

In This Issue:

1. Wisconsin Wins Big at World Championship Cheese Contest
2. Team Member Monthly Message: Kate Arding
3. Otter Creek Organic Dairy Named Organic Farmer of the Year
4. Industry News
5. Upcoming Important Dates

1. Wisconsin Wins Big at World Championship Cheese Contest

An international panel of expert judges may have named a Swiss Gruyere cheese as the 2008 World Championship Cheese today, but Wisconsin cheesemakers still captured 27 of 77 gold medals during the three-day contest.

Cheesemaker Michael Spycher, of Kaserei Fritzenhaus in Wasen, Switzerland, took top honors out of 1,941 entries from 19 countries for his Le Gruyere Switzerland. First runner-up was a Gorgonzola made by CERPL Cheesemakers in Italy, while second runner-up went to an Emmentaler made by Bernhard Naf, of Guntershausen, Switzerland.

Overall, U.S. cheesemakers dominated the competition, earning gold medals in 46 of the total 77 categories judged, including golds in both butter classes and in the retail packaging class. Netherlands came in second among the countries, with eight golds; Denmark had six; Canada had four and Switzerland took three.

Austria, Australia and Spain all won two gold medals, while Sweden, Italy, France and South Africa each captured one piece.

Among U.S. states, Wisconsin dominated with 27 gold medals, while New York took five golds, California and Idaho each took three, Iowa two, and Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island each earned one gold medal.



Wisconsin gold medal winners included:

- Class 1, Mild Cheddar: **Meister Cheese Company**, Muscoda
- Class 2, Medium Cheddar: **Land O'Lakes**, Kiel
- Class 4, Cheddar Aged 1-2 Years: **Maple Leaf Cheese Cooperative**, Monroe
- Class 5, Cheddar aged 2 Years+: **Land O'Lakes**, Kiel

- Class 6, Bandaged Cheddar, Mild-Medium: **Rosewood Dairy**, Algoma
- Class 11, Marbled Curd Cheese: Colby Jack, **Alto Dairy Cooperative**, Black Creek
- Class 16, Mild Provolone: Smoked Provolone, **Land O'Lakes**, Denmark, Wis.
- Class 17: Aged Provolone: **Burnett Dairy Cooperative**, Grantsburg
- Class 31, Blue Veined: European German Style Blue, **Seymour Dairy Products**, Seymour
- Class 32, Brick, Muenster: Muenster, **Decatur Dairy**, Brodhead
- Class 42, Smear Ripened Hard Cheeses: Roth's Private Reserve, **Roth Kase USA**, Monroe
- Class 44, Pepper Flavored Cheeses: Jalapeno Havarti, **Arla Foods**, Kaukauna
- Class 47, Flavored Hard Cheeses: Rosemary-Olive Oil Rubbed Asiago, **Sartori Foods**, Antigo
- Class 55, Cold Pack Cheese: Swiss/Almond Cheese Spread, **Bel Brands USA**, Kaukauna
- Class 57, Flavored Spreadable Cheeses: Sugar Brook Cheddar, **Family Fresh Pack**, Belleville
- Class 58, Pasteurized Process Cheeses: Processed American Cheese, **AMPI**, Portage
- Class 60, Soft Goat's Milk Cheeses: Plain Goat Cheese, **Montchevre Betin**, Belmont
- Class 63, Semi-soft Goat's Milk Cheeses: Goat Milk Jack, **Cedar Grove Cheese**, Plain
- Class 64, Flavored Semi-soft Goat's Milk Cheeses: Cocoa Cardona, **Carr Valley Cheese**, LaValle
- Class 66, Soft Sheep's & Mixed Milk Cheeses: Rondele Gourmet Spreadable Goat Cheese, **Lactalis**, Merrill
- Class 67, Flavored Soft Sheep's & Mixed Milk Cheeses: Driftless with Fresh Basil, **Hidden Springs Creamery**, Westby
- Class 68, Surface Ripened Sheep's & Mixed Milk Cheeses: Cowbilly, **K&K Cheese**, Cashton
- Class 74, Unsalted Butter: **Graf Creamery**, Zachow
- Class 76, Snack Cheeses: Colby & Pepper Jack Cheese Sticks, **Masters Gallery Foods**, Plymouth
- Class 77, Open Class Shredded Cheese: **Foremost Farms**, Appleton
- Class 78, Open Class Flavored Shredded Cheese: Finely Shredded Taco Cheese Blend, **Masters Gallery Foods**, Plymouth
- Class 79, Open Class Grated Cheese: Dry Grated Asiago, **DairiConcepts**, Greenwood



The World Championship Cheese Contest is the largest international cheese and butter competition in the world. It is held every two years in Madison, Wis., and is sponsored by the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association. For complete results and contest photos, visit www.wischeesemakersassn.org.

2. DBIC Team Member Monthly Message: Kate Arding



Kate Arding, DBIC Artisan and Farmhouse Cheese Specialist, shares her own story & tips on how retailers and cheesemakers can work together to ensure consumers receive the best possible product in the best possible condition.

People sometimes ask me how I became a cheesemonger, often followed with the question “did you go to Cheese University?” This usually prompts a smile, and the response that “No. I was really just lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time”.

It is true. The launch pad was Neals Yard Dairy during the 1990s, and the map of my cheese career can be largely attributed to the generosity of a number of people who not only inspired me, but also took the time to make me understand the importance of a certain way of doing things. In other words, a philosophy and ethos.

I came to realize that this philosophy works to the mutual benefit of producer, retailer and customer. It is not based on ego or self-aggrandizement. It’s simply about selecting cheese based on taste and flavor, and selling it in the same way: honestly and in the best possible condition. Thereby representing both producer and cheese to the best of your ability. After all, without the producers, cheesemongers wouldn’t even have a job, so in being the producers’ advocate, it helps everyone.

For the Retailer

As a litmus test, ask yourself the question, “If the producer of this cheese were to walk into the store right now, would they be proud of the way that we are selling their cheese?” If you can honestly answer “Yes”, then you’re on the right track. If your answer is “Hmmm”, then here are a few pointers:

Firstly, develop a buying policy and stick to it. Decide what your guiding principles are – not just in terms of geography, but also in terms of farm/producer size, animal husbandry, animal feed, milk source, quality and flavor.

Make sure you have the full story behind the cheese. If buying direct from the producer, this relationship is much easier to develop. If you are buying via a distributor and they are unwilling/unable to tell you much, either change distributors or do some research of your own. After all, the story is one of your main selling tools. It allows you to bring the cheese to life, enthuse the customer and make them understand why they are opting for quality over quantity.

Be informed. Constantly taste the cheeses as you work with them on the counter. This is the only way that you will get to know the cheeses and how they differ, batch to batch, and to understand the variations. This information is also incredibly valuable to the cheesemaker in terms of feedback – both positive and negative – so don’t keep it to yourself. Note the batch dates/codes and jot down notes. Better still, taste them with your fellow co-workers and customers since exchange of dialog is very helpful to everyone.

Also, a word here on dealing with problem cheese. If you think there is an issue with the cheese, either resulting from a production or transport issue, it is very useful to take a digital photo and e-mail it to the producer or distributor concerned. As they say, a photo is worth a thousand words.

On other levels, make sure you are covering the basic stuff in the store. Ensure that cheese signs, descriptions and pricing are accurate. Make sure the cheese case is not so overcrowded that customers either: a) Can't see the cheeses clearly or b) That you are not correctly rotating stock/it is becoming damaged. Also make sure you have a cleaning schedule for the cheese case (at least once a week) and that cheeses are regularly being unwrapped, scraped/trimmed and re-wrapped.

For the Cheesemaker

A great idea for producers is to enclose a simple slip of paper with each cheese containing basic information regarding batch dates, what was happening that day on the farm, what the weather was doing, where the animals were grazing etc. All this information allows the conscientious cheesemonger to do their job better and it costs relatively little.

If this all sounds like too much work, it was an idea that I encountered from Vermont Shepherd back in the mid 1990s, and believe me, we sold much more cheese as a result.

All of the above will contribute to longer shelf life and quality of product. As a final note, I would say that if you allow quality, honesty and openness to be your guiding principles, much of the rest will follow.

3. Otter Creek Organic Dairy Named Organic Farmer of the Year

Otter Creek Organic Dairy, Avoca, owned by Gary and Rosie Zimmer, and their son, Nicholas, has been chosen as the 2008 Organic Farmer of the Year, an award selected by the board of directors of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES).

The diverse Zimmer farm consists of 1,200 acres of organic field crops, a 200-cow dairy herd and farmhouse cheesemaking enterprise, as well as a 100-cow beef herd and feeder pig and poultry operation. Rotational grazing is a key part of the Otter Creek Organic Dairy farming philosophy. Both the dairy herd and the beef herd are grazed, as are the hogs.

Otter Creek Organic Dairy's milk is made into both seasonal raw-milk and pesto cheddar at Cedar Grove Cheese. The family sells its cheeses and meats at Local Choice Farm Market in nearby Spring Green and has developed a unique partnership with Metcalfe's Sentry Foods in Madison, Wis. to bring more locally produced food into Wisconsin stores.

Congratulations to Organic Creek Organic Dairy from the DBIC and its partners!



4. Industry News

- ❖ **Aspiring Cheesemakers Invited to Rent Space:** Roelli Cheese re-opened its historic cheese factory in 2007, continuing a family tradition of making handcrafted specialty cheeses for nearly 100 years. Now it's offering that same opportunity to other aspiring cheesemakers. Roelli Cheese's 300-gallon vat is perfect for cheesemakers wishing to try a new recipe or make a small-batch of artisan cheese. To rent space at Roelli Cheese, contact Chris Roelli at 608-482-1155.

- ❖ **MACSAC Open House:** The Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition celebrates an open house on March 29, from 1 – 4 p.m. at Olbrich Gardens, 3330 Atwood Ave., Madison. Browse information, meet farmers and learn about fresh local foods. More info: <http://www.macsac.org/openhouse.html>



5. Upcoming Important Dates

- **April 22–24: International Cheese Technology Exposition. Madison, Wis.**
The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association and Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research will host cheese manufacturers and suppliers from across the nation and world at this biennial event. An intensive combination of morning seminars combined with two full afternoons of Expo trade show and evening events, it is the world's largest gathering devoted solely to the multi-billion dollar market for cheese and related dairy products. To learn more, visit: <http://www.wischeesemakersassn.org>
- **April 28: Tour of Fancy Food Show. Chicago, Ill.**
If you grow, manufacture, or market food in Wisconsin, plan to attend the Fancy Food Show at McCormick Place in Chicago where more than 2,000 exhibitors from around the world will showcase 150,000 new foods. The WI Dept. of Agriculture and UW Extension are sponsoring a bus tour of the show. The \$45 fee includes transportation and show registration. The bus departs from Madison at 6:45 a.m. on Monday, April 28. Anticipated return is 7 p.m. Registration is required by April 7. Call Kara Kasten at 414-531-9404 or email kara.kasten@wisconsin.gov to register.
- **July 23–26: American Cheese Society 25th Annual Conference. Chicago, Ill.**
Save these dates for the 25th annual ACS conference and a world-renowned cheese competition, which culminates in the annual the Festival of Cheese. Watch for registration and conference information at: <http://www.cheesesociety.org/index.cfm>

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.
