

The American Cheese Society

NEWSLETTER 4TH QUARTER 2007

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THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING RENNET

By Petra Cooper

When cheese lovers buy cheese, they passionately question the type of milk, the region where the cheese was made, etc. But few (except those looking for vegetarian rennet) if any ever ask about the rennet used to make the cheese. But as more caseophiles understand rennet's importance and origins, the more they are asking questions.

When exploring what rennets or coagulating agents are being used by different cheesemakers, it quickly becomes confusing. In fact, take the rennet challenge. Next time you go to the dairy case, look at the ingredient list for different cheeses. You will find that the term for the coagulant can vary greatly. Some labels read simply "rennet". Other terms include: enzymes, vegetarian friendly coagulant, vegetarian rennet, mi-crobal enzymes, vegetable rennet, occasionally chymosin and yes, you will even see the words "rennet free" (on a hard cheese).

To truly appreciate cheese, one also needs to know something about its ingredients; each plays an enormous role in the final taste, texture, moisture level and aroma profile of the cheese. This includes coagulating agents.

Coagulants Used in Cheesemaking

A coagulant is anything that curdles milk. Rennet is a generic term used to describe an animal-derived coagulant; it includes the enzyme rennin or chymosin. The two are the same; rennin is an older term while chymosin is more chemically specific. But rennet is only one of several types of coagulating agents. There are five types of coagulants used to make cheese:

Animal-Derived Rennet

Made from a collection of enzymes from the fourth stomach of ruminant animals (kid, calf or lamb), this is used in most traditional cheesemaking plants. Through a chemist's eyes, rennet is chiefly made

up of two enzymes that break down protein chains in milk: chymosin and pepsin. The enzyme mostly responsible for coagulating milk is chymosin as it breaks down casein – the primary protein of concern to cheesemakers.

As the chief coagulating agent, today we see highly clarified versions of animal rennets which contain up to 97% chymosin. Some cheesemakers, hoping to achieve a clean taste profile and quick set, find this desirable.

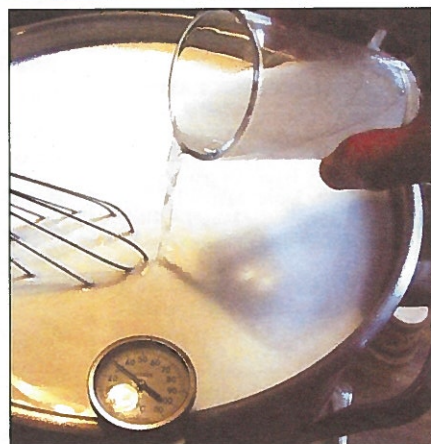
In addition, organic animal rennets can be found. Animal rennet in any form is still the most expensive coagulant (up to 2x more than alternatives). Its price is a function of supply which, in turn, is tied to events on the global market for cow, goat and lamb meat products. Some perceive the use of animal stomachs to produce rennet naturally as somewhat primitive, others as an example of how we make use of all parts of an animal.

Microbial Rennet

Microbial rennet describes a coagulating agent produced by a specific type of mold, fungus or yeast organism, grown and fermented in a lab. This is considered vegetarian-friendly as the enzyme produced is not derived from an animal. While this type of rennet is appropriate for vegetarians, cheesemakers agree that cheeses made with this type of rennet tend to result in bitterness in the flavour profile, especially when cheese is aged. While cheaper than animal rennet, true microbial rennet is now hard to find. It has been replaced by FPC rennet.

Rennet Paste

An essential element in the production of some classic Italian cheeses, rennet pastes are made from stomachs where the animal has suckled the mother for a short peri-



ACS Conference News!

To get handouts from conference sessions and seminars, please go to: www.cheesesociety.org.

In the News and Events box, click on ACS American Cheese Society 24th Annual Conference; then General and Concurrent Sessions.

Note: This benefit is for ACS members only, so you must use your member ID number and password (your zip code unless otherwise registered)



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The American Cheese Society

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Greetings From the President.....

In cheese time, the 2007 Vermont conference is ancient history. It was certainly a terrific learning experience for me to have co-chaired the event, and I am sure that my colleagues in the Vermont Cheese industry would join me in being so pleased to host many of you in Burlington. The conference has been put to bed, and we are already cranking away on our 25th anniversary in Chicago, themed "Looking Forward, Looking Back".

While the conference remains a focus throughout the year, we are allocating resources to nurturing the "maturation" of ACS. We have some initiatives in the works that will begin to showcase us to a larger audience, and we need to be prepared for what will ensue.

For the first time, we will see "ACS Winner" stickers in member deli cases and cheese counters across the country. Sure, we all know the meaning of the sticker. How about our consuming public? Will they Google ACS for more information? Will they want to join? We have just taken a big step into the consumer world. Until now, we have been talking amongst ourselves, a small and forgiving club of less than 2,000 members. Until now, we have communicated with the world in the context of American cheese and not necessarily under the brand of the American Cheese Society.

Our American Cheese Society brand has great value. Steady, organic growth has made us the darling of the artisan food world. We are a great success story of entrepreneurship, social responsibility and optimism. The real success story will be to spread the word and make ourselves available while at the same time maintaining our core values. Is this not the challenge of any successful business and organization? We will see more cheese competitions and big brands that will dangle funds in front of us for the benefit of a mutual association. We will need to find balance between promoting ourselves to a larger marketplace that has genuine interest in what we do and the risk of diluting our values.

As was mentioned frequently at the recent conference in Burlington, 2008 marks the 25th anniversary of the ACS.

Spearheaded by Frank Kosikowski, a small group, many of whom are still active in the association, founded the ACS in 1983 – a true grassroots organization, the first trade association of its kind for the artisan cheesemaker.

We want to honor the efforts of all members past and present who have added their vision to make the ACS what it is today. If you have printed materials, pictures, or anecdotes of the past 25 years, please contact headquarters to see how they can be used in archiving our history. Anything that you send, you may request to have returned.

Just when we thought we were a casual association of cheese professionals, i.e. cheesemakers, mongers, writers and distributors, we have a burgeoning category of members who are cheese educators. These are the folks who teach classes about cheese, talk on the radio and blog about cheese.

The cheese education committee has been toiling over a cheese certification program for ACS members and beyond. They envision an exam that would certify cheese retailers and restaurateurs to talk cheese talk to all of our customers. Imagine a world in which the clerk behind the cheese counter in all of our stores, not just a few, really knew about rinds and could really advise consumers. This is not an uncomplicated task. It is fraught with turf, opinions, financial barriers and most of all, the holy grail of credibility. This group is serious and focused, and the ACS Board promises to help in any way that it can.

Look out this fall for their survey. I ask that each member complete the survey as the opinions and intentions of our members are crucial to their planning process. Though our ACS member sample is small, our actions will lead and help to drive the intent of many retailers and restaurants around the country. After all, look at what our members have done to affect consumption of good cheese so far.

~ Allison





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

Dear ACS Members....

We are still on a high from the fabulous conference in Burlington – the largest ACS conference ever with more than 800 attendees.

Participation in the ACS Competition and Judging has propelled us to become the largest competition in North America. These numbers, though impressive, don't tell the true story of the conference's success. The energy, knowledge-sharing and celebration of American artisanal cheese are impossible to quantify.

The connections made at the conference go beyond the exchanging of business cards; indeed, relationships have been forged and have strengthened over the years.

I would personally like to thank the Conference Planning Committee chairs: Allison Hooper, Tom Kooiman and Joan Kimball; the Festival of Cheese co-chairs: Steve Ehlers and Sara Hill; the Competition and Judging Committee chair: David Grotenstein; and the entire conference planning committee for planning a stellar event. Vermont hit one out of the park for sure.

ACS Honors Dan Carter

Specialty cheese marketing pioneer Dan Carter, Mayville, Wis., has been named the 2007 recipient of the American Cheese Society (ACS) annual Lifetime Achievement Award.

Carter was nominated for the award by his colleagues at the Dairy Business Innovation Center, a Wisconsin-based nonprofit group he founded after retiring from his own specialty cheese marketing business in 2003. Carter has served as an advocate of the American cheese business community for more than 50 years.

"Dan Carter is a dedicated educator, communicator and innovator for marketing and promoting American specialty cheeses," says Allison Hooper, ACS board president. "Without his help, many small and medium-sized American farmstead and artisan creameries would not be where they are today."

Carter joined Purity Cheese Co. as a sales representative in 1958, and later became national marketing director for the Mayville, Wis., company. In 1975, Carter and his wife, Jane, formed Dan

This autumn marks the beginning of year two of our strategic planning process. The last 12 months have seen much dedication by the board in listening to our members and finding ways to realize our vision of promoting and supporting American cheeses.

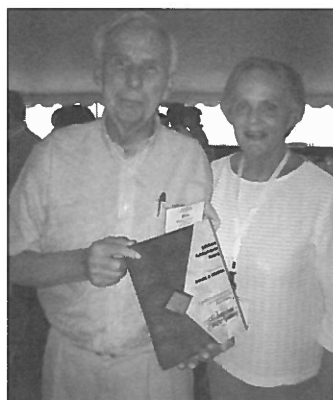
The member needs survey conducted last fall provided insight and direction as to what our members value, resulting in improvements to many existing member benefits.

The improved format of the website, new features of the newsletter and the increased marketing opportunities, such as the "ACS Winner" stickers introduced at conference, are just a few of the accomplishments of the past year.

In the coming weeks and months, we plan to introduce more benefits to help our members stay connected and informed through features such as an online "Member Forum" and access to webinars.

Please ensure that headquarters has your current and correct email address and stay tuned to the newsletter and the Website to follow our progress throughout the autumn and New Year.

Warm regards,
~Marci



Carter Inc., a marketing business that represented small to medium-sized cheese factories in Wisconsin. His company has been recognized as a chief innovator in the U.S. specialty cheese industry.

Carter retired in 2003, and led the creation of the Dairy Business Innovation Center, a nonprofit Wisconsin organization dedicated to assisting with start-up and expansion of specialty dairy plants.

Carter accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award during the ACS 24th annual conference in Burlington, Vt.

"I am accepting this honor on behalf of the Dairy Business Innovation Center team that continues to accomplish the near impossible in growing the artisan cheese industry," says Carter.



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Marketing

Marketing for the Small Retailer

By Jeanne Carpenter

So your cheese shop has a great location, exceptional product and passionate staff. But what does it take to build your business?

The answer, said our experts at the ACS conference, lies in marketing: creating your brand and connecting with your audience. Whether your budget is \$50 or \$5,000, there are plenty of innovative ways to allocate your resources.

First, never underestimate the power of word-of-mouth marketing, says Greg O'Neill, Pastoral Artisan Cheese, Bread & Wine, Chicago. Four simple rules increase store traffic:

1) Be interesting. Give people a reason to talk about you

2) Make people happy. Offer great product and exceptional service

3) Earn trust and respect. Nobody talks positively about a company they don't trust or like

4) Make it easy. Find a super simple message and make it easy for people to share

What makes word-of-mouth marketing happen? O'Neill chalks it up to the "5 T's":

1) Talkers: get people to tell their friends about you

2) Topics: Give them something interesting and fun to talk about

3) Tools: Provide easy ways to spread your message

4) Taking Part: Join the conversation

5) Tracking: Make sure you spread the right mes-

sage

Another very effective and inexpensive way to market your retail shop is through an e-newsletter, says Anne Saxelby, Saxelby Cheesemongers, New York. Both O'Neill and Saxelby utilize Constant Contact, a software program costing \$30/month to email newsletters to their customer lists. Saxelby also takes the highlights from her e-newsletter and puts it in a blog and sends it to a different mailing list, depending on the personality type of her consumer.

Before you start writing your e-newsletter or blog, make sure you establish your goals and stick to them. For example, do you want to increase store traffic or attendance at special events? Or do you want to make promotions and special offers more widely known?

Perhaps you want to educate your customers about your products and company message? Whatever your goal, stick to it in your writing. Tailor your messages to concentrate on reaching your goals.

Finally, Barrie Lynn, The Cheese Impresario, Beverly Hills, recommends getting a comfortable pair of walking shoes to market your retail store. Walk your neighborhood and meet your business neighbors. Leave behind menus, cheese plate lists, a plate of cheese and your business card. Meet the media and bring them cheese. Meet local politicians, the fire chief, the leaders of your community. Start your own word-of-mouth marketing.

These simple and inexpensive tips can be the key to launching your retail store to the next level.



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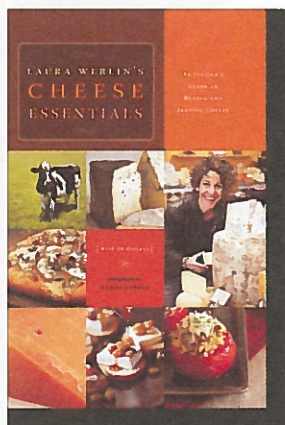
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New Member

Crawford Family Farm

"We feel privileged to be the 3rd generation to operate our 60 cow dairy in Whiting, Vermont." As adults, siblings, Sherry, Cindy and Jim all left, and then one by one came back to the farm that their grandparents bought in 1950 and their parents farmed for 42 years.

The Crawfords have been raising a nationally recognized herd of registered Ayrshires for more than 50 years, a dairy breed with reddish-brown and white markings, of which there remains only a small population throughout the United States. "Our cheese reflects the distinctive qualities of the milk's small butterfat globules, ideal for making quality cheese. We call our farmstead cheese Vermont Ayr because the two most important ingredients in our recipe are the sweet milk from our Ayrshire cows and a good splash of Vermont's fresh air.

"For us, the land is important. We're farmers by birth. In 2006, we took a leap of faith to pursue our interest in artisan farmstead cheesemaking. Our cheesemaking and aging room are on the ground floor of our historic barn, a section of which we converted into a clean, simple setup for cheese making while the baby calves are still raised on the other side."

Cindy and Jim run the 330-acre farm. The cows graze 150 acres of timothy, clover, brome and alfalfa. Each animal is known by name and is treated with respect and affection as well being bred for health and longevity.

From 60 milking cows, they select two dozen to provide the milk for cheese, based on monthly tests for components and quality of their milk. Currently only 10 percent of the milk goes into cheese and the rest is shipped to the fluid milk market.

Sherry, the primary cheesemaker, manages the day to day operation of the cheese business. "Our farmstead cheese is made by hand using traditional techniques and each wheel receives individual attention.

Cheesemaking begins with the warm raw milk being gently poured into a 70-gallon vat. One batch produces only 50 pounds of Vermont Ayr cheese. After being lightly pressed into 4.5 pound molds, this alpine-style tomme cheese ages for 3-6 months on ash planks in the "cave". Adding only a small amount of culture and slow aging results in the development of a natural rind and the complex flavors of the milk emerge in the final cheese flavor.

The edible rind imparts an earthy contrast to the creamy sweetness of the interior. "Our children (aged 2-25), have helped with everything from renovating the barn, to making and selling the cheese- and our course, taste testing!" The cheese is sold at farmers markets, natural food co-ops, and cheese and specialty foods shops and through a couple of distributors. "They want



our 'story' and our timing is good in that there is such a movement toward local food and artisan cheeses."

In Vermont, explains Sherry, there has been a big change in dairy. You have to get bigger, go organic or develop a value added product. "Farmers in the past

could get by, by working hard. Now, not even 15-hour days are enough. We chose not to grow bigger because we like the individual attention we can provide to our cattle. While we are not organic, our animals are raised naturally, meaning they graze on chemical-free fields and they receive no growth hormones." A value-added product best meets our needs and interests. Our goal is to increase the pounds of cheese sold and decrease the number of cows on the farm.

The meeting in Vermont was the impetus for the Crawfords to join ACS; it's a decision they don't regret. "It was a great event," says Sherry who found she learned a lot. It's a great way to meet new contacts and learn what is happening in the cheese world."

What's happening is that the cheese world has a new farmstead cheesemaker.

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Best of Show: Leelanau Raclette

Leelanau Cheese Co. of Suttons Bay, Michigan, beat out more than 1,200 entries to take the "Best of Show" award for their Aged Raclette at the 24th annual American Cheese Society (ACS) cheese competition. John and Anne Hoyt, owners and cheesemakers of the Leelanau Cheese Co. at Black Star Farms, make this cheese with pasteurized milk from just one farm. The Aged Raclette is a labor-intensive cheese, made in nine-pound wheels and aged nine months.

Normally the ACS Newsletter does a story on the Best of Show winner, but we decided we couldn't do better than print this letter from John Hoyt of Leelanau. And we join the many others to say, "Congratulations!"

To All Members and Enthusiasts of the American Cheese Society, I guess everyone can believe how happy we are. A month has passed and the local community and our customers have heard the news and everywhere we go we get "congratulations!"

It's wonderful! They're into it just as much as we are, it's like they won too. Of course our two helpers, Dave and Julie, are very proud. They are great!

It's been about 22 years since I became a cheesemaker. I learned to make Raclette cheese in the Valais region of Switzerland where Raclette originated. After schooling and a summer apprenticeship, I landed a cheesemaking position at the alpine farm of Eison.

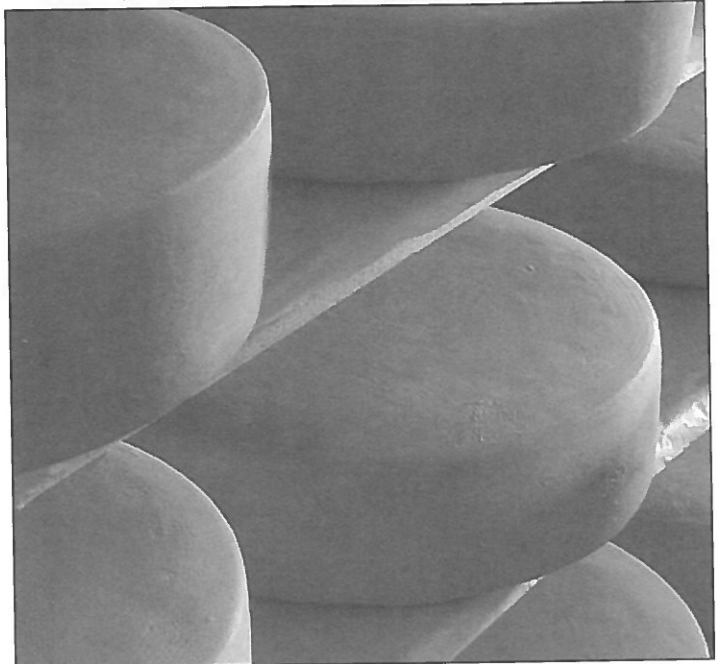
Anne and I met one day while she was on a several-day hike with some mutual friends and they stopped by the farm. She helped me milk our cows (by hand) and prepared meals for us. We became a team and went on to work the Thyon farm in 1987 and then the Veysonnaz farm in 1988.

We had developed a good reputation in the Valais but I wanted to return to the United States to make cheese here. It took some years, but in 1995, we started the Leelanau Cheese Co., named for the county where we are located.

We arranged to get milk from a local farmer and started with some batches of Raclette to cure and then made some batches of Fromage Blanc to get some cashflow to help buy milk. We've sold out of everything since.

We are very small; we produce about 25,000 pounds of Raclette each year. In 1996, we started to age a couple of wheels to see how they would turn out. We were surprised how well it aged but we could hardly dedicate any of the mild Raclette to age. In fact, we could barely keep up with the demand for the mild. But our inventory has slowly increased, and we put two or three wheels aside to age from every 25-wheel batch. That's about 300 a year. It is all sold at the farm and through mail order. We are hoping this winter to be able to fulfill some of the many requests we've had for the cheese.

Anne and I want to thank the ACS and the MANY volunteers for all their hard work, each and every year, to ensure the conference and competition and all the many



A few wheels from every batch of Leelanau's Raclette are set aside for aging. One of these won Best in Show.

cheesy activities happen. Burlington sounded like such a great venue this year, being connected with the Vermont Cheese Trail, with visits to local farms and cheeseries. We really wish we could have been there. We will do our best to make it to Chicago next year.

Just say cheese,
John Hoyt

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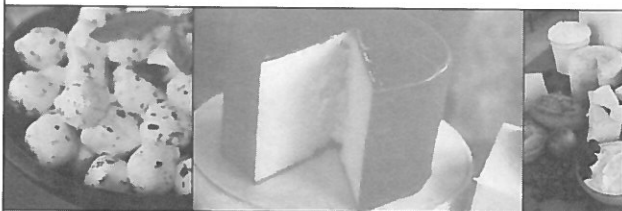
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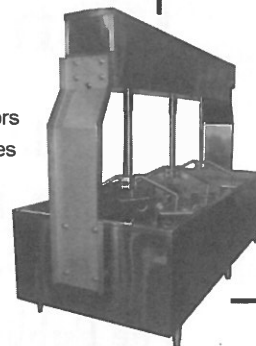
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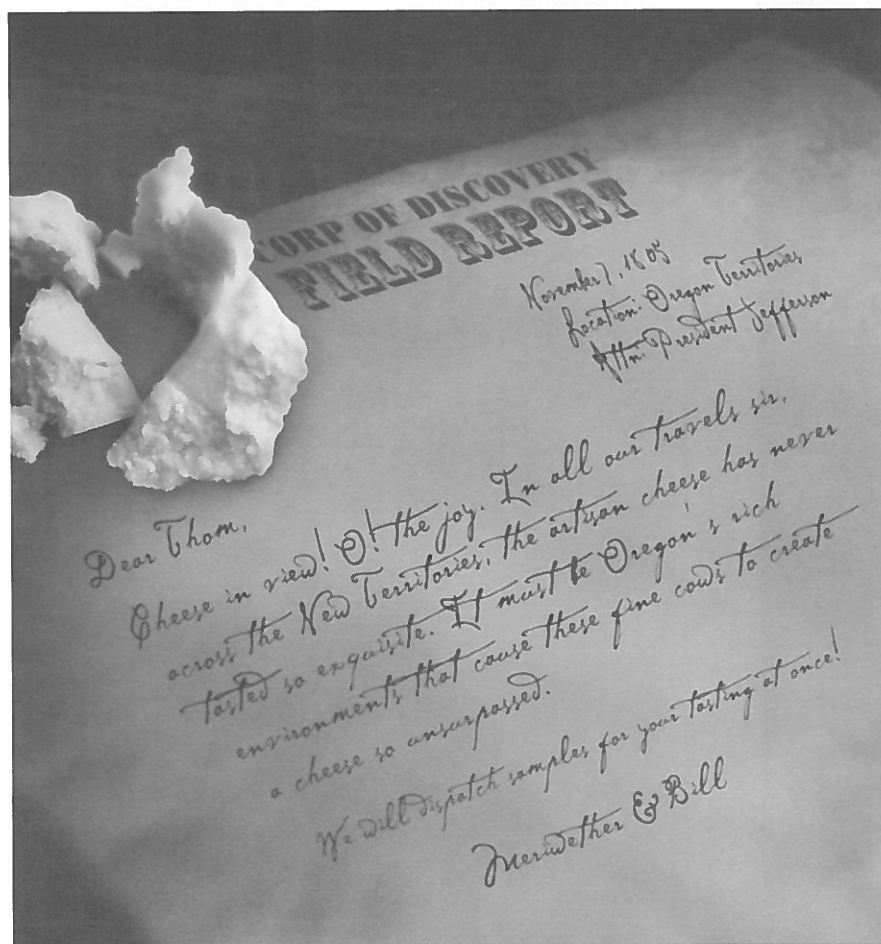


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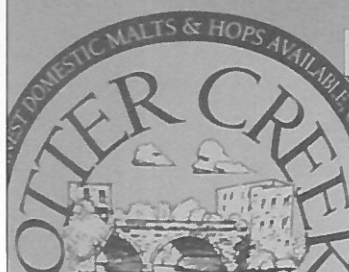
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Dr. Cheez

The Road to Market (Continued)

Relative Humidity is the other part of the equation that is almost not acknowledged by transportation and warehousing. But I will say there are some who are more in tune than others. At least one specialty cheese distributor is making an attempt to maintain a portion of his warehouse at an ideal RH.

But what is ideal? I did a quick informal survey of producers of cheese that fit into the rinded category, each with a hard cheese, some smeared and some not. The complaint they all had was that warehouses were too low in RH. Many of the rinded cheeses are aged at Relative Humidity's between 80% and 95%. So I asked what they'd like the RH to be.

Responses varied and so I did a little reading between the lines. They did not want it to be so high that the cheese would have an active smear, or have non active rinds such as Goudas begin to grow unwanted flora.

For the time being it appeared that a RH of 60% might be a good place to start. A RH low enough to attract moisture away from the cheese at a very slow rate when packaged, in paper, in boxes, on pallets etc. For smaller cheeses this may be too low, a special area that is held a little higher RH may be the key.

Just yesterday, a new producer distributing her product reported that one customer who was constantly reporting problems could not tell her how stable his walk in cooler was. She now has a glove box full of small inexpensive thermometers, calibrated of course, that she is placing in customer coolers. She has not only solved problems for her products but those of many others. How many coolers across the country are in this state? The best kind to buy is a min/max type that can tell what the temperature range is over a period of time.

What is right for your product? Know your product, know its needs and don't be afraid to expect the distribution chain to lift their game, but of course, don't count on it. The only way to know if a system is working is to be able to monitor it, and remember, you can't fix it if you can't measure it.

Today's game is a new one; make sure your distribution chain understands the needs of your cheese. The right to inspect any facility that your cheese is stored in or staged in might be a minimum requirement for working with a provider.

Do you have a question about making, handling, or aging cheese? Neville McNaughton, president of Cheez Sorce, St. Louis, Mo., draws on many years of experience manufacturing dairy products in New Zealand and the U.S. to answer.

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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.

Cypress Grove Chevre was awarded Outstanding Product Line 2007 at the Summer Fancy Food Show in New York City. Selected for its superior product line, the winning family of cheeses includes fresh, soft-ripened and aged cheeses; among them are Purple Haze, Bermuda Triangle, Midnight Moon and Lamb Chopper. "The Product Line category is one of the most prestigious awards because it says that everything that a company sells is outstanding," according to Ron Tanner, vice president, Communications & Education, NASFT. "Cypress Grove's artisan approach to cheesemaking and the unique variety in their line of cheeses set them apart from the competition."

DCI Cheese Co. has launched a new design for their Il Giardino cheese packaging labels. The new Il Giardino product packaging replaces a design that is almost two decades old. DCI has begun its national roll-out with an expected 90% changeover of the brand's packaging by year's end.

Hendricks Farms and Dairy is pleased to announce that their award-winning, raw milk, farmstead artisanal cheeses are now available in all Pennsylvania Whole Foods Markets. After doubling their grass-fed Ayrshire cow herd last fall, Hendricks Farms and Dairy is working in conjunction with Whole Foods' expanded mission to sell more locally-produced, farmstead products. Customers can now buy their cheeses at the counter in Whole Foods Markets. "This is a big step for us", according to Trent Hendricks. "We have been growing our on-farm business while looking for the "right" off-farm channel for our products."

Peter J. Kindel, fromager, has joined **Redwood Hill Farm & Creamery** as a creamery cheese-maker of their artisan goat milk cheeses. Peter and his wife, Caroline, won the Geoffrey Roberts Award in 1999 to study cheese in Europe. After six months working with cheesemakers across France and the United Kingdom, Peter returned to hone his skills working alongside Maitre Fromager Max MacCalman at Picholine Restaurant, and then at the Artisanal Cheese Center, New York City, and Murrays Cheese Shop in Manhattan, N.Y. Most recently, Peter worked at Haystack Mountain Goat Dairy in Niwot, Colo., crafting goat milk



cheese at their farm and creamery.

Rising Sun Farms won a bronze medal at the World Cheese Championship in England for Chocolate Espresso (known locally as Espresso Madness) Cheese Torta. In addition, Elizabeth Fugas was honored in the April 2007 *Portland Business Journal* which named Rising Sun as one of the "Top 50 women-owned businesses" as ranked by revenue in 2006. It ranked as number 28. Finally, they have a new distributor in Texas – Bertrands – and they are now exporting to Mexico and Canada. According to Elizabeth, "Life is good!"

Roth Käse USA's newly introduced "Slice on Slice" (SOS) cheeses offer speed of preparation and the revolutionary paperless packaging reduces waste, saves time, and maintains product integrity. With no cumbersome paper between each slice, new packaging technology allows slices to be stacked on a slant allowing for hassle-free "peel-ability." Packaged in rigid, plastic containers that are re-closeable, stackable, and fit into food-service trays, SOS cheeses are available in 10 varieties.

Former ACS members, Tom and Kristi Johnson have won a victory. **Bingham Hill Cheese Co.**, in a holding pattern since February 2006, received a favorable verdict in its trade secret theft lawsuit against cross-town competitor Morning Fresh Cheese Co., its owner, Rob Graves, and cheesemaker Brad LaRocco, whom Bingham Hill accused of misappropriating the company's cheese recipes, customer lists, supplier lists, and other confidential information. Also named in the suit was Morning Fresh Dairy manager Matt Lucas.

Bingham Hill was granted a permanent injunction preventing the defendants from making blue, washed-rind and brie-like cheeses anywhere for three years and in Colorado for eight years. Bingham Hill was awarded damages of \$400,000, and exemplary damages of \$150,000, because "the actions of Defendants Morning Fresh, Robert Graves and Brad LaRocco were willful, deliberate, wanton, without regard to the rights of Bingham Hill."

The judge's decision is being appealed but Tom and Kristi say the verdict allows them to finally explore options for either resuming business or licensing or selling the Bingham Hill brand, its products and recipes. The Johnsons had been in negotiations with several companies for the sale of the brand when they discovered Morning Fresh's illegal activity. Morning Fresh ignored Bingham Hill's demands that they cease and desist, leaving litigation Bingham Hill's only remedy, the Johnsons say.

***Please note:** Recent new members have not been listed in this issue because of space constraints. They will be listed in the next issue and can be found on the website.*

od, changing the enzyme balance in the stomach. When harvested from these stomachs, the diversity of enzymes is much greater. Thus, the complexity of the great classics such as Parmegiano Reggiano. These preparations contain some traces in varying amounts of animal tissue.

FPC: Fermentation-Produced Chymosin Rennet:

Made by taking the rennin-producing gene out of the animal cell's DNA string and then inserting into the bacteria, yeast or mold host cell's DNA string, this type of microbial rennet was introduced in 1990. Once inserted, the newly placed gene initiates the production of the chymosin enzyme within the host. This is cultivated and fermented. The result is an inexpensive harvest of real chymosin. This is seen as an improvement on the original microbial rennet as it is real chymosin and not a mold or yeast-based substitute. Moreover, it can be economically produced in unlimited supply and addresses some of the concerns regarding the bitterness in aged cheeses. The procedure is not new and is similar to that used to make many vaccines. But, there is more to consider.

FPC rennet is a genetically modified (GMO) product. According to the culture companies, 90% of North American cheese is made with FPC rennet. But ingredient labels do not distinguish between this type of microbial rennet and the original non-GMO type. And the fact that use of FPC type microbial rennet is not labeled a GMO product leaves those who oppose the use of GMOs in the dark when it comes to choosing cheese.

In addition, further confusion and debate arises over the differences between GMO products versus "genetically engineered" products as the latter elicits deeper concerns from those opposed to this type of science. While FPC rennet is GMO, it is not, technically speaking, genetically engineered, because the DNA taken from the animal cell and inserted into the DNA string of a bacterium or mold is not changed. Genetic engineering actually modifies the specific gene responsible for a particular function in order to improve its action. In other words, it takes messing with genes to another, deeper level, like playing with the shape of the Lego block itself, not just with the order of their assembly.

In the end, what this means is that most cheese in North America is made from vegetarian-friendly but animal-origin, GMO-derived FPC rennet. And while use of this rennet is banned in GMO-free European countries, it doesn't mean the cheeses we buy from those countries are necessarily FPC-free. To quote one Danish expert "We can't use FPC rennet in Denmark for our domestic cheese or cheese made for other European countries which have banned its use. We only use it for cheese we export to North America." Why? Because it's cheaper and more consistently available.

Vegetable Rennet

True vegetable rennet (vs. vegetarian rennet – a term used interchangeably with microbial rennet) comes from plants which produce enzymes that have coagulating properties. Examples include cardoon thistle, fig tree

bark or nettles. These are real vegetable rennets, though they often also have undesirable effects on cheese flavor (bitterness) and are a little more unpredictable when used in some cheeses.

Some traditional Portuguese cheeses are made with vegetable rennet as are cheeses in countries where killing a calf would not be possible. In North America, commercially-produced vegetable rennet is hard to source. Some artisan cheesemakers are experimenting with it and a company in Edmonton, Alberta, may soon be commercially producing a true vegetable rennet.

Citric Acid or Vinegar

Finally, some cheeses like Ricotta are coagulated using simple lemon juice or vinegar. However, this coagulant is mostly used for a heat-precipitated curd. These coagulants are decidedly vegetarian and have very limited use due to limitations and noticeable taste profile.

It is indeed important to know your rennets – especially if you are in cheese retailing or working in a restaurant offering cheese plates. And it is worthwhile to ask cheesemakers what type of rennet they use and why.

In my view the reason for asking is not to judge the choice, but to understand why that rennet type was chosen and who they see as their target market. Indeed the rennet a cheesemaker chooses often results in making difficult trade-offs between three priorities: taste, texture and politics. Being able to articulate the trade-offs the cheesemaker was willing to make and why can be of service to the cheese-buying public and will help them to make informed choices.



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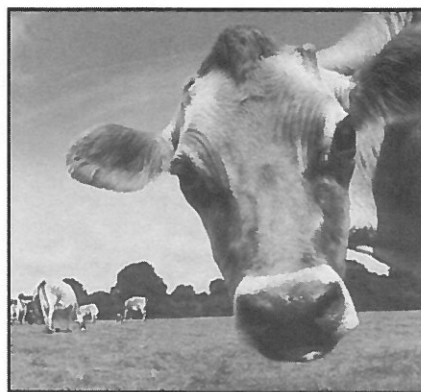
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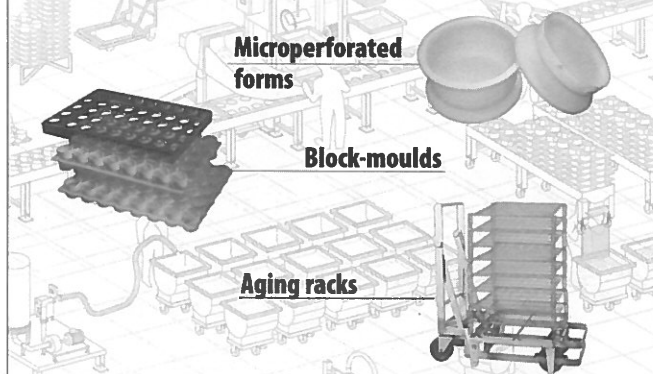


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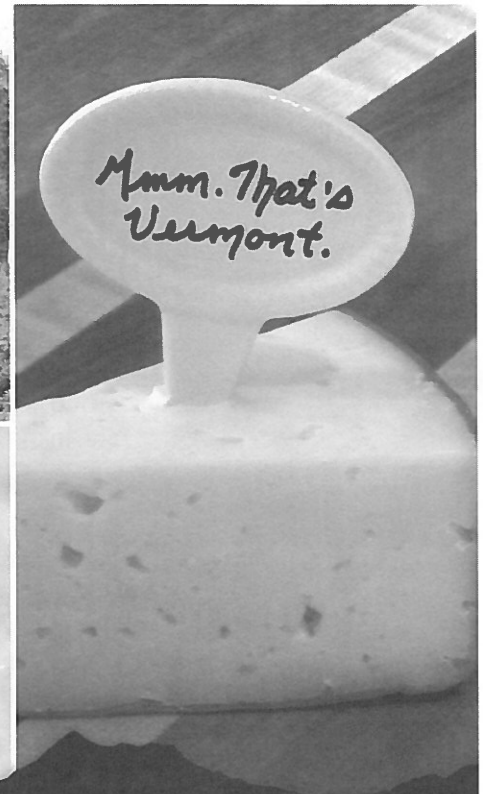
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Education Committee

Two years ago Laurie Greenberg and Kathy Guidi proposed that the ACS create a Fromager Certification program along the lines of a Sommelier program. Response was enthusiastic. A committee was formed and became the ACS Education Committee (ACSEC).

Over the past two years the group has met and worked extensively to research, discuss, plan, formulate and reformulate it's vision. They met in Burlington to present to the membership its revised mission statement, goals and newly created committee structure. Subcommittees are already taking action to make the goals reality.

Mission statement: The ACS Cheese Education Committee is dedicated to supporting artisan cheesemaking by fostering cheese education and by developing a Cheese Certification Program.

Objectives:

1. Establish Cheese Education as a core function of the ACS: a) Add 'Cheese Educator' as an ACS membership category; b) Add the Cheese Education Committee information and updates to the ACS website
2. Facilitate the availability of cheese education resources. To this end, we will a) identify and make available a list of education programs with course content that prepares candidates for eventual certification, b) work with cheese educators to develop a common, basic master syllabus, and c) encourage the development of new cheese education programs. *(Note: The Committee's goal is to develop an exam for certification, not to become engaged in teaching.)*
3. Develop a certification program: Create an examination or series of examinations that will measure cheese knowledge needed by all those who handle cheese in its journey from cheesemaker to consumer.

Enroll partner organizations to fund and market the program.

Administer the exams. Score, record, and report the results.

The ACS Cheese Education Committee has established the following working groups:

Curriculum: developing an outline for the content to be included in the certification exam.

Education development: Establish a clearinghouse of educators and education programs in existence.

Marketing: Work with partner organizations to inform about the efforts of the ACS Education Committee.

Certification: Develop exam content.

If you wish to be involved in or kept current on ACSEC, e-mail: epicurean@sturman.com.

If you are a cheese educator, we'd like to include you on our planned listing of ACS cheese educators. Please email your contact information and web page URL to epicurean@sturman.com.

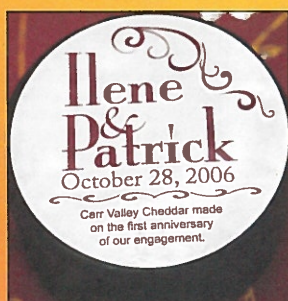


Patrick (The Cheese Guy) Moore and his new bride Ilene celebrated a truly unique wedding last winter.

The pair tied the knot in true cheese-loving style. Almost every dish on the extensive social hour and dinner menus featured cheese in some form. There was beef tenderloin on French bread with St.

Pete's Select Blue; cashew chicken spring rolls with a sesame soy mascarpone sauce; Dauphinois potatoes with Stravecchio.

Cheeses were donated by good friends like Jeff Jirik (Fairibault Dairy), Ig Vella (Vella Cheese) and Sid Cook (Carr Valley Cheese). Indeed, Sid created wedding favours of truckle wheels of Carr Valley cheddar cheese made on the first anniversary of their engagement, October 28, 2006.



A Really Cheesy Wedding



The wedding cake looked like a cheeseboard with a mousy bridal pair. Believe it or not, it's all cake! Jessica Bartl of Jessica's Cakes in Minnesota made it all by hand.

Left: Wedding favours by Carr Valley Cheese.

Right: Detail of one of the "cheeses" on the wedding cake.- Reny-Picot Camembert Fermier.

