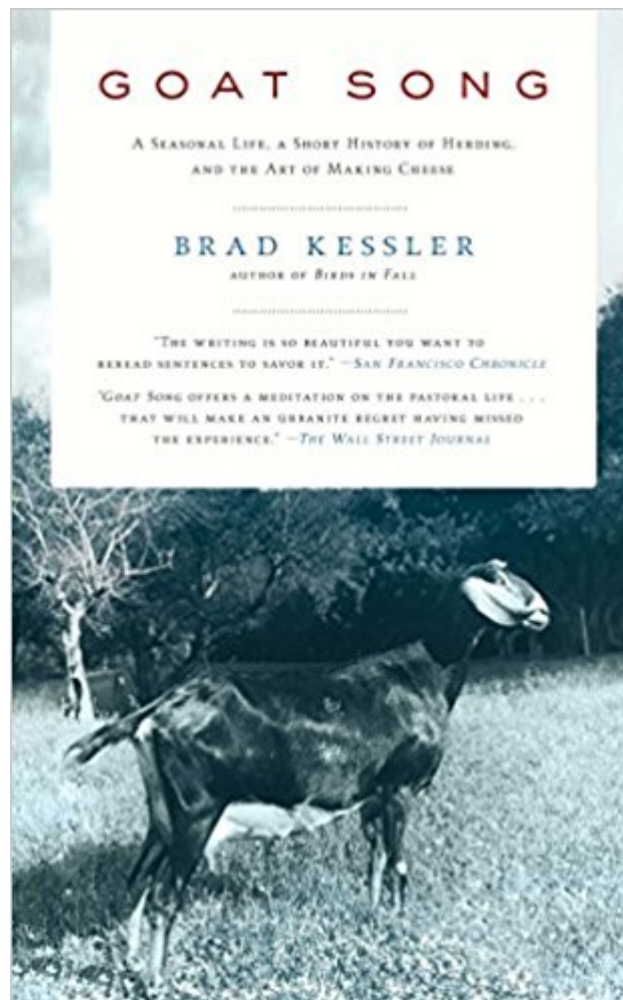




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# Goat Song: A Seasonal Life, A Short History Of Herding, And The Art Of Making Cheese



## Synopsis

Goat Song is the story of a year in the life of a couple who abandoned their one-bedroom apartment in New York City to live on seventy-five acres in Vermont and raise Nubian goats. In poetic, reverent detail, Brad Kessler explores our ancient relationship to the land and our gradual alienation from the animals that feed us. His fascinating account traces his journey of choosing the goats and learning how to breed, milk, and care for them. As Kessler begins to live the life of a herder, he encounters the pastoral roots of so many aspects of Western culture—how our diet, our alphabet, our religions, poetry, and economy all grew out of a pastoralist setting, a life lived among hoofed animals.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Novelist (Birds in Fall; Lick Creek) Kessler's account of tending a small herd of milking goats in Vermont captures both the lush, poetic paradise of rural life and the raw, unrelenting drama of dairying. Kessler, a Saab-driving ex-Manhattanite, purchases two Nubian goats, breeds them and helps his wife, Dona, a trained doula, attend to the birth of four goat kids the following spring. The amusing zoomorphic and anthropomorphic descriptions, where goats forage as if they were at a sample sale and milk-fed kids stagger "like street junkies," dissipate as Kessler endures a season of goat wrangling, haying and hunting coyotes. Kessler gives the legal aspects of unpasteurized cheese a cursory inspection; his devotion centers on a budding relationship with animals, the earth and goat cheese. He's a back-to-the-land naturalist, who supports his detailed personal observations with extensive research as he explores the cultural, historical and biological

aspects of pastoralism. While the tome's lengthy poetic journal entries on animal husbandry and cheese making hardly qualify as a comprehensive manual, the observant, unsanctimonious read is bound to inspire hobby farmers and consummate cheese lovers. (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

• A wonderful little miracle of a book. • --Tom Ashbrook, National Public Radio "Goat Song offers a meditation on the pastoral life that will make an urbanite regret having missed the experience. • " The Wall Street Journal "The writing is so beautiful you want to reread sentences to savor it." --San Francisco Chronicle "A multi-layered, smart, erudite, and incredibly well written book." --Christian Science Monitor

I've read this book countless times, yet each time I learn something new -- and you will too. It's a perfect weekend read, coffee table conversation piece, or even a gift for an outdoorsman friend. Mr. Kessler perfectly blends anecdotes of his goats' daily lives with a history of goat-herding, all with a sacred reverence for the animal that has sustained humanity for centuries. Kessler describes the behavior, nuances, and personalities of his goats so thoroughly that by the end of the story you'll know them better than you know the author himself. You'll want to meet the goats. And you'll be introduced to the alluring mystery that Kessler uncovers by being a goat-herd -- as he learns and anticipates his animals' needs as closely as if they were his friends while enjoying their quiet companionship on walks through his land, he becomes increasingly more in touch with his own inner person. You'll laugh admiring the goats' playful silliness, turn away in disgust at their sexual habits, watch in awe as a mother births her kid, bite your fingernails as coyotes menacingly threaten the herd, and cry through a goat's illness. Yet after you're through, you'll emerge with a newfound respect for the animal, a longing for days long past when goats were more fully integrated into our ancestors' lives, and -- as I said in the title -- will likely want a herd of goats all your own. You'll want to taste fresh goat's milk, gain a palate for the nuances of fresh goat cheese (the flavor changes based on a goat's diet and the season during which the milk was produced), and run to the store to purchase every variety of goat cheese your local market carries. This book is perfect for the gentleman farmer, the weekend gardener longing for a hobby farm, the naturalist, the raw milk advocate, a gourmet foodie, or even just a lover of memoirs. The storytelling is superb (Kessler typically writes fiction), but what makes this book even more difficult to put down is the nuggets of goat-related facts, history, and trivia that he intersperses throughout the book that will both impress

and amuse you. I cannot recommend this book enough, and even my lengthy review of what has now become one of my top five books cannot do it justice. Simply do yourself a favor, and order a copy of Brad Kessler's masterpiece today.

Lovely book. Great winter read. Recommend to anyone interested in farming, homesteading, raising animals, or anyone craving a beautiful, lyrical story that truly touches the soul.

I read Kessler's book in the weeks leading up to and following my becoming an amateur dairy goat farmer. I had left NYC to take my recording studio to the country and ended up adding dairy to my list of things I wanted to produce myself. Kessler's writing is lively and humorous but his knowledge is also very deep. I believe cheese is man's greatest culinary feat--from the point of view of deliciousness, variety between cultures and its fascinating interplay of living organisms, enzymes, heat, salts and aging--and it is such a treat to read an author who can be rapturous in the experience of a bite of cheese, the pasture that went into the making of the milk, and also relay the 14 stages of making hard cheese as if they were paragraphs from an epic poem. Kessler weaves the history of cheesemaking, goatherding and the goat into his memoir with fluidity and finesse. One of my goats ripped out 10 or so pages while I was reading it because I was so absorbed in the story I didn't see her sneak up on me. Luckily, I chased her down and got the pages back without her eating any. This book should be read by anyone interested in the history of animal domestication, history of food, goats, cheese or the flight from city to country in the pursuit of something earthy and real.

Granted, I thought I might like this one going into it, I found it was so much more entertaining than I'd hoped. The stories, the pace, the details all evoke a very happy tale of the Herder. There are so many opportunities in this type of thing for the 'lecture' on the food supply and the modern lifestyles, etc... while these thoughts may well be warranted, they tend to make a dull read. This book does none of that, which was a real treat. This fella offers historic details, emotional connection and really fun stories that move very quickly. I was eager to learn more about this farm. The only negative thing I can say is that I wish there were a sequel. While I rarely read a book twice, I probably will go through this one again.

I grew up with sheep, which I always found a little skittish and scary. But Brad made me love goats and the life of a herder in this book. As a student of the Bible, I found his tracing of the Hebrew

alphabet and other words, back to their origin in herding cultures quite fascinating. I'm still not a convert to goat cheese, but I came to admire the patience and keen eye involved in cheese making. The vulnerability of the herd -- the protective role of the good dog and the good goatherd -- the hard work and satisfaction in haying day. There is a quiet wisdom and beauty in this book.

One of the most beautifully written books I have ever read. Brad Kessler is a poet, a troubadour of prose. Anyone could appreciate the beauty in this book if they take the time to savor his words. I was enchanted from start to finish. Yes it's a story of escaping the confusion of daily life, yes it's a story of the wonder of the goats, yes it's the story of a changed life, but it's so much more. A lesson, or several to be learned here. My new FAVORITE book and my choice for all my gift giving this holiday season. I am back to buy more copies to share with my more enlightened friends.

This is a must read for anyone who knows nothing of, yet is interested, in animal husbandry. It was a recommend read by a local radio program's book show. It was a gift for my boyfriend who thought he might want to make cheese in his retirement. He has actually started making a list of some very unique words used in this book to research and expand his vocabulary. And it was a fascinating and eye opening read. It might tell you more than you wish to know. But that's the reality of raising animals.

Great read. I love how he articulates the connection one feels to the land when farming.

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