

The American Cheese Society

NEWSLETTER 2ND QUARTER 2007

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Honoring a Friend P. 4

Herve Mons, French affineur P. 7

Marketing Column P. 9

Dr. Cheez answers questions P. 10

Member News P. 11

So you want to open a Cheese Shop?

By Stacey Zier

I had exactly two months to learn the world of cheese and open a new gourmet market and artisanal cheese center that would deliver to customers an Old World style of shopping for cheese and charcuterie, cut to order and hand-wrapped.

My previous career in finance prepared me to deal with the financial aspects of opening and running a business, but when I decided to open a gourmet market with cheese as its star product, I knew that I had to find a source of information and a team of support that could help me pull together a game plan in a short period of time. How fortuitous that the American Cheese Society was having an annual conference in Portland, Oregon, last year, just months from my scheduled opening.

Before the conference officially began, the ACS offered a Retail Tour for eager cheese shop entrepreneurs like me. Knowing that Portland is a cheese-loving town, I knew that I could soak up plenty of information and come away with tons of ideas. Even though I had a vision for my store, I carefully studied each location and took copious notes when I interviewed the owners. Each store had a unique appeal that reflected its owner's style, whether small and charming or modern and contemporary.

At first workshop of the day I was presented with 11 wedges of cheese rimming a large dinner plate. (Note for future conference attendees: don't eat a big breakfast). Even though this is what I had been waiting for, I suddenly felt very intimidated because I couldn't recognize one cheese in front of me. The speaker, Juliet Harbutt, led us through a tasting to test our palates. Could we identify the European benchmark from the down-under upstarts or a single herd, raw milk or American blue? As other expert tasters in the room shouted out their correct assumptions I sat there in amazement. How little I knew about cheese!

Each following workshop provided me with a wealth of information that I would assimilate and put into immediate practice. By the end of the conference, I had a pretty good idea



Tastings Gourmet Market & Artisanal Cheese Center, Annapolis, MD is thriving.

of what cheeses would make the opening debut, how to display them, which distributors I would buy from, what other accoutrements would fill my shelves, and how to educate customers.

Ask any business expert and they will tell you that location is king. My shop, Tastings Gourmet Market & Artisanal Cheese Center, is strategically located adjacent to a large, upscale wine store. In fact, since I sub-lease the space from the wine store, we agreed to leave an opening in our wall so that customers can conveniently shop in both. I knew that if the store wasn't located in a high traffic area then it certainly had to be a destination for customers. We're able to cross-promote and have enjoyed an almost instant customer base that is used to being led down the path of educating their palates.

When a customer approaches our cheese case, which holds 150 different types of cheeses, my staff is very attentive. The customer can taste anything, but we also want to lead them through an incredible journey. The staff is trained to find a jumping off point with the customer and then go up or down in texture and flavor. It's always exciting to find the perfect cheese for someone. One trick I learned at the ACS conference was that if a customer is at the case, give them a taste of something just to start a conversation – tell them that you had to

continued on page 10 →



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Greetings From the President.....

Soon you will receive your 2007 Conference Registration in the mail; the agenda and registration form are on the website. We are braced for a larger attendance this year. Please be sure to take advantage of the early bird registration. Here are some things to help plan your trip:

Traveling to Burlington is easy. As you fly in over Lake Champlain, you won't think about the small plane you are in because you will be distracted by the view of our modest Eastern Adirondacks and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. You will see the Champlain Valley stretch to the North into Quebec dotted with verdant farmland. You don't need a car in Burlington but you may get the urge to explore beyond Vermont's largest city (population: 38,000). Vermont is small and sites are quite accessible. If you ask a Vermonter how long it takes to drive from one end to the other they will tell that it depends on how fast you drive...consider three to four hours.

The Sheraton and its ample parking are minutes from the airport and the Burlington waterfront. By car you are an easy 1.5 hours from Montreal, 3 hours from Boston and 6 hours from New York. You can pack a lot of cheese visits in a day drive from New York and Boston. Take two days because a summer drive through Vermont is blissful. You won't see billboards or many traffic lights. Most every town village is precious and historic where you can still meet real Vermonters running general stores, inns and B & B's. Check www.vacationvermont.com

Vermont has more than 40 cheesemakers to visit. And though we have planned pre-conference tours, we couldn't visit everyone. Vermont Cheese Council members will post hours for drop-in visits over the week of the conference; check www.vtcheese.com for a map. Head east three hours to visit the Maine cheese guild members, many of whom we will see for the first time at our conference. From New York you will drive by the cheesemakers in the Hudson Valley and the Berkshires. When you get thirsty, stop at a brewery or cider mill. They too have a map at www.vermontbrewers.com.

This year we have added three new events to the conference. Wednesday night before the opening of the conference we will have a "Meet the Cheesemaker" event at the Sheraton. This is an informal opportunity for cheesemakers to secure a table to show off their cheeses to buyers and the media. You may want to consider arriving early on that afternoon to meet cheesemakers and taste their cheeses. During

the networking breaks we plan to hold book signings by our member authors. If you have written a book about cheese you would like to have included, please call the office and get on the list. The third activity is a series of "round table" discussions during the meals. After each conference, attendees list topics of interest, many of which don't make the cut for a formal session. These include cheese certification, pricing strategies, ecological design and management, succession planning, dairy herd management for cheesemaking and more. You can choose a table and join an informal discussion.

Finally, at the heart of the American food revolution is the Vermont Fresh Network www.vermontfresh.net. An event not related to the ACS but one that happens every year is the Vermont Fresh Network Forum. This celebration of chefs and producers coming together to cook and serve the public at beautiful Shelburne Farms is the perfect soft landing after three days of sessions. Be sure and browse their website for details of this splendid Sunday afternoon event. Join the party. Meet the farmers producing everything from mache to pasture-fed beef and their devoted chef customers who are committed to preparing locally-grown foods for their restaurant patrons.

Saying good bye to a colleague: Last year my friend and colleague, John Crompton of Seacrest Foods, passed away. He was our company's first distributor salesperson. The poor guy visited our farmstead creamery in Brookfield in 1984 during a weekend vacation in Vermont. He looked beyond the rudimentary conditions and took a flyer with an American company making goat cheese. He was a tenacious and passionate salesperson and certainly pioneered goat cheese in the Boston market. We will miss him. In honor of his life, a collaboration of colleagues headed up by his former employer the DiTomaso Family of Seacrest Foods and Peter Lovis of The Concord Cheese Shop are holding a memorial fundraiser to celebrate his life and raise funds for the John Crompton Memorial Scholarship. Gifts to the trust will be used to fund scholarships for ACS-related activities. Read more about it in this issue. And, thank you on behalf of the American Cheese Society for the effort to establish such a fund and to all of you for your generous giving.

~ Allison





From the Desk of the Executive Director.....

Spring is finally here, and the American Cheese Society is moving ahead at full steam. We have many irons in the fire — a new and improved website will be unveiled at the end of April and conference planning is well underway!

To celebrate sustainability, ACS has chosen Burlington, Vt, in the heart of New England dairy country, for the 2007 Annual Conference and Competition.

The conference theme, *Achieving Sustainability*, was chosen to focus on sustainability at all levels of the cheesemaking process, from the farm to the table. The Conference Planning Committee has spent countless hours organizing diverse educational sessions full of relevant information that members can take home and put into practice. Topics include mold selection and starter cultures, chemistry, dairy science and cheese retailing.

The ACS Chef's Cheese Cook-Off, pairing local chefs with ACS cheesemakers, will return again this year. The opening reception at Shelburne Farms is a networking event in a stunning venue. And there's also the

Competition... and the Annual Judging Awards... and the Festival of Cheese....

Optional tours during the conference only suggest a taste of what this quaint college town has in store for the visitor. This year's tour offerings will feature local cheesemakers, a sunset cruise on Lake Champlain aboard the Ethan Allen III, and some of Burlington's finest retail cheese and specialty shops. The conference is an excellent opportunity for attendees to network, while Burlington offers a blend of magnificent scenery and New England appeal that make for an enjoyable break.

The conference hotel is the Sheraton Burlington. Registration information is about to be mailed and will go live on our website during the last week of April. Each member of ACS will receive a conference registration packet with hotel registration form in the mail. In addition, we will send a blast email to all members when registration goes live on the website. Hotel registration information will also be located on the website during the last week of April.

It is going to be a knockout three days! I'll see you in Burlington.

~ Marci

The American Cheese Society

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2007 ACS National Conference

Meet the Cheesemaker Event

**Wednesday, August 1, 2007
3 p.m. to 6 p.m.**

At this year's conference, ACS is making networking better than ever by holding the first Meet the Cheesemaker event. This is a perfect opportunity for distributors, restaurateurs, editors, retailers and enthusiasts to meet and greet the terrific cheesemaker members of ACS.

If you are a cheesemaker and would like to reserve a table, visit www.cheesesociety.org to download a registration form. The deadline has been extended to May 1.

Feedback

As a soon-to-be cheese retailer (this spring) and an ACS member from Pennsylvania, I was very interested in the front-page article in the recently published ACS newsletter on the state guilds. Although I am not currently a member of any guild, I have been following their activities online for a good while. The article is very informative.

However, I was surprised that the Pennsylvania Farmstead and Artisan Cheese Alliance was not included in the guild list. In fact, the Pennsylvania Alliance, which was started in 2005, is older than both the Ohio and Oregon guilds, which were organized in 2006. Moreover, Pennsylvania is the fourth-largest dairy state in the United States (after Wisconsin, California, and New York) and is home to a substantial number of artisan cheesemakers. The PA Alliance has a web site: www.pacheese.org. Would it be possible to correct this omission in the next newsletter?

Jeff Katcher

Editor's Note: It's done!

The American Cheese Society

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Scholarship Fund Honors a Friend

The John Crompton Memorial Scholarship Fund has been created in honor of our friend and colleague, John Crompton, who passed away in August of last year. The John Crompton Memorial Scholarship will annually recognize talented individuals who share John's passion for the specialty food industry, particularly specialty cheese. A memorial fundraiser has been planned for May 3, 6 to 10 p.m. at the Veterans of Foreign War (Post 2346) Hall at 190 Main Street, Saugus, Mass.

This one-time fundraising event will take place to celebrate John's life. The evening will include refreshments, a cash bar, raffle and auction items, gift certificates, baskets and assorted donated items. The goal for the John Crompton Memorial Scholarship Committee is to raise enough funds to sustain many years of scholarship offerings.

The need-based scholarships are intended for individuals dedicated to enhancing their knowledge and skills in the specialty food world through involvement and participation in American Cheese Society-sponsored events.

All who knew John Crompton are aware of

his passion, dedication and commitment to the industry. John was a 25-year employee of Seacrest Foods and a specialty food industry veteran. He loved the business, the people and the products; he had made them his life. John's boisterous personality and his instinct for the business left a deep impression on all those who knew him.



Detailed scholarship and fundraising event information, including donation options (program book ads, raffle items, etc.), will be mailed to John's colleagues and friends and will be online at www.seacrestfoods.com/johncrompton. Those unable to attend but wishing to contribute, may send direct donations payable to the John Crompton Memorial Scholarship Fund. Mailing address: John Crompton Memorial Scholarship Fund; c/o TD Bank North, 59 Walden Street, Concord, MA 01742.

Cheese of Choice Coalition Committee Coalition Report

For the first time in history, a new USDA policy has paved the way for raw milk cheeses to be exported to European Union countries. Rogue Creamery, makers of artisan blue cheeses in Central Point, Ore., is the first American cheese operation to receive the certificate. Until now, USDA allowed only pasteurized milk cheeses to be exported. But as interest in American cheeses has grown throughout the world, and as competitions such as the World Cheese Awards and SIAL Innovation Awards continue to fuel interest in all cheeses, including American, the need to allow export of all cheeses, whether pasteurized or unpasteurized, had become apparent.

The achievement is the result of a cooperative effort between the USDA, US Dairy Export Council (USDEC), Oregon Department of Agriculture, American Cheese Society, Cheese of Choice Coalition and SLOW FOOD USA. Interest in American cheeses has continued to grow in recent years. USDEC has sponsored the entry of American farmstead and artisan cheeses in European cheese competitions, which has driven

European consumer awareness and demand for American artisan cheese. Rogue Creamery was awarded the 2006 SIAL Innovation Award in Paris and its flagship cheese, Rogue River Blue, was crowned the World's Best Blue at the 2003 World Cheese Awards in London.

Allison Hooper, president of ACS, says, "This is a time to celebrate the progress of the American artisan cheese movement, high quality standards and the collaborative efforts of regulatory, nonprofit volunteer driven and private organizations to make the export of fine raw milk, American artisan cheese a reality."

The Cheese of Choice Coalition (CCC), co-founded by the Old Ways Trust Exchange and ACS, works with U.S. government agencies such as FDA to preserve the continued production of American raw milk cheeses. CCC keeps ACS apprised of current and proposed legislation regarding the production of raw milk cheeses and recommends courses of action to the ACS Board of Directors. David Gremmels and Kurt Dammeier represent the ACS Board on this committee.

2007 ACS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The time is now to compose your nomination for the second annual ACS Lifetime Achievement Award. The ACS Lifetime Achievement Award was created in 2006 by the American Cheese Society Board of Directors to honor individuals for significant contributions they have made to the industry throughout their career.

Last year, California Cheesemaker Ignazio "Ig" Vella received our first Lifetime Achievement Award. Vella, whose father founded Vella Cheese in Sonoma, Calif. and Rogue Creamery in Central Point, Ore., has continued the family tradition of producing superior artisan-style cheeses.

"The award was a complete surprise! I was absolutely flabbergasted to be chosen," says Vella. "I am a charter member of the ACS and our dry jack won the very first competition the organization held. It certainly was nice to be recognized in this way for lifetime achievement."

Over the years, Vella has mentored many cheesemakers and has remained true to the craft of producing handmade cheeses.



Ig Vella poses with the first ACS Lifetime Achievement Award

ACS President Allison Hooper sees the Lifetime Achievement Award as a way to honor individuals as well to mark the passage of time. "Our history is very important to us. We are all indebted to those who have gone before us, who helped to build this dynamic and thriving industry," says Hooper. "This award gives us an opportunity to tip our collective hat and to say thank you."

Nominees must demonstrate outstanding achievements of significant impact to the larger community of the American cheese industry and have a minimum of 15 years of experience in a cheese-related profession.

To nominate an individual, complete the nomination form on the ACS website, submit a one-page summary of demonstrated contributions to the industry, a bio, and two letters of support.

Nomination packets must be received at the American Cheese Society office by May 1, 2007. Late nominations will not be accepted.

Cheesemaker Scholarships Available

By Jennifer Bice, Cheesemaker Scholarship Chair/Member Services Committee

This year the American Cheese Society will award more Cheesemaker Scholarships to deserving Cheesemaker members. Cheesemakers are core members of the American Cheese Society and both the Member Services Committee and the entire ACS Board wants to ensure attendance of as many cheesemakers as possible at our annual conference.

The 2007 Cheesemaker Scholarships will include two full scholarships which offer complete ACS Conference registration, four nights at the hotel and \$500 toward travel expenses to the conference, held this year in Burlington, Vt. from Aug. 1- 4. In addition, multiple par-

tial scholarships, which include full ACS Conference registration, will be awarded.

Scholarships will be awarded based on need and merit. Use the essay requirement of the application to let the committee know more about yourself, why you want to attend, and why you should be chosen.

Applications are now available from ACS headquarters or on the ACS website and are due by May 5, 2007. Winners will be notified soon after June 10 so that plans can be made. Complete your application now and plan to attend the annual ACS Conference to gain cheesemaking knowledge, learn sales tips and strategies, and network with those in our cheesemaking industry.

Welcome New Members

Check our list for new members who might be near you. Contact details are on the ACS website.

Ms. Brigit Bernhard
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Susan Miller
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Bob McCall
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Arcata, CA

Stephanie Pelham
Eats Gourmet Marketplace
Albany, NY

Nancy Starziano
Eastside Marketplace
Providence, RI

Lori Thoreson
Newbury, MA

New Member Profile

Pholia Farm, Rogue River, Oregon

By Liz Campbell

"As soon as we decided to become a dairy, we joined the American Cheese Society," said Gianacis Caldwell of Pholia Farm in Oregon. "They helped us learn so much and confirmed what we wanted to do."

In fact, Pholia Farm, licensed since last September, had its official opening in March, 2007, with a little help from Oregon neighbors like Rogue Creamery. "They are such kind, generous folks and they really know what they're doing; they've helped us so much," Gianacis says.

It all started with a few Nigerian goats. Gianacis grew up on a family farm with a few milk cows and missed that, so when her husband, Vern, retired from the military in 2003, they moved back to 23 acres of family land at the base of Elk Mountain, Ore. Calling herself "a typical cow person" Gianacis initially bought the goats for their daughters, Phoebe and Amelia. (The farm's name comes from a combination of their two names – Pho-lia). But it wasn't long before the whole family was in love with the fun-loving friendly creatures.

A bonus was the discovery that Nigerian goat milk is very



Amelia Caldwell plans the breeding of their dwarf Nigerian goats.

high in butterfat (it can be more than 8 percent) which makes for a unique cheese, more like a sheep milk product. So Gianacis started making cheese from the milk they produced. She started with Elk Mountain a mountain tomme-style cheese, which she washes with Caldera Pale Ale (brewed in Ashland, Oregon) as it ages for six to eight months. The paste is firm and slightly dry with a nutty flavor and robust presence. Imagine their delight when Elk Mountain won the American Dairy Goat Association Best in Show in 2005 in the amateur division.

The company makes three cheeses. In addition to Elk Mountain, the Caldwells make Hillis Peak, is a medium sharp, washed curd cheese. It is aged from four to six months and has a natural rind that is rubbed with oil and paprika during aging. The paste is creamy and slightly sharp with herbal overtones. The rind is usually not eaten.

The third cheese, Wimer Winter, is only made in the winter months. It is aged 60 to 80 days, during which time it is exposed to B. linens; the humidity in their aging room is high in the winter months so this mold grows naturally. This cheese features a soft, creamy paste and is slightly "stinky" and salty.

All the cheeses are made with raw milk, and because the goats graze on pesticide-free land, Gianacis feels she is providing a healthy cheese for her customers. However, Pholia Farm has not sought the organic designation. "If the choice is available we choose organic," she says. "But there's an issue when you have to buy from hundreds of miles away."

The farm breeds Nigerian dwarf goats and Amelia is responsible for much of that side of the activity, even planning the best matches for optimum results. And they will continue to make cheese. The farm currently produce about 150 pounds a month but the family is hoping to produce 300 pounds a month in the future.

They won't be entering their cheeses this year as they haven't been selling them for a year, (this is a requirement for a cheese entering the competition) but they wouldn't miss the annual meeting and competition of ACS for anything.

Coming
Late May

The Atlas of AMERICAN ARTISAN CHEESE

Jeffrey P. Roberts

FOREWORD BY
CARLO DE LUINI
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Marketing Tips

A regular new feature of the ACS Newsletter Quarterly, this column will provide marketing ideas from a variety of accomplished marketers. We invite you to share your successes and experiences. Send your ideas to editor Liz Campbell at campbellliz@rogers.com

"I Never Use a Marketing Plan"*

ACS members are cheesemakers, retailers, distributors, writers, entrepreneurs of all kinds. How can a marketing column be appropriate for different kinds of businesses? Is marketing "One-Size-Fits-All"?

The answer is that there are basic guidelines to marketing, no matter what the final product is. Are you a candidate for a marketing plan? Answer these three easy questions:

- Do you use a Daily Calendar (paper, electronic, any kind)?
- Have you ever missed an important meeting, deadline, etc?
- Do you make lists of Things to Do?

If you answered "No" to all these questions, please turn the page. But if any of these questions apply to you, keep reading.

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Quick, now: why a marketing plan? (First of four)

A marketing plan provides a daily calendar of marketing tasks. At a glance, you can see what has to be done and why. By making your marketing tasks visible and tangible, you're taking the first step toward making certain that marketing becomes a part of your daily activities.

Quick: Another reason to have a marketing plan? (second of four)

Creating a calendar of marketing tasks makes it easy to develop the content you need for your marketing messages. By noting upcoming deadlines, and frequently reviewing your marketing plan, your subconscious mind will be thinking about upcoming tasks while you drive, read, or sleep. As a result, a lot of the hard work—the thinking—will already be done when you sit down to create an article, brochure, newsletter, or press release.

Quick: yet another reason to have a marketing plan. (third of four)

Your marketing plan provides a location where you can track the results of your various marketing weapons. Write the number of responses and the number of sales next to each of your marketing activities. Trends will soon become obvious, allowing you to eliminate the tactics that didn't work and concentrate on the weapons that deliver the biggest profits.

A final reason to have a marketing plan (fourth of four)

Deadline madness is never pretty. It results in embarrassing mistakes: typographical errors, misspelled names, missing names, incorrect prices, and transposed digits in phone numbers, etc. Start small. Commit your marketing plan to writing. Create a spreadsheet or columns on a legal pad. Add dates and record results. Review and analyze.

Avoid stress. Avoid costly mistakes. Use a marketing plan to work backwards from the "street date" of your promotion.

* Direct quote from an ACS member.

Carole Palmer is the president of Good Taste Marketing Services, a Bethesda, Md.-based sales and marketing firm specializing in bringing artisan cheeses to the marketplace.

Committee Reports

We have a new committee structure that we believe is more aligned with the priorities of the ACS. We have folded some of the existing committees into three new committees: Member Services; Marketing and PR; and the Alliances Committee.

Member Services Committee Report

The primary focus of the Member Services Committee is to enhance member communication and improve and create new programs that increase members' satisfaction. The programs include the newsletter, the website, education, and cheesemaker scholarships. The committee reviews fees and creates membership materials for prospective and current members.

The Newsletter

You may have noticed some changes and, we hope, improvements in the last few issues: color, better layout design, more member news. Watch for other improvements. To keep content relevant, accurate and timely to all sectors of membership, we established an Editorial Advisory Board to review topics. The members are:

Neville McNaughton, CheezSorce, LLC; Dick Roe, Atlanta Foods International, dickroe@atlantafoods.com; Jed Davis, Cabot Cheese of Vermont, jdavis@cabotcheese.com; Stacey Zier, Tastings Gourmet Market, stacey@tastingsgourmetmarket.com; Carole Palmer, Good Taste Marketing.

Liz Campbell is the person who keeps us on our toes and puts it all together. Kate Sander, *Cheese Market News*, ksander@cheesemarketnews.com, contributes valuable editing input. John Eggena is readying a coherent advertising plan to encourage our members to use our newsletter as a marketing tool and make the newsletter independent financially. We invite new ideas; contact a committee member. We are looking for writers who are interested in developing new stories.

The Website

An important result from last August's member survey was our members' desire for a stronger, better website. We are starting with new graphics and a user-friendly format. We plan to include more conference content, historical records from past competitions and conferences, technical information for cheesemakers and retailers, job postings, webinars, and an active chat room.

The website revision was begun with help from Christine Hyatt, Richard Silverston, rsilverston@swbell.net and Carole Palmer. Steve Ehlers, Marci Wilson and Barry Comer, FSA's graphic designer, are also contributing to this project. You may have experience with creating websites or suggestions for material to include. We want to make this site important to you. Let us hear from you.

Cheesemaker Scholarship Program

See Jennifer Bice's review of her committee's exciting new plans. A new Membership Brochure is in the works. Your Membership Directory has been delivered in a more sub-

New Committee Structure

Member Services (Newsletter, Website, Cheesemaker Scholarships)

Carole Palmer, Chair

Jennifer Bice

John Eggena

Christine Hyatt

Neville MacNaughton

Industry Alliances

David Gremmels, Chair

Laurie Greenberg

Joan Kimball

Michelle Martino

Marketing

Sara Hill, Co-chair

Christine Hyatt, Co-chair

Kurt Dammeier

Tim Smith

Laura Werlin

Sponsorship

David Gremmels

Mike Gingrich

Allison Hooper

Tom Kooiman

Michelle Martino

Tim Smith

Certification

Laurie Greenberg

Cheese of Choice Committee

Kurt Dammeier

David Gremmels

stantial, durable format this year. The information packet for new members will be more useful.

The Member Services Committee is YOUR committee. We are busy and excited about helping to make ACS more meaningful to you. We are doing it for you and WITH you. Please get in touch.

Carole Palmer is chair of the Member Services Committee.

Marketing Committee Report

The Marketing Committee is charged with defining and managing the ACS brand through external communications with the media. It also has responsibility for educating consumers about the American Cheese Society.

The Marketing Committee has been hard at work on several projects.

We are developing a Press Kit which provides an easy reference for industry information and answers to Frequently Asked Questions. Compiling this information, which will include a state-by-state breakdown of cheesemakers and other relevant industry statistics, is a large undertaking. We will hire an intern or research assistant to assemble this information.

We are creating "ACS Award Winner" labels which will be available for purchase to make promoting this year's winning cheeses quick and easy. More details will be available in the next newsletter and at the conference in Burlington.

If you would like to work with the Marketing Committee to help build the ACS brand, please e-mail one of the committee members.

Industry Alliance Committee report page 9 →

Hervé Mons, Affineur Extraordinaire

By Nathalie Jordi

French affineur Hervé Mons is well-known the world over as the maturer behind some of the most delicious cheeses in France. What's his secret? Several generations of experience, a relentless commitment to improvement, an endlessly analytical eye, and the ability to function properly on three hours of sleep and 16 cups of coffee. Here, an exhortation to work harder and pay attention to detail:

The three elements to master in the maturing of good cheese are temperature, humidity and a balanced ratio of cheese to space. Even a good affineur can't work miracles if given a bad piece of cheese. But a bad affineur can certainly sabotage the work of a good cheesemaker.

Many cheesemakers and affineurs are obsessed with controlling the world of the living, the infinite, and do so by killing everything off. But the world of cheese is the world of microscopic things! It's very difficult to ensure a consistent product—that's why the work of an affineur cannot be learned through books; it's all practice. You need the "feeling" to make the right decisions at the right moment.

Learning it all alone is impossible. An affineur learns by tying him or herself to others, which involves enormous trust on both sides. If you're going it alone, you have no point of reference, and you'll make very expensive mistakes.

Some of the cheese I mature is also matured by other people, including the cheesemaker. Langres, a soft, washed-

rind cheese, is an example. We keep it for 45 days, we pass it through rooms that are cooler and more humid, then transfer it to an ambiance that's warmer and drier, and we wash it every other day. At the end of all this, it's better than the cheese that's been kept at the cheesemaker's! Obviously! When you just leave it on the board and don't touch it, what do you think is going to happen?

Affinage is a mix of mystery and technique. There are rules, but also things impossible to define. Technically, we know what happens when we adjust the speed of ventilation in the caves, the rate of humidity in the air. When a cheese gets too runny under the rind, there are things we can do—chemical, technical. But there's more to it than that.

Okay, here are important things: the quality of your materials (boards, ventilation fans, etc.) is crucial. You must be able to control your temperature and humidity very exactly, so make sure you have no leaks and that your insulation is sound. Can you keep the temperature constant? Can you regulate ventilation? How high can you get your humidity to go? Those are the basics.

Any change we ever make is minimal, so that we can trace its effects. It's crazy how important the details are. We would never, say, change the temperature by five degrees at once. It would disrupt too much.

Cheese is not poetry. It takes real work. Americans are way ahead of us in terms of marketing and sales, but don't forget the nature of the product and how much expertise it takes to get it right.



Hervé Mons, one of France's best known affineurs, offers his views on the aging of cheese.

Your cave should not be a decoration. Remember, a beautiful, state-of-the-art cave filled with inferior product is...just pointless.

The advantage that we have in France is that we still have great raw materials with which to work, milk rich in natural flora. There's no way to work with ultra-pasteurized products. Americans—all of us, really—should fight to keep milk alive and kicking. Good affinage is only possible with a cheese that has transformative potential. If the product is born with nothing to say, how can we hope to make it sing?

The work isn't done once the cheese is made. Affinage is a cheese's second life, its second transformation.

Editor's Note: When asked for his comment on Hervé Mons, Neville McNaughton said, "He is coming to the USA/Wisconsin this year; I will be standing in line to meet him again."

Industry Alliances Committee Report

The purpose of the Industry Alliances Committee is to create strategic alliances with associations that share the values of the ACS. In keeping with the mission of the ACS to provide a platform for education and knowledge sharing for the artisanal and farmstead cheesemaker, the Industry Alliances Committee will seek relationships with like-minded organizations for the greater good of the membership and who will also find it mutually beneficial for their membership.

During the course of the year, the committee will meet via conference call and in person to assess what opportunities exist and how to seize those opportunities to forge relationships within the industry.

The members of the committee are David Gremmels, Laurie Greenberg, Joan Kimball and Michelle Martino-Overholt. Please do not hesitate to contact any member of the committee with your feedback.

Dr. Cheez

Do you have a question about making, handling, or aging cheese? In this new column, Neville McNaughton, president of Cheez Sorce, St. Louis, MO, draws on many years of experience manufacturing dairy products in both New Zealand and US. to answer questions from members.

The Road to Market

As cheesemakers we know that getting cheese to our customers is no dream ride on a magic carpet. The stresses and strains of distribution are largely the way they are because we have "progressed" into the modern age. During the course of the next few newsletters, I will take a look at what's happening back at the plant and en route to the market. The focus will be targeted in this case primarily at cheese which is rinded, cheese which is not required to be packed in plastic, vacuum or gas-flushed wrappers or containers.

I would also like to hear from readers about issues they have encountered with cheese in distribution to the ultimate consumer. It is always important to remember that while you may receive your money from a distributor, you have not created a solid business until the consumer accepts your quality/price ratio either at the foodservice or retail end point. The step from the distributor to the end user in the retail situation

requires that the distributor has handled the product appropriately, and, in the case of retail, that the retailer handles it correctly.

I want to discuss issues such as temperature; humidity; turning; inventory rotation FIFO; identification of cheeses (not just boxes); and any other issues that you might raise on the topic. Please send your questions to Dr. Cheez on any subject, but if you have questions about cheese in distribution get them in for the next issue. I am always amazed when I hear that Anheuser-Busch requires that their distribution warehouses be maintained at a specific relative humidity; I thought those bottles were sealed?

Distribution means different things for different producers. When a Midwest producer based in a sparsely populated region ships cheese, it will stress the cheese to the max. Similarly, so will shipping cheese from one coast to the other. Compare this with smaller producers in markets with dense populations and farmers' markets. Maintaining the integrity of our cheese in distribution is critical. When cheese is not properly rotated in distribution, expectations are not met, reputations are damaged and cheese may go unsold. As artisan and specialty cheese producers, having products that will withstand the rigors of distribution may be the difference between a good night's sleep and lying awake wondering if it made it.

continued from page 1

unwrap it anyway. Our cheese cards provide a description in addition to the milk type, cheese type, country of origin and wine pairing; customers can even take a copy home with them. We recently organized a card file system for customers to write down their favorite cheeses. It's actually turned out to be a clever marketing tool and customer loyalty program. Not only do customers enjoy keeping a log of all their cheeses but we catch them looking up to see if their friends have cards on file so they can find out which cheese they had at a friend's house or to bring a hostess gift of the perfect cheese.

Now that we've been open for six months, I frequently get asked the question, "How are you doing?" I can sum it up in just a few words – better than I expected. I am often confronted by customers who say that our shop is "exactly what our town needed" or "we don't have anything like this". Honestly, I never knew that cheese could have such an effect on people.

Thinking back on my decision to attend the conference, I ask myself, "Could I have opened the shop without having attended the ACS conference?" Probably. "Would we be as successful as we are thus far?" Probably not.

Stacey Zier is the President/Owner of Tastings Gourmet Market Inc. located in Annapolis, Md. She also owns A Great Dish Cooking Studio where she offers hands-on cooking classes. She can be reached at 410-212-2224. www.TastingsGourmetMarket.com or www.AGreatDish.com

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Member News

ACS members who produce, market, support or serve American cheese share what they're doing. If you have news you'd like to share with us, please send it to the editor, Liz Campbell, at campbellliz@rogers.com.

Matt and Kate Jennings' Farmstead Cheese, their cheese shop in Providence R.I., was featured in the "Saveur 100" last month. "We were number 14 for our passion and commitment to selling the best of hand-crafted, artisan cheeses and were excited to receive this accolade." Also noted was their artisan cheese and wine bar—la Laiterie—next door to their shop.

Matt and Kate Jennings also collaborated with Steve and Karen Getz of Dancing Cow Farm in Bridport, Vt. to create a new American artisan cheese, Sarabande, a washed rind, raw cow's milk pyramid.

Euro USA, a Cleveland, Ohio-based distributor of specialty food and seafood, has purchased the former Gourm-E-Co, a specialty food distributor in Sterling, Va. The deal, finalized in May '06, gives Euro a presence in the Mid-Atlantic market to complement its existing business in the Great Lakes Region.

"At Catapano, we began our kidding season early with a premature delivery from one of our Nubians. We had to raise her on a bottle with the help of my pregnant cat, Ragdoll, who adopted her! She stayed with her 24 hours a day until she delivered her own kittens," reported Michael and Karen Catapano, owners of Catapano Dairy Farm in North Fork, on the tip of Long Island, N.Y.

On Jan. 27, Kenny's Farm-house Cheese, of Barren County, Ky., won an award for the "Best Use of a Kentucky Proud Product" at a charity event called "Heard It Though The Grapevine" in Lexington, Ky.

Paula Lambert's new cookbook, *Cheese, Glorious*



Ragdoll, Catapano's pregnant cat, took it upon herself to care for this premature Nubian goat.

Cheese! has been published by Simon & Schuster. In it, Paula shares more than 75 new cheese-centered dishes, including soups, salads, entrees, appetizers and desserts. Paula's special culinary style shines in recipe after delectable recipe showcasing cheese in all its wonderful variety. The ingredients and cooking techniques may be simple, but the results are always spectacular. To promote her new book, Paula has made radio and television appearances, participated in book signings and presented cooking classes throughout the United States. Her cheese factory was profiled in the *Dallas Morning News*. A series of videos of Paula making cheese and discussing her book can be found at <http://www.dallasnews.com/s/dws/spe/2007/cheese/>

An American in Paris: Allison Hooper, co-founder of Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, was the first American cheesemaker to judge at the prestigious Concours General Agricole during the 2007 Salon International de l'Agriculture held in Paris in March. During this competition, the best French cheeses are evaluated by a group of five judges

per category, to determine the best. Roland Perrin, head of all the judges and a teacher at the National Dairy School in Poligny, France, invited Allison to judge. Adeline Foley of Vermont Butter & Cheese, and Marc Druart, Master Cheese-maker at the Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese, also

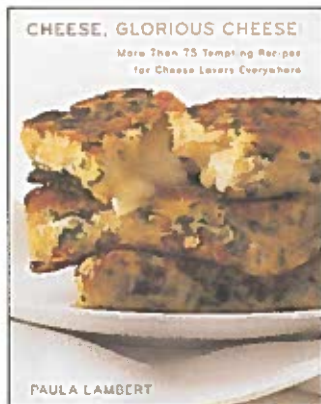
judged the competition. Allison is currently president of the American Cheese Society.

Beecher's Handmade Cheese at Pike Place Market in Seattle is offering Cheese 101: Introduction to Artisan Cheese. Attendees learn to recognize different types of cheese and the cheesemaking process. The knowledge learned is put to the test in a guided cheese tasting and interactive cheese and wine pairing. Kurt Dammeyer, owner of Beecher's, developed and teaches the sold-out monthly classes.

Beehive Cheese Company, Uintah, UT, is happy to announce that their new Web site is live at <http://www.beehivecheese.com>.

"Whey Cool" was the title of the article in the March issue of *Oprah* magazine featuring American cheese companies from across the United States. The article quoted member Laura Werlin who discussed the growing number of great American cheesemakers. ACS members included in the article were Silvery Moon Creamery, Maine; Grafton Village, Vermont; Lively Run, New York; Carr Valley, Wisconsin; Pure Luck Dairy, Texas; Haystack Mountain, Colorado; Cowgirl Creamery and Winchester Cheese, California, and Appel Farms, Washington State.

In their first-ever showing at the United States Championship Cheese Contest, farmstead cheesemaker Brenda Jensen of Hidden Springs Creamery, Westby, WI, captured a prestigious Best of Class Gold Medal for her fresh sheep's milk Driftless Cheese. It also earned gold in the Soft and Semi-soft Sheep's Milk Cheeses category for Driftless Honey Lavender; silver in the same category for Driftless Natural; and fourth place for Driftless Basil & Olive Oil. The Jensens farm the old fashioned way, with draft power and only Percheron Draft horses. But their dairy and milking parlor is a grade A farm with completely modern, new equipment.





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BECOME A MEMBER!

Benefits of annual membership may include:

- Subscription to the quarterly ACS newsletter
- Discounted registration fees for the annual conference
- Annual membership directory
- Listing on the ACS website, with links to your own website
- Advance notice of special events in your area, including the Bon Appetit Wine and Spirits Focus
- The opportunity for cheesemakers to exhibit their products at the Winter and Spring NASFT Fancy Food Shows, in San Francisco and New York

YES, I wish to join the ACS at the membership level of:

☐ Associate (\$95) ☐ Individual (\$160) ☐ Small Business (\$450) ☐ Corporate (\$790) ☐ Multi-Unit Business (\$1,975)

Company/Organization Name

Mr./Ms. Your First Name Last Name

Title

E-mail Address Website

Street Address

City State Zip Code

Home Telephone Work Telephone

Fax Number

Profession: ☐ Academic ☐ Association ☐ Broker
☐ Butter Maker ☐ Cheesemaker ☐ Chef/Caterer ☐ Consultant
☐ Dairy ☐ Distributor ☐ Enthusiast ☐ Importer
☐ Public Relations ☐ Writer/Author ☐ Marketing ☐ Retailer
☐ Trade Publication ☐ Other (Specify) _____

Ways You Can Help ACS and ACS Members:

- ☐ Write an Article for the Newsletter
- ☐ Start an ACS cheese-buying club in your store
- ☐ Share Technical Expertise
- ☐ Write an Article for a Newspaper or Magazine
- ☐ Discount Offers for Members
- ☐ A Link on Your Website to Other Members
- ☐ A Website Link to ACS
- ☐ Help in Meeting the Press
- ☐ Bringing in New Members
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Public Cheese Tastings
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Cheeses Made:

Short Bio:

CORPORATE MEMBERS

You may indicate up to four additional names to be listed as representatives of your company:

1. 2.
3. 4.

ACS Membership Levels

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP \$95 • The Associate membership is designed for those who want to gain and/or increase their knowledge about the world of cheeses and cheesemaking. This level of membership is not available to those within the trade. Benefits of membership may include: • one-year subscription to the ACS newsletter • discounted registration fees for the annual conference.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP \$160 • The individual membership includes those individuals and businesses that are involved in the production, distribution, marketing of cheese and/or related products. Individual memberships may also be held by writers, cookbook authors, and academicians in related fields. Includes the Associate benefits above, plus: • membership directory • annual conference report • ACS website listing, link to your own website, and access to members-only area • invitations to selected Society events • voting rights and eligibility for the Board of Directors. For cheesemaker members, also included in the Individual Membership are • reduced judging entry fees for the annual cheese competition • option to participate at Bon Appetit Wine & Spirit Focus • option to participate in NASFT trade shows in New York and San Francisco

SMALL BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP \$450: Benefits include those of the Individual member category for up to three designated company representatives.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP \$790 • Benefits include those of the Individual member category above, for up to five designated company representatives (a \$625.00 value) and the ability to add additional members at the reduced rate of \$100.00 each, plus: • a one-time one-quarter page ad in the ACS newsletter (all artwork and copy to be supplied by member) • eligibility to advertise in the ACS newsletter.

MULTI-UNIT BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP: \$1,975 • Designed for multi-unit retail outlets, membership is held by each of the units under the same business heading. All employees of the company would be affiliate members of the ACS via the store membership. This category includes all of the same benefits of the Corporate Membership, plus • each unit listed in the membership directory • eligibility for all employees to receive annual conference discounted rate • access for all employees to the members-only area of the ACS website.