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1. Specialty Cheese Increases; Processors Optimistic About Future

A report released by the USDA last week not only confirmed Wisconsin's ranking as the nation's top cheese producing state, but also revealed that America's Dairyland continues to dominate the specialty cheese industry.

With a production rate of 552 million pounds in 2010, specialty cheese accounted for 21 percent of the state's total cheese production, almost a 10 percent increase over 2009.

Wisconsin has been tracking specialty cheese production since 1993. That year, the state's specialty cheese production totaled 83.1 million pounds, or 4.1 percent of the state's total cheese

output. A total of 43 plants produced one or more specialty cheeses back in 1993, or less than half the number of plants that now produce one or more specialty cheeses.

Today, of the state's 129 cheese plants, 90 manufactured at least one type of specialty cheese during 2010, the report states. Blue, Feta, Hispanic types, specialty Mozzarella varieties, Parmesan Wheel, and specialty Provolone cheeses were the state's most widely produced specialty cheeses. The largest increases from 2009 to 2010 were in specialty Cheddars and Provolones, up 22 and 24 percent, respectively.

The report comes on the heels of a survey conducted for the DBIC in January and February by the National Agricultural Statistics Service. That survey was sent to 149 of the DBIC's past clients, with a 42



percent response rate. More than two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that their gross sales increased more than 25 percent from 2004 to 2010, and over half saw their profitability increase significantly over the same time period. A total of 70 percent of respondents indicated that the DBIC was helpful in increasing their profitability. For these plants, 20 percent more workers were employed and milk intake grew by 16 percent.

The DBIC survey also revealed that investments in dairy plants, including buildings, new equipment and new products totaled \$223 million between 2004 and 2010. More than 60 percent of all respondents reporting launching a new product through assistance from the DBIC, with nearly all respondents saying they planned on using the DBIC in the future. A whopping 98 percent of respondents anticipate their business will grow in the next five years, and 100 percent are optimistic about their business' future in Wisconsin.

The DBIC looks forward to continuing to work with the Wisconsin dairy industry and growing specialty, farmstead and artisan dairy processing businesses.

2. Team Column: Five Things I've Learned Working With the DBIC



This month, we hear from **Rebecca Paris**, Client Manager for the DBIC. Becky works at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection as the Dairy Business Initiative Assistant Coordinator. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from Northern Michigan University and was raised on a dairy farm near Belleville, Wis. In her first column for the DBIC newsletter, Becky shares “**Five Things I've Learned Working with the DBIC.**”

When I started working with DBIC in late 2009, I was fairly confident in my knowledge of Wisconsin's dairy industry. I grew up on a farm, actively participated in 4-H, and was even the Green County Dairy Queen. Armed with this background and a solid four years off the farm obtaining my undergrad degree in Business Management at Northern Michigan University (or the second North Pole as I like to refer to it), I was ready to make my mark on agriculture. Suffice it to say, I've learned many things along the way.

1. There is no such thing as too much cheese. You would think that at some point, a person would reach their maximum cheese capacity and either explode or fall into a cheese induced coma, but after extensive personal research, I assure you, neither of these will ever happen. There is always room for one more piece. Just make sure there is enough in your wallet for a larger pair of pants.

2. Business plans are not just time wasters used in college classes. Two years ago, I was convinced the binder full of business plans I had to write in school served only two purposes: 1) to allow my professor to not actually have to teach during class and 2) to result in my absence at a party I was later assured in fact was the party of the century. Since then, I have seen how business plans can make a world of difference to a company. Important note: business plans do not have to be documents easily confused with free weights. Start by simply writing down what you have done, what you're doing now, and what you want to be doing in 2, 5 and 10 years. Presto - you have the beginnings of a business plan. Now you are ready to contact DBIC and ask them to help you fill in some of the details and financials

leaving you with a working document that will actually help you reach your business goals and do it profitably.

3. Traveling the world is overrated. As many people probably do, I thought I wanted to spend my first few years out of college traveling the world in “Eat, Pray, Love” style- taking in new cultures, seeing beautiful landscapes, and meeting interesting people. If I had become some sort of dot com billionaire, I probably would be doing just that. As it turns out, I wasn’t graced with superior technological skills for which I am actually quite thankful. Canvassing the value-added dairy industry in Wisconsin has exposed me to the widest array of cultures and people I could have hoped for. The best part? I have never met people more passionate about what they do than the people crafting dairy products in Wisconsin. There is always a story behind every step of every process and everyone is willing to share that story with you. These stories range from heart-wrenching to pee-your-pants funny. Either way, they have all left me with the knowledge that I wouldn’t trade hearing these stories for a trip around the world any day.

4. Dairy equipment technology might take over the world before robots do. Alright, that might be a bit of a stretch, but seriously, have you seen some of the amazing equipment out there? Having grown up on a grazing dairy farm, grass was the rock star while computerized technology took a backseat, not that I was aware of it at the time. When I walked in to the International Cheese Technology Expo organized by the Wisconsin Cheese Maker’s Association, I actually wondered if I was at a sci-fi convention. I am still completely blown away by the way the dairy industry has transformed to accommodate every single method of farming and processing people can dream up. From custom processing equipment to the vast data available to farmers about their individual cows, there is something for everyone. These technological advances have allowed Wisconsin’s dairy industry to grow by creating new cost-efficient and time saving methods for every producer and processor. (But don’t worry Dad, grazing will always have a special place in my heart!)

5. Growing up isn’t just about the new shoes you can buy. Coming to the realization that over was my world of sleeping until noon, summers living at the beach, and resetting my life every semester, was like slow torture. I could only take comfort in the fact that soon I would be able to decide what sort of “real food” I wanted for dinner instead of deciding between beef or chicken ramen. Yes, being a grown-up seemed like a terrible plan. In my short years as a “real adult”, I have had the privilege of being inspired by people who truly care about what it is they do. It is incredible the number of people working in the dairy industry who do it simply because they love it. I challenge you to find another industry for which the same is true. From the farmers, to the processors, to the business professionals, they all do it because they care. Their reward isn’t generally seen in a yearly bonus check, or a corporate retreat in Vegas; instead they take their reward in the form of quality product and the pride that comes from others enjoyment of it. You can see it in their faces every day, that although they might be tired from staying up all night caring for a sick animal, they still enjoy what they do. Because of these people, I can safely give the advice to my friends- do what you’re passionate about and it won’t be work.

I’m sure my experiences are not unique and many of you have noticed the same things. To all of the producers and processors, thank you for your dedication and commitment to excellence. Without fail, a year from now I am sure I will be remarking over all the new things our producers and processors have taught me and how little I really know now in comparison. That constant innovation, hard work and passion are what define the Wisconsin Dairy Industry and I am proud to be a part of that.

3. American Cheese Society Competition – Entries Due May 20

This year's American Cheese Society Judging & Competition will be held in Montréal from August 3 – 6, culminating with the Awards Ceremony and the Festival of Cheese. But for cheesemakers planning to enter cheese into the annual competition, a date much earlier is just as important: all cheese entries are due May 20, sooner than usual, due to shipping requirements into Canada.

Entry Fees:

\$55 for on-time entries

\$80 for late entries

Entry Deadlines:

May 20, 2011 – Deadline for ON-TIME entries

May 27, 2011 – Deadline for LATE entries



Entries received between May 21 and May 27 will be considered late and will be subject to the late entry fee of \$80/cheese entry. Entries received after May 27, 2011 will not be accepted.

The ACS has made entering the competition easy. Visit the organization's website [by clicking here](#) and follow these three simple steps to submit your entry accurately:

Step 1: Review the 2011 Producer Letter and Guidelines for Competition Entry and the 2011 Cheese Categories.

Step 2: Download the electronic entry form and submit online, or download a printable entry form and mail in. Online forms are preferable.

Step 3: Upload your entry form and pay online.

All cheesemakers are encouraged to submit their cheeses to be judged at this competition. Last year, Wisconsin cheesemakers dominated the annual American Cheese Society Competition in Seattle, Wash., capturing 98 ribbons, including the prestigious Best of Show prize.



4. Upcoming Events

- **June 5-7: IDDBA Dairy-Deli-Bake Conference, Anaheim, Calif.**

Rock & Roll is the theme for this year's IDDBA Dairy-Deli-Bake. The Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board will sample products that fit into three categories: cheeses that have won top awards within the past year; new products that have been featured in WMMB's What's New from Wisconsin newsletter over the past year; and varieties made by Wisconsin Master Cheesemakers in which they certified as Masters. Reminder: If you're exhibiting at IDDBA, apply now for booth fee reimbursement through WMMB's trade show support program. More info:

www.iddba.org/conference

- June 25: WI Blue Ribbon Cheesemakers Train. Mukwonago, Wis.**

The Elegant Farmer hosts a new Wisconsin Blue Ribbon Cheesemakers' Train on June 25, from 1 – 3 p.m. Three of the 2011 U.S. Championship Cheese Competition Winners will be on board, including cheesemaker Katie Hedrich, LaClare Farms; Paula Homan, Red Barn Family Farms; and cheesemaker Brenda Jensen, Hidden Springs Creamery. Come ride the rails in a beautifully restored, vintage East Troy Electric Railroad's Dinner Car. Tickets are \$35 and include on-board samplings of cheeses, beverages, a dessert tasting featuring Red Barn's signature milk paired with a slice of The Elegant Farmer's famed Apple Pie Baked in a Paper Bag and a take home goody bag including cheeses and an individual apple pie. More info: www.elegantfarmer.com
- July 10-12: Summer Fancy Food Show. Washington, D.C.**

North America's largest specialty food & beverage Event features 180,000 products including confections, cheese, coffee, snacks, spices, ethnic, natural, organic and more. A total of 2,400 exhibitors, with 80 countries represented and 24,000 attendees. More info: www.specialtyfood.com
- July 16: All-Star Blue Ribbon Tasting. Wisconsin State Fair Park, West Allis. Wis.**

Join the Wisconsin State Fair Park Foundation for an All Star Blue Ribbon Tasting, celebrating Wisconsin specialty meats, cheeses and spirits. Taste more than 30 Wisconsin State Fair blue-ribbon specialty meats and cheeses, paired with complimentary award-winning Wisconsin beers and wines, plus a special State Fair dessert table! The All Star Blue Ribbon Tasting is a fundraiser for the Wisconsin State Fair Park Foundation. Proceeds help support youth programming and scholarships. The event is sponsored by the Wisconsin State Fair Dairy Promotion Committee. More info: www.wisconsincheeseoriginals.com
- August 3-6: American Cheese Society Annual Conference. Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

The beautiful city of Montréal in Québec, Canada will play host to ACS's 28th Annual Conference & Competition, marking the first time that the annual event will be held outside of the United States. More info: www.cheesesociety.org/conference Event highlights will include:

 - Opening Celebration at Marché Bonsecours in historic Old Montréal
 - Opening Keynote, "New World Terroir," presented by Pascale Tremblay
 - Festival of Cheese featuring more than 1,400 cheeses and gourmet foods
 - Meet the Cheesemaker with producers showcasing and sampling products
 - Awards Ceremony & Rooftop Reception celebrating winning cheesemakers
 - Unique educational, tasting and pairing sessions
 - Tours through the Province of Québec

5. The Last Word with Norm Monsen: WI Dairy – An Open Door



The other day a few of us were talking about all the out of country visitors that come to Wisconsin to see and learn about dairy. We thought it would be fun to total up those we knew who visited over a three month period. From the middle of March to middle of June we know of the following:

- Cheesemakers from Kosovo to UW–River Falls cheese course
- Cheesemakers from Canada to visit the state
- Cheesemakers from North Africa to learn about dairy
- Dairy officials (and farmers) from China to learn about food safety

- Cheesemakers (and farmers) from Russia to purchase equipment
- Cheese makers from Venezuela to meet Wisconsin cheesemakers
- Extension agent from Mexico to attend Center for Dairy Research
- Cheesemakers from the Netherlands to speak at Wisconsin Cheese Industry Conference and visit with Wisconsin cheesemakers
- Cheesemaker from Japan to intern at Wisconsin cheese plants
- Cheesemakers from England to research and study with Wisconsin cheesemaker friends
- Senior Administrator from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization to learn about Wisconsin dairy
- Representatives of Philippines dairy industry to learn about how dairy is produced and processed
- (AND we also know that Wisconsin cheesemakers and dairy scientists have been all over the world in this three-month period teaching and training and ... learning.)

The above are those we know about. We are guessing there are many more.

So what does this mean? Some might say we are giving away our secrets and our markets. Others point out that by sharing we actually build markets and learn. Personally, I go with the second interpretation. By sharing information, we help economies grow, we help keep people safe (food safety practices), we bring investment to Wisconsin, and .. we learn.

And just as important, we open new markets. Most of the visitors listed come from countries that never will be able to supply their growing needs and demands for quality dairy products. We can predict with certainty that when these countries look to import dairy, they will look to Wisconsin because our dairy is open and friendly. As more and more Wisconsin dairy companies strive to a goal of exporting 25 percent of their production, relationships and networks built through this open door attitude are vital.

For those in dairy who want to look at starting or growing their dairy exports we can write that there are many resources. Included in this list are the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, The Babcock Institute WI DATCP's International Market team, the Dairy Business Innovation Center, and the U.S Dairy Export Council.

P.S. Industry news that shouldn't go unnoticed:

- **Shirley Knox** (Maple Leaf Cheese) was recently elected to the position of President of the Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute
- **Jim Natzke** (Emmi-Roth USA) was recently elected to the position of Secretary/Treasurer of the Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute

Congratulations and thank you to Shirley and Jim, and to all the Wisconsin dairy industry folks who generously share their time, talents and knowledge.

*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.*

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