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1. Wisconsin's Black Creek Classic Cheddar Goes Nationwide

Alto Dairy Cooperative is partnering with Winona Foods, Inc. to market their newly branded Black Creek Classic Cheddar nationwide. This naturally aged, hand-selected Cheddar is crafted by Wisconsin Master Cheesemakers at the Black Creek, Wis. plant. To ensure full flavor is in every bite, licensed graders critique the cheese from finish and appearance to body and texture. There are 17 flavor profiles alone that are approved before the cheese receives the Black Creek name.



With today's consumers seeking bolder flavored cheese, Black Creek Classic will be available in three ages: nine months, three years or five years. The new line is available to the retail market in both 7-ounce and 15-ounce tapered wedges, as well as a two-pack of mild and nine-month. For the delis, 5-pound and 10-pound prints are also offered.

"We are excited to share our proud brand and unforgettable cheese with consumers across the country," says Barrie Tenpas, dairy farmer and chairman of the member-owned Alto Dairy Cooperative's board of directors. "Our dairy farmers want others to experience the flavor and tradition of fine Wisconsin cheeses made possible by their dedication to their daily work." Congratulations to Alto Dairy Cooperative and Winona Foods, Inc. from the DBIC and its partners.

2. DBIC Team Member Monthly Message



This month we hear from **Janet Ady**, DBIC Client Product Research Consultant. Janet says "**Consumer Testing Is Key to Successful New Product Launches.**"

"You've got a great new dairy business idea. Or you'd like to introduce an innovative new product line. You've got your business plan together, and you're ready to start manufacturing. But how can you make your idea or product stand out from the rest when you go to market? Consider participating in DBIC-sponsored consumer focus groups.

Over the past year and a half, 20 DBIC clients have participated in DBIC-sponsored consumer focus groups. During these sessions, we ask consumers to evaluate positioning statements, label/packaging designs and/or the product itself through taste testing. Consumer label testing is especially important for small companies or those with tight budgets: often, the only opportunity they have to communicate their story directly to consumers is in the few square inches of real estate they have on their product packaging.

Although each company and product situation is unique, there are a number of broad themes that have come out of focus groups. Following are some key findings:

- Less is more. Focus on the one word or phrase that really serves to differentiate your product from others. Assume consumers will only be able to remember one fact about your product or company. Using a focus group can help determine what that word or phrase should be.
- Clarity wins every time. Be careful not to choose words that are not widely known to the general public or are too scientific or consumers may assign it a negative connotation.
- Describe your product and typical uses. Unless your product is well known (e.g., cheddar), describe how it will taste and how it can be used.

Talk to your DBIC client manager if you are interested in participating in an upcoming DBIC-sponsored focus group."

3. Westby Cooperative Creamery Launches New Single-Serving Cottage Cheese Cups

Westby Cooperative Creamery has launched a new product: six ounce, single-serving cottage cheese cups with fruit flavorings. Available in plain or mixed with pineapple, mandarin orange or peach, this extremely fresh product is sure to be a hit with the lunch crowd and is available in all Kwik Trip stores in Wisconsin.



Westby General Manager Pete Kondrup said the farmer-owned cooperative decided to launch the new 2-percent low fat cups after a similar product made with zero fat didn't test as well with consumers a few years ago. This new product is faring much better - as Kondrup is now entertaining calls from school districts and assisted-living centers interested in adding the product to their lunch menus. Kondrup believes the new product is a great addition to Westby's product line and one more way for farmer-owners to connect with the public. Congratulations to Westby Cooperative Creamery on this new product launch from the DBIC and its partners.

4. DBIC & Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board to Sponsor American Cheese Society entries

Looking for an opportunity to compete against American specialty and artisanal cheeses? Plan now to enter your cheeses in the American Cheese Society's 2006 Competition. This competition, held during the American Cheese Society's annual conference July 20-22 in Portland, Oregon, attracts entries from cheesemakers throughout the United States.

In past years, Wisconsin cheeses have earned top honors in this contest, including Best in Show in five of the past eight competitions. This year, the Dairy Business Innovation Center and the Wisconsin Milk

Marketing Board are partnering to encourage Wisconsin cheese companies to participate in this competition in the following ways:

- WMMB will reimburse 50% of cow's milk and mixed milk product entry fees (\$40 per entry for ACS members, or \$160 for the first entry fee for non-members of ACS)
- DBIC will reimburse 50% of a company's first four goat's milk and sheep's milk product entry fees (same fees as above)
- WMMB & DBIC will reimburse 100% of the freight costs to ship these respective products to the competition in Portland, Oregon.

Entry forms must be postmarked by **June 2nd**. You can download the entry forms via the American Cheese Society's website: <http://www.cheesesociety.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=5>

Once you've shipped your contest cheese, send a copy of your cow's milk and mixed milk products' freight bill and entry form to WMMB, or a copy of your goat's milk or sheep's milk freight bill and entry form to the DBIC, and we will reimburse you for these costs. If you have any questions please call Cathy Hart, WMMB, 608-836-8820, ext. 246 or Kathy Brown, DBIC, 262-740-0705.

5. Industry News

- **May 24 Film Showing & Artisan Cheese Tasting:** The public will have an opportunity to meet the cheesemakers featured in a new documentary recently aired on Wisconsin Public Television: "Living on the Wedge: Wisconsin's Dairy Artisans," and view an extended 60-minute version of the film at a gala event at the Orpheum Theater. Scheduled for May 24 in Madison, the event will feature dishes prepared by seven Wisconsin chefs paired with seven Wisconsin cheesemakers featured in the film. The event runs from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and may be purchased at the door. For more information, contact Jeanne Carpenter at 608-358-7837.
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- Photo Courtesy of Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board
- **Specialty Cheese Event in Tokyo:** The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) has initiated a program in Japan to give the U.S. artisan/specialty cheese industry its well-deserved recognition in the world market. In March, a group of nine cheese importers from Japan visited Wisconsin as part of a U.S. tour and were extremely impressed with the outstanding varieties and quality of our specialty cheeses which, in their own words, compare without a doubt to the more internationally well-known European cheeses. These importers are eager to introduce U.S. specialty cheeses in Japan. To help facilitate this process, USDEC is organizing a "Specialty Cheese Seminar" and a "Cheese & Wine Reception" in **Tokyo, Japan on June 27, 2006**. The target audience for these events is importers, retailers, foodservice operators as well as trade and consumer media. USDEC expects to host about 200 people. **Your participation in these events is important and USDEC is inviting Wisconsin cheesemakers to join them** (USDEC is consolidating and paying to send cheese to this event). The Specialty Cheese Seminar will be presented by Chef Regi Hise of *foodtrends*, along with Mr. Murayama, an influential opinion leader for cheese in Japan. The Cheese & Wine Reception will highlight the wonderful selection of U.S. specialty cheeses available and paired with many U.S. wines. If Wisconsin cheesemakers are interested in participating or would like more information, contact Angélique Hollister, USDEC, at ahollister@usdec.org or at 703-528-3049.
 - **Wisconsin's Specialty Cheese Production Increases:** Wisconsin's specialty cheese production reached 355 million pounds in 2005, up 7 percent from 2004 according to just-released figures from the Wisconsin Field Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Specialty cheeses

accounted for 15 percent of the state's 2005 cheese production, with 77 of the state's 115 cheese plants now manufacturing at least one type of specialty cheese.

- **Grass Point Farms Debuts New Line In Chicago:** Grass Point Farms, manufacturer of the first nationally distributed, certified humane line of grass fed dairy products, debuted their new line of premium dairy products at the All Things Organic Show in May. Based in Clark County, Grass Point Farms certified humane grazing standards are the first to be applied to a dairy product line available nationwide. Grass Point Farms offers a full line of milk available in all sizes and varieties, and an assortment of cheeses ranging from Monterey Jack to mozzarella to cheddar to blue, and other unique, specialty cheeses. Grass Point Farms cheeses are available in both retail as well as deli packaging and their butter comes in quarters in a one pound package. For more information, visit: <http://www.grasspoint.com/>
- **Artisan Cheese Vats For Sale:** BelGioioso Cheese is selling horizontal cheese vats with round corners and capacities between 5,000 and 7,000 pounds each. Ideal for small artisan cheese production with very good agitators. Contact Lisa Cumbers, BelGioioso Cheese, at 920-863-2123.
- **Bleu Mont Dairy Studies Cheesemaking in British Isles:** Bleu Mont Dairy's Willi Lehner and Qui'tas McKnight traveled to the British Isles to study farmstead cheesemaking last April as part of the Wisconsin Dairy Artisan Research Program, a joint venture between the DBIC and The Babcock Institute. Read about their findings and experiences in this just-released report, available at: <http://www.dbicusa.com/planningoptions/research/dairy+artisan+series/default.asp>




6. Upcoming Important Dates

- **June 13-15: Dairy Goat Workshops, Wisconsin.** The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will hold two and one-half days of training for extension agents, agriculture instructors, veterinarians, lenders and other service providers on the production, processing and marketing of dairy goat milk and milk products. A one-day training will be held in Menomonie on June 13. That training will be repeated on June 14 in Madison. An optional half-day on June 15th will include discussion about on-farm processing on a farm near Madison. A goat specialist from Langston University will lead the training team, along with trainers from the University of Wisconsin, UW-EX, producers, a marketer, and processors. Sponsors include DATCP, the University of Wisconsin Extension, Technical College System, and the Dairy Business Innovation Center, among others. For more info, contact Jeanne Meier, DATCP, 608-224-5121.
- **June 16: Dairy Artisan Merchandising Seminar, Madison, Wis.** Are you constantly on the hunt for fabulous new Wisconsin artisan and farmstead dairy products? Are you looking for more high-impact, cost-effective ways to share your enthusiasm for artisan cheeses and dairy products with your customers? If so, the DBIC has a training opportunity you can't afford to miss -- a customized ZingTrain & DBIC seminar for specialty retailers, food co-ops, chefs and DBIC clients with retail stores. The training will be held on **Friday, June 16 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Whole Foods in Madison, Wis.** Zingerman's Founder and CEO Ari Weinzwieg and Steve Ehlers of Larry's Market,



Brown Deer, will help you learn how to source and develop relationships with artisan producers, properly handle and care for cheese, create effective displays and discuss selling tips. Registration is due now and space is limited. Fee is \$90 per person or \$150 for two people from the same company. For more information or to register contact Heidi Busse at 608-224-5047 or email heidi.busse@datcp.state.wi.us.

- **June 27: Annual Farmstead Producer-Food Safety Meeting, Eau Claire, Wis:** The DBIC is coordinating Wisconsin's second annual Farmstead Producer-Food Safety meeting, to be held on Tuesday, June 27 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Eau Claire. The purpose of this meeting is to bring together producers and food safety officials to discuss current issues specific to farmstead producers. This meeting provides current farmstead producers with the opportunity to get updates on recent licensing requirements and regulations, and share any questions they may have about the processes. For further information, please contact Heidi Busse at 608-224-5047 or heidi.busse@datcp.state.wi.us.
- **Aug. 10: DBIC Farmstead Field Days, Crystal Ball Farms, Troy DeRosier, Osceola, Wis.** Crystal Ball Farms is a farmstead operation that opened in the fall of 2003. Using the milk from its 100-cow herd, Crystal Ball Farms produces cream-line bottled milk, hand-packed butter, cheese curds and ice cream and markets its products regionally and in the Twin Cities. The Aug. 10 hands-on Field Day, with a tour of the facility, is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Topics will include: facility design and funding options for value-added dairy processors, sourcing small-scale dairy equipment, marketing options for farmstead operations, organic production, labeling and packaging requirements. Limit of 30 participants. Fee is \$25. For more information or to register, contact Heidi Busse, 608-224-5047 or heidi.busse@datcp.state.wi.us.
- **Aug. 15: Washington Hotel Culinary School Artisan Cheese Seminar, Washington Island.** Enjoy tasting and sampling some of Wisconsin's finest artisan cheeses, as this seminar will explore the art of crafting farmstead and specialty cheeses. Award-winning cheesemaker Mike Gingrich of Uplands Cheese will talk about his craft, and Chef Leah Caplan will prepare a special dinner featuring Uplands Cheese and other Wisconsin artisan dairy products. Cost: \$100. For more information, visit <http://www.thewashingtonhotel.com/classes.html> or call 920-847-2169.
- **Aug. 15-17: 2006 National SARE Conference, Oconomowoc, Wis.** Wisconsin is proud to host the 2006 national gathering for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education at the Olympia Resort and Conference Center in Oconomowoc. The conference program will include a variety of topics including: innovative livestock systems; sustainable crop production; direct market successes and renewable energy. Registration information to be available soon at: <http://www.sare2006.org/registration.html>. For questions and comments about the 2006 SARE conference, contact: [Linda Kleinschmit](mailto:Linda.Kleinschmit@oregonstate.edu), (402) 472-5678, conference committee chair, or [Lloyd Yanis](mailto:Lloyd.Yanis@oregonstate.edu), (312) 925-7996, conference coordinator.
- **Sept. 17-23: Europe in Your Backyard Cycling Tour, Wisconsin.** Bicyclists on this fall's Europe in your backyard celebration of Wisconsin's European heritage will include a tour of Blue Marble Family Farm, a new farmstead milk bottling operation. The 2006 tour begins and ends in Fitchburg and will highlight Wisconsin's dairy culture with a community-wide finale wine and cheese pairing on Friday, Sept. 22. To register or for more information, call 800-546-8520 or 800-233-4340.
- **Oct 3: Butter Grading Seminar, Madison, Wis.** This seminar will coincide with the Wisconsin Dairy Products Association's annual dairy products evaluation clinic during the World Dairy Expo at the

Alliant Energy Center in Madison. This full-day seminar will provide dairy industry and retailing personnel the opportunity to sharpen their grading skills while also gaining a better understanding about present USDA and WI grading standards and how they are applied. The seminar will feature a comprehensive discussion of common defects in butter, what buyers are looking for and how to properly package, handle and grade butter, all in compliance with Wisconsin Food Safety standards. For further information or to register, please visit WDPA's website at www.wdpa.net or call 608-836-3334. For general inquiries, contact Heidi Busse at 608-224-5047.

- **Nov. 9-11: Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium, LaCrosse, Wis.** The Dairy Sheep Association's announces its 12th Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium, to be held in La Crosse, WI on Nov. 9-11. This international event brings together dairy sheep producers, researchers and processors from across North America and Europe to discuss current industry issues. Features of this year's conference include a tour of Carr Valley Cheese and a visit to a farmstead artisan cheesemaker and sheep producer. For more information, visit www.dsana.org or contact Yves Berger at yberger@facstaff.wisc.edu or 715-635-3735.

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, 608-358-7837.