

American Cheese Society

Post Conference Essay

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Attending the American Cheese Society conference in Providence, RI was an amazing experience that I will never forget! The conference was definitely everything I had dreamed of and more! I am so very grateful to the scholarship committee for choosing me for one of the Cheesemaker scholarships and for making such a wonderful experience available to me.

I was amazed by how organized everything was, and by the quality and variety of the educational sessions. Everyone who worked so hard to put it together really must be commended for a job well done! I know that when such a large event runs so smoothly, it can only be because of all the hours and effort that have been put into it ahead of time.

I went on the “Cheese, Wine and a Newport Mansion” tour on Wednesday. The scenery and the locations we visited were beautiful and the local lunch provided at the winery was divine! Besides making new friends and thoroughly enjoying myself, I also learned some new aging methods during our visit to Great Hill Creamery.

The educational sessions over the next three days were great and there was a good selection to choose from. I attended sessions on everything from the affinage of bloomy rind cheeses, to third-party audits and environmental sampling, to managing and leading employees. All of the session presenters were very knowledgeable about the topics they spoke on. I also enjoyed, and learned a lot from, the two ticketed tasting sessions I attended (European Tradition vs American Innovation and Pairing Principles of Cheese and Wine). The Scholar-In-Residence consultation was very helpful. Although we only had time to talk about one of the four cheeses I brought, Ivan Larcher gave me some very helpful feedback and suggested tweaks for our washed-curd stabilized paste bloomy rind. I am looking forward to putting his suggestions into practice and seeing the results!

One of the highlights of the conference was at the awards ceremony when my mentor, David Rogers, won 2nd place Best of Show for his Standard Market Cave Aged Chandoka. The Standard Market after-party was all the more celebratory! Speaking of celebrations, Meet the Cheesemaker and the Festival of Cheese were definitely other high points of the conference experience! I was truly blown

away by the amount and variety of American cheeses. I volunteered for the cheesemonger team that prepared for the festival and was very glad that I did. The sight of all those tables filled with all of that beautiful delicious cheese made me very proud to be a part of the cheese community and a member of the ACS. Before the crowd was let in I was one of several “cheese nerds” taking pictures of nothing but tables filled with cheese! It was one of the most beautiful sights I had ever seen.

In addition to all that I learned, all of the sights I saw, and all of the wonderful cheese and food I consumed; I met some great people. It was refreshing and inspiring to be surrounded by other cheesemakers, cheesemongers, distributors, farmstead dairy owners, and other people passionate about cheese. I must admit to being a little star struck rubbing elbows with people like Ricki Carroll, Peggy Smith and Mary Keehn.

Attending the ACS conference was truly an experience that I will never forget and I would recommend going to anyone involved in the cheese industry. I know I will be trying to figure out a way to make it to Des Moines in 2016!