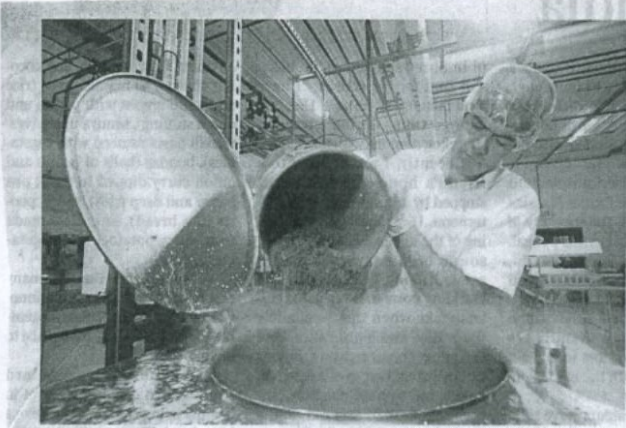


# Food & Arts

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COREY HENDRICKSON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

## GOT SOY MILK? VERMONT DOES.

A NEW PRODUCER BRINGS IN DAIRY ALTERNATIVES

By Darryl Madden  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

HARDWICK, Vt. — Here's one timeworn Vermont scene: Holsteins meandering lazily along the hills through twilight.

And here's another, newer scene: A man pedaling a bicycle that powers a blender mixing a smoothie made with fresh soy milk from Vermont.

Yes, soy milk in the Green Mountain State. And while you may think the prospect of producing soy milk in a region famous for its dairy cows may not attract much attention, the year-old Vermont Soy is gaining notice trying to work into the preexisting ecosystem of dairy farmers, Birkenstocked vegetarians, grainaries, and locavores.

At least, that's the idea. Right now, Vermont Soy is busy, busy, busy. They're evaluating the soy beans Vermont farmers tested for them last year; recruiting new farmers to grow them; making their intensely creamy soy milk in regular, vanilla, and chocolate; and launching a line of tofu.

"A lot of people in Vermont Soy MILK, Page E5

Vermont Soy co-owner Todd Pinkham adds chocolate to the soy milk process.



## Soy maker horns in on a dairy state

► SOY MILK  
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mont were, like, 'I just don't see it. We're in a dairy state,'" says Todd Pinkham, co-owner of Vermont Soy. "But the truth is that people in Vermont are importing literally tons of these products."

So Pinkham, co-owner Andrew Meyer, and a handful of employees are cranking out a ton of tofu and 2,000 gallons of organic soy milk each month in their new Hardwick plant on equipment salvaged from an old Ben & Jerry's factory and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters operation. Hardwick is an out-of-the-way town of 3,000 in north central Vermont.

Vermont is a good incubator for this food venture. The state has branded itself and its products successfully for years, including maple syrup, cheddar cheese, Ben & Jerry's ice cream, Long Trail Ale, and King Arthur flour.

But the soy enterprise has its eye on the greater New England market, specifically Boston, which Pinkham knows to be one of the biggest tofu-consuming cities in the country. There is another small tofu maker in New England, the Bridge, based in Middletown, Conn., which makes about 1,000 pounds of tofu daily with beans from upstate New York, but they don't sell soy milk. International giant Vitasoy is based in Ayer. Some, but not all, of their production takes place in Massachusetts.

Before it can expand, Vermont Soy needs to determine which soybeans it will use again and convince some farmers to grow them. Last year, six growers harvested about 50 acres of beans for the new company. Pinkham and Meyer are trying to understand their various beany qualities (such as

color, flavor, protein). Meanwhile, agriculture specialists at the University of Vermont have samples of those same beans to learn what it takes to grow them in these northern fields. The company, the farmers, and UVM are piecing the puzzle together so small farmers aren't stuck buying special cleaning and storage devices for the soybeans.

The trick for Vermont Soy is growing at a rate that will support the farmers as they put more acreage into soybeans, and also finding other outlets, like organic grain suppliers, for the surplus beans.

The company also wants to maintain its distinctive style. Pinkham researched soy milk and tofu

**'A lot of people in Vermont were, like, "I just don't see it. We're in a dairy state."'**

TODD PINKHAM,  
Vermont Soy co-owner

production for years before products were launched. Much of the aseptically packaged soy milk on the market is thin. Vermont Soy's is so thick you have to wonder if you can pull it through a straw. Their fresh milk is packaged in recyclable plastic Vermont-made jugs and in pint sizes. Tofu is a firm nagiri style with a strong flavor often described as cereal-like.

For Ariel Zevon, daughter of 1970s rocker Warren Zevon and owner of the restaurant LACE in Barre, "Vermont Soy has been a godsend," she says. "I only serve locally produced foods to my clientele, and many of them are vegan."

"For so many years, this state was wool, wool, wool, then milk, milk, milk," says Meyer, of Vermont Soy.

His vision? It's not "soy, soy, soy" exactly.

But a bean can dream.

Vermont Soy soy milk and tofu are available at A. Russo and Sons, 560 Pleasant St., Watertown, 617-923-1500.



PHOTOS BY COREY HENDRICKSON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



Clockwise from above: Allen Van Anda, Todd Pinkham, and Violet Walbridge and James Lovinsky work to produce Vermont Soy organic soy milk.

