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1. Wisconsin Earns 92 Awards at American Cheese Society Competition

By Jeanne Carpenter

Wisconsin cheesemakers swept the 2009 American Cheese Society Competition last week in Austin, Texas, capturing 92 ribbons including a prestigious Runner-Up Best of Show prize.

Of 1,327 total entries, Wisconsin cheesemakers scored nearly one third of all awards bestowed, more than any other state. America's Dairyland's awards included 24 firsts, 34 seconds and 34 third places. Cheesemakers from 197 companies in 32 U.S. states, Canada and Mexico were represented.

Winning Best of Show was Rogue River Blue, made at Rogue Creamery in Central Point Oregon. Second Place Best in Show went to Red Hawk, crafted by Cowgirl Creamery in Point Reyes Station, California. Tying for Third Place Best in Show was Cave Aged Mellage, a mixed milk cheese made by Sid Cook, Carr Valley Cheese, LaValle, Wis., as well as Rupert, an aged Jersey cow's milk cheese produced by Consider Bardwell, in West Pawlet, Vermont.

Master Cheesemaker Sid Cook of Wisconsin dominated the competition, landing 19 ribbons for his American Originals. Meanwhile, cheesemaker Brenda Jensen, Hidden Springs Creamery, Westby, Wis., captured the second most ribbons for Wisconsin, with a total of 8 awards for her farmstead sheep's milk cheeses. Cheesemaker Marieke Penterman at Holland's Family Cheese in Thorp, Wis., took home six ribbons with her range of farmstead Dutch-style Goudas.



Best of Show Rogue River Blue at the 2009 ACS Festival of Cheese



Edelweiss Creamery Master Cheesemaker Bruce Workman at the 2009 ACS Festival of Cheese.

Wisconsin cheesemakers earning first place ribbons include:

- **BelGioioso Cheese Inc.**, Denmark: Burrata
- **Carr Valley Cheese**, LaValle: Four-Year Cheddar, Cave Aged Mèlage, Cocoa Cardona
- **Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese**, Waterloo: Les Frères Reserve
- **Edelweiss Creamery**, Monticello: St. Mary's Grass-Fed Gouda
- **Hidden Springs Creamery**, Westby: Driftless Honey Lavender, Farmstead Feta
- **Holland's Family Cheese**, Thorp: Marieke Gouda Clove
- **Klondike Cheese**, Monroe: Dill Havarti, Lowfat Feta
- **Meister Cheese**, Muscoda: Roasted Red Pepper Mozzarella
- **Montchevre-Betin**, Belmont: Mini Log Flavored with Honey
- **Organic Valley**, La Farge: European Style Cultured Butter, Pasteurized Pepper Jack Cheese
- **Pasture Pride Cheese**, Cashton: Redstone, Guusto
- **Roth Käse USA**, Monroe: St. Otho, Gran Queso, Valfino
- **Sartori Foods**, Plymouth: Merlot BellaVitano, Black Pepper BellaVitano, SarVecchio Asiago, Pastoral Blend

In addition to landing the most first place awards, Wisconsin cheesemakers swept five categories, including: American Originals Mixed Milk or Sheep's Milk Cheeses; American Made/International Style, Dutch Style; American Made/International Style Mixed Milk or Sheep's Milk Cheeses; Italian Type Cheese, Grating Styles; and Fresh Sheep's Milk Cheeses, Flavor Added.

For a complete list of all ACS winners, visit: <http://www.cheesesociety.org/>

2. DBIC Monthly Message: The Power of Grass Roots Marketing



This month, we hear from **Jeanne Carpenter**, DBIC Communications Director. She provides insight into **“The Power of Grass Roots Marketing.”**

One of the most effective tools for cheesemakers or dairy companies with no available budget for marketing or public relations is the power of grassroots marketing. Grassroots momentum is getting alpha consumers and industry opinion leaders in your key markets to care so deeply about what you are doing that they become your most vocal cheerleaders. If managed correctly, grassroots marketing can produce a highly effective voluntary sales force that will be more effective than any high-powered public relations firm or marketing department.

Case in point: when the Dairy Business Innovation Center began back in 2003 and brought me on as its communications director, I had no national media connections and very few established industry partnerships. Therefore, I had to rely on grassroots marketing to make connections and build the case that Wisconsin cheesemakers were indeed crafting original, artisan cheeses that deserved the attention of media, industry and consumers. Since 2003, through the use of cultivating relationships, building bridges to industry partners and using grassroots momentum, I've placed stories about Wisconsin cheesemakers in national newspapers, glossy magazines, national radio programs and television. You can do it, too. If you are an emerging cheesemaker or dairy entrepreneur whose expertise lies in crafting a product instead of marketing your product, I bring forth good news. All you need is a computer with an Internet connection and access to a teenager to help set up the following FREE consumer/buyer connections that will cost you absolutely nothing but your time:

Set up a BLOG: I know what you're thinking – "I can't blog; I'm not a professional writer." Guess what? The vast majority of bloggers today are not writers. But, they are experts in their field. Effective bloggers convey information around something they care deeply about and getting other people to care, too. It's easy to set up a blog – there are many free blogger websites out there – but it's harder to manage content. Here are a few key lessons I've learned in writing a cheese blog for the past 3-1/2 years that is now read weekly by more than 4,000 people across the world:

- **Quality is more important than quantity.** Only post when you have something to say. New product? People care. Blog about it. Win an award? People care. Blog about it. A customer told you a funny or meaningful story about your product? People care. Blog about it. Your cat just did a backward flip? No one cares. Do NOT blog about it. One or two meaningful posts a week will earn you more loyal readers than throw-away daily posts.
- **Link to other bloggers.** It will take awhile – perhaps several months -- for your blog to really gain popularity. One way to expedite this process is to connect with others blogging about the same subject and exchange links – meaning, provide a link on your blog to their blog and ask for vice versa. This simple practice will vastly and rapidly improve your Google search rating.
- **Tell key players about your blog.** Send a quick email to a few key industry professionals and consumers, talking about your blog once you have a few posts up. Let them do the marketing for you – word of mouth recommendations are worth far more than paid advertising.

Take the plunge and get on FACEBOOK: Again, I know what you're thinking. "I'm too old to be on Facebook." Guess what? The key demographic of Facebook users is now women, aged 32 – 55. Isn't this most likely your targeted consumer group – women with families doing shopping for dinner? Well, then establish your company as a Facebook organization with the ability to let people sign up as "Fans". This allows alpha consumers to connect with each other while they are talking about your product. Use your Facebook page to give updates on specials and events. Facebook is more informal, so have fun with it.



Just do it: set up an account on TWITTER. In this case, I really do know what you're thinking, because until two months ago, I was thinking the same thing. "This is a fly-by-night application that will lose steam and I'm not going to mess around with it." Guess what? I've found Twitter to be – by far – the most useful social networking tool of them all. Why? Because the only people bothering with Twitter right now are the opinion leaders and alpha consumers. This is the channel they're using to tell their friends about all of their fabulous new finds. Talk about your product on Twitter, and I guarantee people will find you. There's even a special app for us cheese people -- #cheese – put this in your Tweet and it will go into a separate listing where all the cheese people on Twitter talk to each other. I've discovered some pretty amazing new cheeses this way.



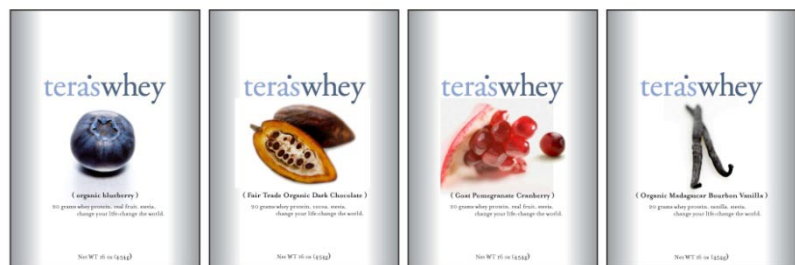
In summary, when using technology to grow grassroots momentum, be sure and think quality, not quantity. Only post a blog, update or tweet when you have something to say or meaningful information to share. It is in your best interest to focus on garnering the attention of influential people who will tell their friends and colleagues about the most amazing product – your product -- they have ever tried. After all, you don't have time to reach the masses, so let opinion leaders do it for you.

3. WI Specialty Protein Launches “teraswhey” Line of Products

Just one year after breaking ground to build the nation’s first facility to process whey specifically from organic cow, goat and sheep cheese, Wisconsin Specialty Protein today launches a new line of whey protein products in flavors ranging from fair trade dark chocolate to yumberry, a fruit sourced from southeast Asia.

Made with all-natural ingredients, “teraswhey™” protein products are available in 12-ounce cans and single serve pouches and retail online at www.teraswhey.com for \$19.99 and \$1.99. The product can be added instantly to water or milk, shaken and easily drank right from a water bottle. “teraswhey™” includes only five ingredients, sourced from sustainable dairy farms and small local cheese plants in southwestern Wisconsin, and infused with “super fruit” flavors from ecosystems around the world.

“Because we’ve engineered our drinks to use all natural ingredients, this is a product that tastes amazingly good – smooth and fruity, with no chalky aftertaste,” said CEO Tera Johnson, founder of Wisconsin Specialty Protein. “These products are designed not only for professional athletes, but also for real people who are looking to enhance a healthy lifestyle with a high protein, low carb beverage made from completely traceable, sustainably produced, local whey. When I say I know where our whey comes from, I mean I know the cheesemakers, the farmers, and the communities.”



Each serving of “teraswhey™” contains 20 grams of protein and only 5 grams of carbohydrates from fruit and “low glycemic index stevia,” meaning a consumer’s blood sugar will not spike. The drinks are formulated using “super fruits” known for their extremely high antioxidants, and the best tasting vanilla and chocolate on the planet – the same varieties that French pastry chefs demand. Flavors now available in r-BGH free cow’s milk include:

- **Acai** – a tropical fruit of Brazil
- **Wolfberry** – from the Tibetan Plateau
- **Yumberry** – sourced from Southeast Asia
- **Fair Trade Dark Chocolate** – from cacao beans in Brazil
- **Bourbon Vanilla** – sourced from islands in the Indian Ocean

The current line of products are derived from fresh, sweet, rBGH-free cheese whey using low temperature ultra-filtration and a gentle drying process. Additional flavors using organic whey protein concentrate will also soon be available. In addition, goat’s whey protein concentrate drinks should be online by year’s end, Johnson said.

Wisconsin Specialty Protein has been on a fast track since breaking ground in Reedsburg last July. The \$14 million, 20,000 sq. ft. facility currently employs a staff of 13. The unique facility is in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification process and was constructed using recycled materials. The facility incorporates passive solar design elements, rain gardens, recycled water, and heat. It uses 40 percent less energy than a typical whey drying plant. The building’s only air emissions are steam. For more information, visit: <http://www.teraswhey.com>

4. Industry News

- ❖ **Feature on Farmers' Markets:** Alyssa Mitchell, senior editor at *The Cheese Market News*, recently shared information on how farmers' markets can be key to a cheesemaker's bottom line.
 - According to USDA, the number of farmers' markets grew by 150 percent over the last decade, thanks to growing consumer interest in obtaining fresh, local and organic products. The National Directory of Farmers' Markets currently lists more than 4,700 markets across the nation.
 - Farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture is growing faster than total ag sales.
 - Average sales at farmers' markets in 2005 totaled about \$245,000; average annual sales per vendor totaled \$7,108. For example, Wisconsin cheesemaker Tony Hook, Hook's Cheese, Mineral Point, says about 5 percent of his company sales come from the Dane County Farmers' Market in Madison.
 - Larry Johnson, General Manager of the Dane County Farmer's Market, points out a key difference for cheesemakers vs. other vendors at the market is the fact that even with more than one cheese vendor present, each has a unique product to offer customers, adding that there are about 8-10 cheesemakers at the market this year. "It's different from all the vegetables," Johnson says. "I mean, after a while, a radish is a radish is a radish."



5. Upcoming Important Dates

- **Oct. 30 – 31: 2009 Focus on Goats Conference. Sinsinawa, Wis.**
Save the date for this year's Focus on Goats Conference, to be held at Sinsinawa, Wis., near both the Illinois and Iowa borders, in the heart of Upper Midwest Dairy Goat operations. The conference will include several producer panels and keynote speakers. Watch for updates at: <http://www.wdga.org/>
- **Sept. 11: Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute Member Meeting. Monroe, Wis.**
Members will gather at Turner Hall Ratskellar in Monroe to hear featured speaker Jon Metzиг talk about his recent trip to Europe to study cheesemaking. Tours before and after the meeting are also available. For more info, visit: <http://www.wisspecialcheese.org/>
- **Nov. 6 – 7: First Annual Wisconsin Original Cheese Festival. Madison, Wis.**
Shake hands and talk shop with the current generation of Wisconsin rock star cheesemakers, sample hundreds of original cheeses, take a tour to a cheese factory, choose from a stunning line-up of six tasting seminars, or join a cheesemaker for a private dinner for 12 at one of six participating Madison Original restaurants. To learn more or to purchase tickets, visit <http://www.wicheesefest.com/>

The **Dairy Business Innovation Center** offers technical assistance to dairy producers and processors in developing value-added dairy products, business planning and market development. For more information, visit www.dbicusa.org or contact Jeanne Carpenter at 608-358-7837, email: jeanne@wordartisanllc.com.