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1. The Cheesemakers of Iowa County: Their Stories Past & Present

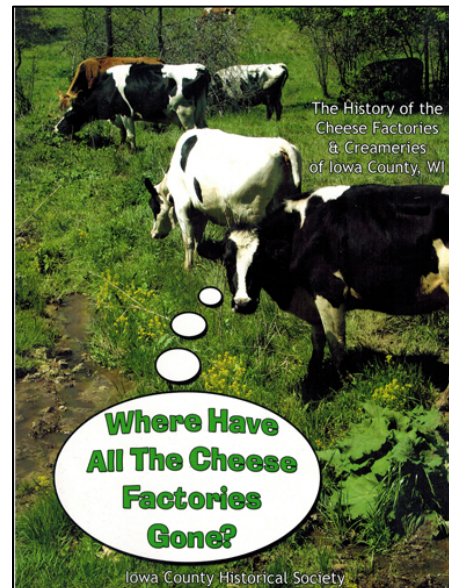
Every cheese factory has a story to tell. In one county in southwestern Wisconsin, the stories of an astonishing 149 past and present cheese factories are now being told, thanks to a core group of dedicated volunteers at the Iowa County Historical Society.

In their epic 404-page tome titled, *Where Have All the Cheese Factories Gone?* the Iowa County Historical Society has compiled an unprecedented history of a slice of Wisconsin's cheesemaking history, providing detailed glimpses into the life of cheesemakers from the late 1800s to present day.

"Travel anywhere in Iowa County and pay close attention to the road signs – Goldmine, Pikes Peak, Clay Hill, Sinbad, Survey, Lost Grove. Down these roads a cheese factory once operated," say Melva Phillips, Marie Sersch, Carolyn Meuer and Joan Bennett, the four women who led the project. "At some sites a decaying old building, a modern house, or a foundation overgrown with trees still exists where the factory once stood. But for many, the only evidence left of the once-active cheese factory in the community is the name on the road sign."

Like many counties in southern Wisconsin, dairying became the backbone of Iowa County in the early 20th century. At its peak in 1922, a total of 149 cheese factories and 6 creameries were operating in the county. These operations were central to the life of farm families, not just as a place to sell their milk or buy cheese, but also as a social gathering network to meet neighbors, talk about weather, crops and community news.

Where Have All The Cheese Factories Gone? includes detailed maps of each township within Iowa County, and every cheese factory that once stood. Each factory is extensively profiled using historical records, filled in with oral histories and newspaper articles. One of the best - and most entertaining - sources of information comes from Ed Mundy's "Pick-Up" columns that were published in the *Dodgeville Chronicle* from 1923-1958, where the author shared the local news, or gossip, at each dairy farm and cheese factory he visited while picking up milk.



Often, Ed Mundy's column provided breaking news on which cheese factories were switching production, changing ownership, or shutting down. Often, he provided glimpses into local characters, such as this nugget from 1930: "At the Barber cheese factory, the scribe found a real booster in the person of Mrs. Durtschi who leads him to believe than women are better judges than men." Or, this one, from a 1938 visit to the Pleasant Ridge cheese factory: "Wolfgang Wittman came over from Norway in 1910 and bought the Pleasant Ridge factory 12 years ago. He and Mrs. Wittman have taught their children the art of working and they will never be relief problems. Tame grape vines along the south side of the factory almost cover the building, making it much cooler than otherwise. In the fall, as the patrons come to the factory each morning, they feast on bunches of grapes."

Of the 149 cheese factories profiled in the book, six continue operations today. Some, such as Arena Cheese, date back to 1915, while others, such as Uplands Cheese, established in 1999, are new to the county. Other operating factories include Mill Creek Cheese, Hook's Cheese, the Linden Cheese Plant, now owned by Sartori, and Fantome Farm.

To learn more about the project, or to purchase a book, call (608) 935-7694 or e-mail ichistory@mhtc.net

2. Babcock Institute Leads International Training on Animal Genetics

Where does the world go to study animal genetics? To Wisconsin, of course. In October, the Babcock Institute for International Research and Development hosted six participants of a USDA Cochran Fellowship Program from Bosnia and Herzegovina for a two-week training program on animal genetics and embryo transfer. The training took place at the UW-Madison campus, at local companies, and on Wisconsin farms.



Aiming to expand embryo transfer programs and improve the quality and quantity of milk production through dairy cattle genetics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the group, consisting of members from the Ministry of Agriculture, forestry and water management, university faculty members, technical managers and veterinarians, participated in the customized Babcock Institute training. The program covered education in genetics, dairy cattle nutrition, reproductive management, basic veterinary care and technology, and artificial insemination.

While in Wisconsin, Cochran fellows interacted with distinguished campus professors and worked with industry professionals, including Nathan Dorshorst at Lodi Vet Clinic. There, participants learned about embryo transplant and were able to apply knowledge in actual practice.

Near the end of the training program, fellows visited Accelerated Genetics, a Wisconsin-based company and one of the leading artificial insemination companies in the world. There, each participant had the opportunity to work one-on-one with Reproductive Service Manager Humberto Rivera, Director of Semen Processing Aziz Siddiqui and Vice-President of Genetics Deran Funk. The group also explored a number of local farms including the University of Wisconsin's Agricultural Research Station at Arlington, Crave

Brother's Farm, Ripp's Dairy Valley LLC, and Blue Star Dairy, learning about each farm's management directly from farmers.

At the end of their visit, the fellows from Bosnia and Herzegovina returned home with improved skills and practice in animal genetics and embryo transfer, as well as direct experience in animal care from Wisconsin's top professors, industry leaders and excellent dairy farmers. The Babcock Institute has already been in touch with the fellows since they returned home, and look forward to hearing how they utilize their new knowledge and skills in their fields.



The Babcock Institute is proud of its long history with the Cochran Fellowship Program. Since 1997, the Institute has hosted 40 fellows from 15 different countries. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and strives to assist countries in developing and improving agricultural systems, while strengthening trade links.

For more information about the Babcock Institute for International Research and Development, visit <http://babcock.wisc.edu/> or contact Director Karen Nielsen, (608) 265-4169, knielsen@cals.wisc.edu.

3. Local & Raw Milk Cheeses Possible Top Cheese Trends for 2012

It's not even Thanksgiving, and already top food consultants and editors are predicting what trends will shape the nation's dairy industry in 2012. With "local," "sustainable," and "transparent" taking top billing as food trends for the next year, one publication predicts 2012 just may be the year of raw milk cheese.

In the November 2011 issue of *Dairy Foods Magazine*, executive editor Marina Mayer says "raw is the draw." More cheese companies across the United States are debuting new raw milk cheeses – aged at least 60 days, of course – to meet a growing demand from consumers wanting natural, high-end specialty cheese, and who want to know where their food comes from.

In Wisconsin, 22 cheese plants craft raw milk cheeses. (For a complete report on raw milk cheese production in Wisconsin, visit http://www.dbicusa.org/dbic_sponsored_research.php and click on "Exploring the Concept of Terroir and Wisconsin Raw Milk Cheeses.")

In addition to raw milk cheeses, "local" foods will continue to be a draw for consumers when shopping and dining out, says Technomic, a research and consulting firm servicing the food and foodservice industry. "Restaurant menus will get even more transparent, as a small-but-growing group of consumers seek information beyond calorie counts — they want to know about the source of their food and who's growing it," Technomic says in its list of 2012 predictions.

4. The Last Word with Norm Monsen: Diversity in Wisconsin Dairy

Wisconsin is proud to host an array of international events, bringing with them, a variety of international visitors. These guests usually have questions about the makeup of Wisconsin dairy, and as we gather information to answer their questions, it always is an eye opener. I have to admit that sometimes we Wisconsites take our dairy diversity for granted. Instead, we should remind ourselves of everything Wisconsin has to offer.



Wisconsin has Diversity in milk:

- Goat -- Wisconsin is No. 1 in the nation in the number of dairy goats, goat farms, and award winning dairy plants producing goat-milk products.
- Sheep – Home to the nation’s only cooperative of dairy sheep farmers.
- Cow – Wisconsin has the most dairy farms, dairy plants, and leads the nation in cheese and specialty cheese production.
- Horse – this diverse milk is used for lotions and healing creams.
- Water Buffalo – Although not native to Wisconsin, we do have a milking herd, with a dairy processor producing cheese from the milk.

Wisconsin has Diversity within species and farm styles:

- Milk can be sourced that is feed specific, including grazed, conventional and different ingredients.
- Milk can be sourced that is Breed specific, including milk, cheese and other products from the milk of Jersey, Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Holstein, crossbreeds, or other types of cows.

Wisconsin has Diversity in dairy crafters:

- The state has more than 1,200 licensed cheese makers.
- Wisconsin boasts almost 50 licensed butter makers.
- Range in size: the smallest dairy plant in Wisconsin uses the milk from 12 goats to make cheese, while the largest dairy plants use millions of pounds of milk from hundreds of farms per week.
- Wisconsin boasts hundreds of different styles and types of dairy products between the largest and smallest processors.

Wisconsin has Diversity in dairy products:

- America’s Dairyland makes at least 650 different styles, types and varieties of cheese.
- We boast many different butters, yogurts, milk based products, ice creams and reports show that hundreds more will be introduced in the next 5 years.

When guests hear these facts and figures, they are amazed. They often ask how can it be? The answer we give is: all of this is possible because of our heritage, the abundance of resources supporting dairy, the willingness of all to work together and accept others’ styles, and the excellence of our farmers and processors. More often than not, their response is then: “I think I would like to live here.” It seems to me that we Wisconsites have much to be thankful for. With all of the above in mind, we wish you all a safe and good Thanksgiving holiday.

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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