

Producer Information and Guidelines for Competition Entry

Dear Cheesemaker:

You are invited to participate in The 25th Annual American Cheese Society Judging and Competition

The American Cheese Society's goal is to give positive recognition to cheeses and dairy products of the highest aesthetic qualities - flavor, aroma and texture – and have achieved technical excellence as well.

1. When and Where

The American Cheese Society Judging and Competition, one of the largest competitions for American-made cheeses, will take place Tuesday August 4 and Wednesday August 5, 2009, as part of the American Cheese Society's Annual Conference. The conference dates are August 5-8 in Austin, Texas.

2. Entry Criteria

Cheeses must be made in North or South America, from a North or South American milk source.

Cheeses must be entered as whole wheels, loaves or blocks. Any cheeses under one pound of weight will require 1 retail case of samples - minimum of 6 pieces. Your cheese entry must have been available for retail or mail order sale to the general public since January 1, 2009. Judges will not consider products that are mock-ups or prototypes. Entries must clearly state the name of the cheesemaker, the dairy where the cheese was made, the retail value, and a copy of the State or County Health Dept. Permit to operate a Dairy/Food processing business/plant.

3. Remove ALL Labels from Entries

Cheeses submitted for the judging must be identified **only** with their ACS Competition Entry Codes, which will be mailed in advance of the Judging and Competition. Please remove, mask, mark over or otherwise obliterate all labels. Cheeses that require a pre-printed label or container must be submitted in generic, transparent plastic deli cups with only the entry number for your cheese attached to the cup.

Cheeses shipped for display or non-competition events may be branded but must be packed and/or shipped under separate label for that event.

Cheeses shipped for the competition with any identifying labels or markings will be rejected for judging and the entry fee forfeited.

4. How Entries are Judged

Judges work in teams of two: one Technical and one Aesthetic. Technical Judges deduct points from a perfect score of 50 for flaws and defects; Aesthetic Judges award points to a maximum of 50 for outstanding characteristics and qualities.

ACS Judges are food professionals, selected from the Academic, Dairy Industry, Dairy Science, Cultures Manufacturing, Food Retailing, Food Distributing, and Food Press Communities as well as the ACS membership.

Awards in the 2009 ACS Competition:

Minimum scores are required to earn awards. Cheeses do not compete against each other for ribbons within categories and subcategories. Standards of excellence apply to all entries.

Assuming minimum scores are met, the three highest scores in each category or subcategory will place 1st, 2nd and 3rd. However, it is possible that awards are not earned within a category if no entry achieves a minimum number of points.

Ties are allowed only for 2nd and 3rd Place finishers. No ties for 1st Place. (We allow half-point scoring to help reduce the number of ties.)

5. Category Selection

In 2009 we added only one new category, VA, which is washed rind cheeses aged more than 90 days with less than 42% moisture, all milks. Please carefully review the category list to identify the category and subdivision which best describes your cheese or dairy product. This year there are 22 Categories with a total of 101 subcategories.

It is not permitted to enter the same cheese in multiple categories. All entries are reviewed by the committee, and it is possible that we may contact you for clarification regarding your entry prior to competition.

6. Getting Your Scores

Winners of the American Cheese Society Competition will be announced at the Awards Ceremony on Friday, August 7, 2009 and all entries will be displayed at the Festival of Cheese on Saturday, August 8. Winners present at the Awards Ceremony will be presented a *temporary* ribbon. A permanent Awards Certificate and Ribbon will be sent to each winner after the conference.

Shortly after the conference, you will be sent a copy of the score sheet(s) for each of your entries, including the judges' comments, overall scores and the number of entries per category.

7. The Festival of Cheese

The Festival of Cheese is the ACS's annual gala and tasting. Cheeses and Dairy Products judged in the Competition are displayed at the Festival of Cheeses.

The Festival also offers producers of complementary food and drink the opportunity to present their products to hundreds of cheese lovers. Wineries, breweries, bakeries and charcutiers will offer their wares to all the food professionals and non-professional enthusiasts who will be attending this year's Conference and Festival.

One ticket per registrant for this event is included in the cost of a full conference registration, or a day pass registration for Saturday, August 8. Additional tickets may be purchased for this event. Please consult the ACS conference brochure for ticket prices. We always expect a large turnout with press, cheesemakers, trade personalities, wholesalers, retailers, chefs and interested consumers, so please order your tickets early.

8. Fees and Deadlines

The On – Time Entry Fee for the 25th American Cheese Society Judging and Competition is \$55 per entry.

The Deadline for that entry is Friday, June 12, 2009.

Entries submitted after June 12 but before June 19, 2009 will be subject to an additional \$25 late fee, for a total of \$80 per entry.

Entries received after June 19, 2009 will *not* be accepted.

Please fill out the *Annual Judging Entry Form* and mail it with your check (or your credit card information) payable to the "American Cheese Society" as soon as possible. You may also download the entry form to submit and pay online at www.cheesesociety.com. The Excel spreadsheet, PC and Mac compatible, provides the most accurate way to create and submit your entry form.

Shipping instructions and more information will follow upon receipt of your completed entry form and fees. All cheeses may be sent to the same address in one shipment; however each event's cheeses (e.g. Competition, Festival, and Cheese Scholar Evaluation) must be clearly identified in order to avoid loss. Please mark or identify cheeses for different events on the cheeses themselves and on the outer box.

If you know other producers who would be interested in entering the Competition, please let us know and we will be happy to send them information. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Marci Wilson at the Cheese Society Headquarters **(502) 574-9950 ext. 265** or email mwilson@hqtrs.com and your questions will be forwarded to the Competition & Judging Committee.

We celebrate and respect the craft of every cheesemaker who enters the ACS Competition. It is your individual efforts that continue to collectively advance the quality and character of American Cheeses.

Thank you, and see you in Austin!

David Grotenstein

2009 American Cheese Society Judging and Competition Chair