days, I'm still actually very much pro goats. There are definite advantages to each animal no matter what you choose. So I wanted to break down this topic into a list of pros and cons for you today. Alrighty. Let's start off with goats and the pros or benefits of owning a home dairy goats. Primarily I think the biggest one on this list is the cost. Dairy goats are a much, much cheaper to purchase than a milk cow, right goat price tags vary a little bit, depends on the breed and if they're pure breeds or where you're getting them from. But you can expect to pay anywhere from about 50 bucks on the very low side to probably 350 bucks for a starter goat, depending on the age, breed, and whether or not the goat is registered.

Speaker 1: [03:45](#) I think with our goats, we paid around \$200 a piece for them, which felt really good to us because they were from good stock and they were pure bred Nubians and so even though they didn't have papers that didn't feel unreasonable. Also on the cost side of things, goats consume far less hay than a full size milk cow. Even when our goat herd was at its very largest, which I believe was around 12 head at one point when I got really crazy about breeding every year, the herd still ate far less than just a milk cow or two would, so they're more economical to feed for sure. Now also, it's kind of obvious, but goats are going to take a whole lot less pasture space and less space in your pens and barn. So if you're dealing with a small homestead or maybe you even live in the suburbs or in a city that has zoning for animals, goats are going to be your definite best option because they don't take up a lot of space.

Speaker 1: [05:03](#) There's also the intimidation factor to consider because they're so much smaller than a cow, goats are a far better choice if you've never worked around large animals before. Now for Christian and I, we had had experience with horses and cattle for quite some time so this wasn't an issue for us, but for you, if the largest pet you've had thus far is like a Goldfish, then if you go get a 1200 pound milk cow for the first time and then go to sit underneath it and grab a handful of udder, that can be a little nerve wracking. Not to mention dangerous if you're not familiar with how these larger animals operate cause there is a little bit of a pecking order or just some best practices to use when working around an animal that's so much bigger than you and you need to be familiar with that. The good news is with goats, I mean they still might kick you when you're milking them, but it's going to be far less damaging than a kick from a cow and a goat's probably not going to run you over in the pen.

Speaker 1: [06:17](#) Another benefit, and this can actually be a pro and a con is that goats give less milk, and I'll explain a little bit more about this in a minute, but if you have a small family or if you just do not have time to deal with massive quantities of milk, a goat is going to be a great option. Depending on the type and size of goat that you get, you're probably going to get anywhere from a couple of cups, to a gallon or two a day, and that's a little more manageable. And lastly, this is probably the biggest question of all the pros on the list. Goat smell does taste good. Like I promise, fresh goat milk that has been handled correctly tastes, I don't know if this is offensive to go people to say, but it tastes just like cow milk, which is a good thing.

Speaker 1: [07:13](#) I'm saying that as a good thing. It doesn't taste goat-y. And contrary to popular belief, it doesn't have to be stinky or strong.

Now, sometimes people will go to the grocery store and buy canned goat milk or some sort of commercialized goat milk and they don't love it. I have found that those store bought, commercialized milks taste vastly different than fresh goat milk that you're getting yourself or getting from a local farmer. I remember the day, I mean we've milked our goats for the first time. I had been waiting a while. They finally had their babies. I waited for the babies to get in their groove. We finally went out there to milk for the house, right? House milk, brought it in, strained it, and I had it sitting there in a glass on the counter and I'm thinking, oh boy, what if this tastes so disgusting that I just spent all this time and money on these goats and I don't even want to keep doing this?

Speaker 1: [08:12](#) So I very hesitantly took a gulp and I was so pleasantly surprised, like it literally just tasted like regular old milk. There is a little bit of a concern if you have bucks, which is a male goat, you have those around on your property, they're stinky and a little bit icky. So sometimes the stink from the buck can get into the milk or just having the buck in the vicinity can cause the does or the female goats. They, they get a little more uh, aromatic. And so that can get into the milk. We never personally kept bucks around. I always would borrow a buck or another option is artificial insemination. If you have someone in your area who can help you with that. So as long as you're keeping bucks away from your milking does, that really shouldn't be an issue. Oh, and that brings me to another little side point.

Speaker 1: [09:16](#) Breeding your goats can be a little bit easier because oftentimes, depending on your community, you can find buck goats to borrow or rent a little bit easier than a bull. Not to mention a buck is going to be a little bit safer and easier for you to deal with and transport than a 1500 to 2000 pound bull. So to breed your goats back each year cause right, you can't have milk without having babies, then it's a little bit easier to get that done. Okay. So goats sound pretty cool, right? Lots of benefits and pros to having goats. Let's talk a little bit about the cons of keeping dairy goats. The biggest one for us, and this is ultimately probably the biggest reason that we ended up downsizing our herd was fencing. You almost need a water tight fence to keep a goat in. It's kind of crazy.

Speaker 1: [10:20](#) And even then, they might still get out because they're escape artists. With our situation, most of our fences were barbed wire, which we kind of knew that barbed wire fence would not keep in a goat and it didn't. Now we had to keep the most of the year because of this in our pens that had, we call them cattle panels or hog panels, which is just a wire panel that you can buy at the

feed store. And then you usually have to brace it with T-posts or some sort of fence post or board. That will keep your goat in. It's a little costlier to build that fence and you're not going to want to fence the entire perimeter of your property with that. So other options would be a rolled woven wire or electric fence. If you want to have goats out to pasture and you want them to stay put, ours would go through our under our barbed wire and go eat our trees.

Speaker 1: [11:21](#)

So we lost many hundreds of dollars worth of trees due to the goats, which was super frustrating. And because we didn't want to refence our whole property or you know, set up a ton of electric fence, we ended up phasing out of the goats for that reason. Now another downfall to goats, which I mentioned this a minute ago, is they give less milk. So if you have a small family, that's no big deal. But if you have a large family or you're just wanting to go crazy with home cheesemaking, you're going to need to milk several goats at least to get enough milk. Okay. So just going to take a little bit more work. You know, not a big deal, but something to consider depending on the size of your family and your ultimate goals. And then the other big downfall to goats, this is a sad one. It's tough to get cream from goat's milk.

Speaker 1: [12:18](#)

A lot of folks don't know that goat's milk is naturally homogenized, which means that very little cream will rise to the top. So homogenization is just the process that milk undergoes to make sure the cream doesn't separate. So when you see on your gallons of milk from the grocery store, it says homogenized, that means you're never going to have to expect to see a cream line on that milk. Now, that was put into place, you know, decades ago because when dairies were becoming more commercial, it was hard to regulate the cream lines. And also when the milk was being transported, it would jiggle and the trucks and you'd have issues with the cream. So homogenization became a thing. I personally don't like homogenization because I want to capture the cream at the top of my milk, which is one of the big reasons I love having my own cow because I can skim that cream and do so much with it.

Speaker 1: [13:21](#)

On the flip side, goat's milk is naturally homogenized meaning that all of that cream is kind of mixed into the milk and it doesn't really rise to the top on its own. So if you are having visions of homemade butter or buckets of whipped cream, you're going to have to invest in some sort of mechanical cream separator. So it can be done with goat's milk. You can still get a little cream from them. You're just going to need a machine to make it happen. For us, I love cream, kind of obsessed with it,

and I liked the fact that with my cow milk, the cream just floats to the top. I can skim it off with a ladle and call it good. So just something to keep in mind. All right, so we talked goats. Now is time to talk cows. Okay. The pros of milk cows or why?

Speaker 1: [14:18](#) I think they're a really good option for some homesteaders. So first off goes without saying, but fencing, if you have a basic barbed wire, which is the really most common fence in many areas of the country or a wooden fence, your cows probably going to stay inside with very little issue. There are exceptions. But cows respect barbed wire for the most part. You're also going to be swimming in milk. So even when I'm just milking our cow once per day, I still get around two gallons of milk per milking depending on the season and what she's eating and so on. But it's a lot of milk. That's enough to make all of the cheese and ice cream and butter, yogurt, everything my heart desires. Plus I can feed extra milk to pigs if we have them or chickens or dogs. So there is plenty to go around. Plenty.

Speaker 1: [15:18](#) Now along with the large amounts of milk, you also get large amounts of cream, which is fantastic. And probably my favorite part of owning a milk cow, I'll never forget the first time I got a five inch cream line that is five inches of cream, you guys, on the top of the jar after I let it sit in the fridge for a while and I was in heaven and the milk tastes good. You know, just like good goat milk, cow milk that's been handled properly and chilled as it should, tastes pretty darn amazing. And lastly, you can use extra calves to be beef for your freezer. So in order for a cow to stay fresh or to have maximum milk production each year, you need to breed her about once a year. You can stretch that a little bit more, but once a year is what most folks do.

Speaker 1: [16:18](#) And then the byproduct of this, well not really a byproduct, but you get calves and you can either sell those calves to make money. You can keep the calves to turn into future milk cows or you can put them in your freezer. And even though there's a little bit of a stigma around beef from dairy cows, we have found that it's excellent. There's nothing wrong with it. It still tastes very good. It's very lean. It often has more of a yellow fat to it instead of a white fat just because of the animals and how they, I believe it's related to how they have the Beta carotene in their bodies. It doesn't mean it's bad, it's just different. So there's nothing wrong with dairy beef at all. And that's not to say that you can't eat goat meat as well because you absolutely can.

Speaker 1: [17:09](#) But for us, we just prefer beef over goat. So that's a huge benefit for us. Okay. The cons for cows, even though I love

them, there's definitely some things that make them a little bit tougher. And these are really important to keep in mind. A big one with cows is costs. Purchasing a milk cow is going to set you back quite a bit more than a goat. You're going to pay anywhere from about a thousand dollars to \$3,000 for a milk cow. And that just depends on her age, if she's currently pregnant, if she's had a lot of experience as a family cow and so on. I believe that we paid, I think it was \$1,800 for Oakley and when we bought her, she was pregnant, confirmed pregnant by a vet, but she was not halter broke, which meant she had never been really touched by a human.

Speaker 1: [18:07](#)

So she wasn't mean. But I had to work with her for a while to get her to trust me and to be able to put a halter on her and lead her around. If she had been an experienced family cow and pregnant, we probably would have paid even more. So you can get into them cheaper if you're willing to do more work upfront. But it's a definite investment. You also have to keep in mind that cows eat more than a goat, like obviously. Right. So with our cows we have enough pasture that they're able to graze through the summer months, but then in the winter time we're buying hay for them and they eat a lot of hay. So that is a definite expense. Also. Keep in mind transportation. Unless you have some really generous friends who have trucks and stock trailers, you're going to need some sort of truck or trailer to haul your cattle.

Speaker 1: [19:05](#)

Now you might be able to get away with this. If you live in an area with neighbors around you and really you only ever are going to want the cow to come to your house and you don't plan on having to take it to the vet or move it around, you may be able to pay someone or find someone to just bring it to your house. And you may not need a trailer, but it's pretty handy to have one just in case of emergency or whatever. And in contrast, you can usually just haul goats in a minivan or a car. So just a thought a little bit more difficult on the transport end of things. And in addition to larger transport vehicles, cows also require a larger amount of pasture space. One cow usually requires around two to five acres of pasture, depending on where you live and what your grass is like.

Speaker 1: [20:04](#)

Now, even with our 60 plus acres of pasture, that's not enough to feed our cows. I think we have four to five cows here at a given time. That's not enough to feed them year round. We still have to feed hay for a portion of that year. You could keep a cow in a smaller lot. Let's say you have an acre and you have a little pen, you could keep your cow in the pen year round, you're just going to have to spend more time keeping it clean

and then of course buying the Hay to feed it 12 months out of the year. Okay. And lastly, one of the cons of cows and yes I do list this as a con because this can be very overwhelming is that you be swimming in milk. And I think people underestimate this just a bit. You know, the first few days that this happens, it seems super fun cause you have so much milk and so many options.

Speaker 1: [21:01](#)

But then when your refrigerator is so full of milk jars, you cannot fit anything else in it, and you have made all the yogurt you guys can possibly eat, and you don't have a ton of time to devote to cheese making. Okay? It can be really overwhelming. And there are ways you can cope with this milk overload, whether you're sharing with others, selling it. If you live in a state that allows milk sales, giving it to animals and so on. But you need to be prepared for this glut of milk because it is inevitable if you are getting a milk cow. Okay, so I gave you a lot of information over the last few minutes just to wrap it up. And if you are a beginning homesteader, I have a recommendation for you. If you are just starting out into the world of home dairying, I wholeheartedly suggest that you get a goat, actually at least two goats because goats like to travel in pairs and they need a friend.

Speaker 1: [22:05](#)

But with two goats, you don't have to shell out a bunch of cash to get started or go figure out how to deal with an animal that's three times your size. You just gotta make sure you do have that water tight fence so they don't run down to the neighbors and then once you get your goat and you decided that you love home dairying or maybe you don't love home dairying and if you do want to continue or you just want to step up your cheese making game than down the road account might be a perfect addition later on. I've just seen too many folks who dive in with the cow first thing only to realize they bit off a bit more than they can chew and they end up having to sell it later, which that's not the end of the world. It's just a little bit more time and money that you would be spending that you don't have to.

Speaker 1: [23:02](#)

If you let goats be your test run first, so there you have it. My friends. I'm a fan of both cows and goats. Both have their benefits and both have their downfalls, but both have made my personal homestead experience a whole lot more exciting and delicious because nothing quite compares to the first time you take that sip of fresh milk from your very own animal. It makes all the sweat and money and time worth it. If you know that home dairy is definitely in your future, whether it's coming now or later, grab a copy. My complimentary home dairy handbook. It'll help you skip the farm store and make safe natural products

for your cow or goat at home. Go to theprairiehomestead.com/homedairyrecipes to grab it. That's theprairiehomestead.com/homedairyrecipes, and that is all for today. If you have just a minute, I would be so honored if you'd pop over to iTunes and leave us a quick review so more people can find out how to add a homesteading into their lives. Thanks so much for listening and I'll chat with you next time on the old fashioned on purpose podcast.