

The American Cheese Society

NEWSLETTER 4TH QUARTER 2008

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Marketing Column P. 7

New Member P. 23

Best in Show P. 9

Dr. Cheez on vats P. 5

A Judge's Tale P. 13

To Market, to Market

By Liz Campbell

"It's looking in people's eyes and seeing how they feel about your cheese," says cheesemaker, Ruth Klahsen, owner of Monforte Dairy in Stratford, Ontario, Canada. Ruth takes her cheese to 12 farmers' markets each week from May to October. In the summer, she makes cheese twice a week only and leaves apprentices to do the rest while she builds relationships with her customers. "It's also about knowing where to take my quality. If you just stay in the plant and make cheese, you don't connect with your customers."

Farmers' markets are a growing phenomenon in North America with new ones of all sizes springing up everywhere. Perhaps one reason for this has been a desire on the part of consumers to connect with the food they eat – with the people who grow or make it and with the community from which it is born. The development of movements like Slow Food and the popularity of the 100-Mile Diet have made these even more important as they are the means by which local farmers can get their produce directly to the consumer. And let's face it, given the choice of eating fruit and vegetables picked in the last day or so and ones picked a week ago and trucked 1,000 miles, which would you choose?

"Authors like Barbara Kingsolver have made people so much more aware of the food we eat. People have become so supportive of local producers," says Jean Mackenzie of Mackenzie Creamery, who last year

started making goat cheese in Hiram, Ohio. She markets her flavored fresh chevres through local retailers as well as in six farmers' markets in the Cleveland/Akron area. In one market which is just 10 years old, more than 4,000 people attend each week.

"There's a synergy in the market you don't get in the grocery store," she says. "In two markets I'm right next to an artisan baker. I'll tell my customers, this cheese works really well with his French stick."

Most significant to cheesemakers is the chance to talk directly to customers. "It's a platform to deliver our story, to talk about our herd, our recipe and our sustainable focus," says David Gremmels, of Rogue Creamery in Oregon. Rogue's cheeses go to nine markets from Ashland to Portland, five days a week. "It's the key to our success. Those individuals we meet at market get to sample our cheese, and if they love it, they become our ambassadors, asking for our cheese at retail stores."

Telling the story is more likely to sell the cheese than almost anything else. "People will be looking down at the cheese when they come to the table," says Jean. "But then I'll tell them I'm the cheesemaker, and they look up and smile and get excited. I tell them about the cheese, and we're engaged."

Ask any cheese retailer and they'll tell you that the cheese tastes better when it has a story behind it. There's a big difference between, "Taste this wonderful cheese," and "Taste this wonderful cheese from a small farm-



Cheesemaker Ruth Klahsen chats with customers under the trees at Trinity Bellwoods, an open air farmers' market in Toronto.

stead in Virginia where the cheesemaker is a fulltime doctor but loves sheep and cheesemaking so much, she does it as well," (I'm sure everyone recognizes Dr. Pat Elliot's story). The story is even more potent when told by the cheesemaker himself or herself.

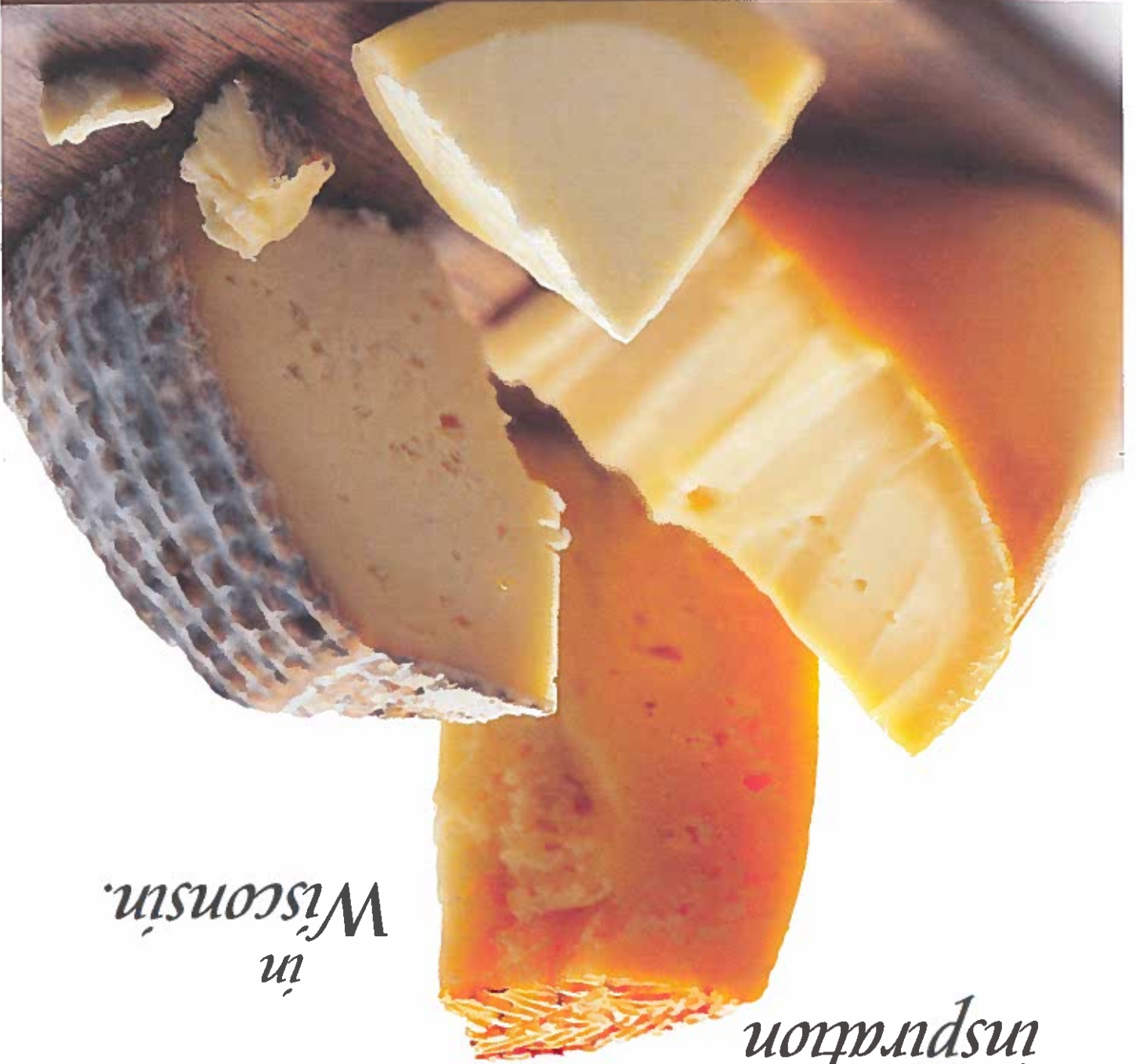
Indeed, Pat goes to a farmers' market. "I think everyone should sell their cheese firsthand," she says. "You learn so much about what your customers are looking for, what they like, even how to fix a problem with your cheese. You have to interact directly with them, and you can't beat that for feedback."

Pat even saves scraps of cheese for a retired greyhound that visits her at the market. "The dog wears sunglasses and his owner now buys my she laughs. "The point is, you get to

continued on page 4 ➔

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

Dear ACS Members....

Have you ever wanted to find a good distributor in a certain region of the country? Do you ever have questions about rennet or alternative coagulants?

Do you want to follow the progress of the Cheese Certification Alliance? Can you imagine tapping into the knowledge base of 1,400 cheesemakers, retailers, educators and distributors? That is what the ACS Member Forums were created to do. As part of the strategic plan, the American Cheese Society has been looking for ways to maximize the communication and sharing of information within the artisan cheese industry. The Forum was created as a resource to accomplish just that.

It is easy to register for the Online Forum by following three simple steps.

1) **Login** – From the ACS homepage, click on the login button in upper right corner. You will be taken to the login page where you input your username and password. (If you don't remember your username and password, click the "Forgot your Password?" button and the information will be emailed to you instantly.)

2) **Next** – Go to the Membership tab on the main menu bar and click "Forum."

3) **Set your Preferences** – Select your notification preferences on the Forum home page by clicking on the

"Preferences" button on the right.

Subject threads include Cheesemakers, Distributors, Education/Certification, General Industry Questions, Hot Topics, Journalists/Press/Visitors and Retailers. Whenever a member posts a question or comment, you will receive an email to your inbox and may respond directly from there if you choose. We recommend that you register for each thread so that you don't miss out on any potential knowledge sharing. You may deselect a subject thread at any time.

The Forum is a valuable member benefit and will flourish with member involvement. So ask questions and throw out discussion topics, but whatever you do, become involved!

Finally, I want to thank all of you who attended the 25th Anniversary Conference last month in Chicago. Your participation made the event meaningful and memorable in so many ways. I would particularly like to thank the ACS Conference Planning Committee, led by Steve Ehlers, Joan Kimball and Greg O'Neill, for orchestrating an informative yet entertaining event. A sincere thank you goes to ACS sponsors, session panelists and moderators, judges and volunteers. Evaluations and word of mouth confirm that a great time was had by all.

**Best regards,
Marci**



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Greetings From the President.....

We celebrated our silver anniversary in great style in Chicago this July. It was a great celebration of people, of cheeses and of community, all of which began as a grass roots volunteer organization. It grew from the passion of its early members as shown in a documentary produced by Christine Hyatt of Cheese Chick LLC. Early steady growth exploded during Cathy Strange's and Jodie Wishe's tenures as president. Over the last three years, under Allison Hooper, membership, competition entries and attendance have nearly doubled.

This year's conference was passionately and expertly orchestrated by co-chair volunteers Steve Ehlers, Joan Kimball and Greg O'Neill, with additional assistance from many others. It addressed current topics, had retrospectives, and looked into the future.

Our second Meet the Cheesemaker, organized by Sara Hill and Tim Smith, had a record attendance of over 70 cheesemakers and 400 distributors, retailers, and writers tasting and discussing cheese. And this year, we celebrated Steven Jenkins, author and cheesemonger, who is the 2008 ACS Lifetime Achievement award recipient. He put many cheesemakers on the map and is an expert, writer and outspoken champion of the great American cheeses.

The finale was the Festival of Cheese where 1,149 cheeses were beautifully highlighted in the grand ballroom at the Chicago Hilton with the backdrop of the Chicago Skyline carved from cheese! The next day's annual cheese sale raised over \$9,000 for the ACS scholarship fund.

The ACS board and its new members

are moving forward with clarity, strength and passion to develop strategic initiatives to increase education and awareness of American cheese. These include developing sustainable models for our businesses as presented in the Cheesemaker Financial Statements; building alliances with coalitions and associations like the Cheese of Choice Coalition, Raw Milk Cheese Makers Association and Slowfood; offering more benefits through affiliate programs; and continuing to build collaborative education and marketing initiatives we started with Cheese Education Alliance and NASFT.

We're reviewing an e-based forum platform to support initiatives, new committees, and regional organizations that can collaborate and address challenging and evolving issues faced by our members. There will be many updates throughout the coming year on the ACS website and newsletter and certainly at the next conference in Austin, Texas.

There are many opportunities to volunteer. It is through the sharing of knowledge and experience and networking that we continue to grow and sustainably empower each other in this changing economy. With the presidents who preceded me, I look forward to building a sustainable future for ACS's members, one that is true to the mission, core values, and vision – "ACS promotes and supports American Cheeses."

~ David



To Market, To Market P. 1 cont'd

know your customers at the market." Jean agrees, "I've seen the look on their faces when they hear it's goat cheese, but I give them a tiny sample and a napkin so they can spit it out. Usually, one taste is all it takes. I've won over so many new customers that way."

Offering a taste is a wonderful way to market and one that a retailer can only do for a few cheeses at a time. In fact, as many farmers' markets only operate through the summer, getting that cheese in their mouths may ensure they look for it at local retailers during the cold months.

Then there's a pragmatic reason for cheesemakers to go to market them-

selves. Selling cheese at retail prices rather than wholesale so as not to undercut retailers in the area means those profits go right into the cheesemaker's pocket. "It's very lucrative," says Jean. And Ruth adds, "It costs \$25 for a table and I typically sell between \$1,000 and \$2,000. That's all cash in your pocket before you go home."

Farmers' markets are also a great way to way to track new trends. "A number of chefs shop in the markets I go to, says Ruth. "It's my responsibility to know what they're looking for." And finally, adds David, "You have to be successful in your own backyard. You have to create the market and attain those sales before you can spread out."

Dr. Cheez

How do you choose a cheese vat?

By Neville McNaughton, CheezSorce

I feel very strongly that many cheese-makers make cheese in a vat that is not appropriate for their situation. A lot has been learned about cheesemaking and equipment. We must never forget the Alpma model, they are traditionalists who have pioneered a better way on many occasions, there may be a better way for your situation as well.

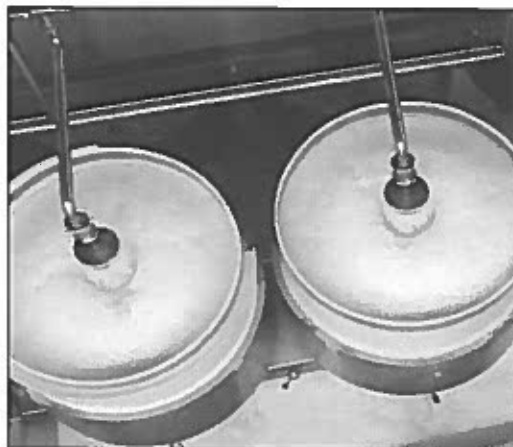
For soft cheese such as Chevre, Quark and other ladled products, the vessel is any vat that can be kept warm for the extended period of incubation. In many cases the vat for these products is the pasteurizer as most of these cheeses are made of pasteurized milk if they are to be sold in less than 60 days.

Camembert and other similar soft cheeses require a small batch size. Little or no agitation is needed and all curd can be placed in molds in a very short time, (say one minute). This is critical and essential to the production of consistent cheese. For this, a simple vessel such as a small tub can be used. The best lesson on this is the evolution of Alpma equipment over the years culminating in the Alpma Coagulator, a continuous forming of small vats.

The French cheesemakers know that consistency comes from treating all the curd the same way; small easily tipped units of curds and whey provide this. Such vats rarely require heating. Each individual cheese size is managed by varying the amount of milk in the vat.

Gouda, Edam, Gruyere, Hard Italian types and other hard cheeses require typically round vat types with good continuous agitation. Curds may be transferred to a separate vessel for a pre-forming step, if pressing under the whey is required. In this case, a rectangular vat with fixed agitation works.

Rectangular vats with fixed agitation went out of vogue more than 100 years ago when it was found that a dual purpose vat with traveling agitator that could also stir curds and mix in salt saved labor.



Many European cheese vats are round and the curd is cut with an attachment or the paddle running in the reverse stir mode. Most of these cheese types require very little manipulation in the vat.

For Cheddar, rectangular vats are the norm for non-enclosed vats. Pictures exist of vats that had fixed agitators in the past, with driven off overhead lay shafts and flat belts. The evolution of traveling agitators was probably driven by the need to stir the curd after milling to mix in salt, or simply to stir for granular make styles.

The down side was the traveling agitator did not keep the curd in suspension during the cooking process and needed to plough back through the settling curd. This is very hard on the curd causing high fat loss and some protein loss. One of the benefits of enclosed or round type vats is lower fat loss.

Heating of cheese vats is another important decision. Water systems are the best, especially when combined with tracked pressure wall construction. Steam should only be contemplated if there is a need for steam in the process such as when making Ricotta. In many plants where steam is available it is converted back to water. It's not efficient to go from water to steam and back to water.

It's important to understand that if the equipment is designed for the benefit of the product it may look different than if it is designed for the benefit of the people working the process. Horizontal rectangular vats with traveling agitators are about the people not the product. Question the paradigms and realize that what was once the case had its own context.

Today, we are in a whole new world, so make decisions that produce the best, most well-crafted products possible.

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Marketing

Keeping it Fresh:

Harm Reduction for Cheese at Retail

Moderator, Gordon Edgar (Rainbow Grocery Cooperative, San Francisco, CA) and panelists, Helder dos Santos, (C.E. Zuercher & Co., Chicago, IL), Juliana Uruburu (The Pasta Shop, Oakland, CA) and Carlos Souffront (Zingerman's Delicatessen, Ann Arbor, MI) discussed this topic at the annual conference in Chicago.

By Karen Silverston

The panelists at this session unanimously favored a "buy it and sell it," hands-on approach and advised retailers to handle cheese daily, taste rigorously, learn to recognize ripeness and use a cheese iron. Each insisted on the importance of maintaining the integrity of the cheese and getting it into customers' hands as the cheesemaker intended it.

*They rely on attentiveness. "Cheeses are like babies: they're in need of constant attention and they can't talk," said Souffront. For each cheese he stocks, Souffront posts a customized care chart created from his master matrix of care processes.

*Dos Santos explained that harm reduction and damage control mean making sure retailers receive the cheese in the best possible condition. As a distributor, he knows the cheesemakers and every anomaly in the coolers. He assesses the cheese in them daily, expediting it to retailers. "Get it in; get it out," is the motto.

*The Pasta Shop won't sign for a shipment until it's inspected. Once they've accepted it, they mitigate damage or stress resulting from its journey. They re-set the case and clean all marbles daily. "What we do always goes back to what's best for cheese," said Uruburu. "Know what to sell next and make it beautiful. If you're not happy with what you see, pull it." Cheese that's



Gordon Edgar with the cheeses at Rainbow Grocery. Keeping cheese fresh and flavourful is the challenge. been wrapped four days is unwrapped, scraped and re-wrapped. If you can't assess all the cheeses in one day, assess one area each day.

*If there's a problem, it's important to give immediate feedback to distributors and cheesemakers via photographs and phone.

*Retailers should be able to know when the distributor received the product and whether problems occurred in the past. "Someone worked hard to make the cheese. I've seen how hard they work – they're like a parent," said dos Santos, who urged, "Try to work with them." A 2008 ACS judge, dos Santos has been a judge in the past and was amazed at "how much great cheese there is."

*To avoid waste, know the capacity you can sell, assess shrink and benefit from pre-order programs.

*If cheese is bad on the shelf, please throw it out.

Trusted resources include: cheesemakers, distributors, ACS panelists, peer retailers, cheese books and the wealth of San Francisco Chronicle's weekly Cheese Course column by Janet Fletcher, archived online since 2002. Take time to learn and take notes because "there isn't a bible of how to take care of cheese."

Session handouts are available at: <http://www.cheesesociety.org>

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Best of Show

By Liz Campbell

Sid Cook walks up to the podium – again! A normal phenomenon at the American Cheese Society annual competition, the prolific cheesemaker has strolled up to gather enough ribbons to wallpaper his cheese plant. But this year, he adds the honor of Best of Show for his Snow White Goat Cheddar.

This is the second time Sid Cook has won the contest's top award; in 2004, Carr Valley's Gran Canaria, a mixed milk cheese, took the top prize. He describes Snow White Goat Cheddar, in production at Carr Valley Cheese for about four years, as a good cheese with a nice, bright flavor and a long finish.

Only the second person to ever win the honor twice (the other is Mike Gingrich whose Pleasant Ridge Reserve has twice been named Best in Show), Cook's win is different in that he won with two different cheeses. "I've never entered Gran Canaria again," he says referring to his first win. "Once it won, I retired it from the competition."

In fact, Cook's achievement is even more unique in that he takes away ribbons for two of the top three spots



by also winning the third place award for Cave Aged Marisa. "I'm very surprised," says a delighted Cook. "I thought third runner-up was pretty darn good and then all of a sudden I got called back up again."

Meadow Creek Dairy, Galax, Va., was the contest's second place winner with its Grayson cheese.

The 2008 competition featured 1,149 entries, just shy of the record set in 2007 when 1,209 entries were received. The judging team was chaired by David Grotenstein with help from John Greeley whom David referred to as "The Solomon of American Cheese

Judging." More than 180 producers from 30 states and three Canadian provinces sent cheeses and dairy products to be evaluated by 30 judges whose taste buds were stretched to the limit. And on Saturday night, hundreds of visitors filled the Hilton's grand ballroom to stretch their taste buds to the limit by trying as many of those 1149 entries as they could.

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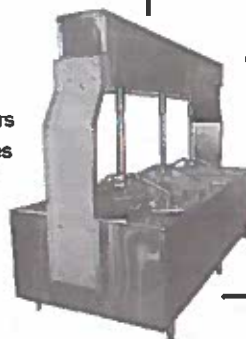
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The Judge's Tale

By Ray Bair

I jumped at the opportunity to judge the 2008 cheese competition, but when I received the list of other judges, I was blown away. I mean, how often do you get to spend two days in a room with many of your cheese idols? Folks like Janet Fletcher (SF Chronicle), Anne Saxelby (Saxelby's, NYC), Kate Arding (former Cowgirl), David Lockwood (Neal's Yard Dairy), Steve Jenkins (Fairway, NYC), and others are the life blood of the American cheese movement. Working alongside them is a pretty heady experience.

Judging is serious business, and this not-so-early riser had to be ready to go at 7 a.m. to board the bus to the Plumbers Union Hall. Here, three container-sized portable coolers housed more than 1,100 cheeses and dairy products from across North America. Tables were neatly arranged with name cards, paper plates and napkins, plastic spoons, and spittoons. I was delighted to see my partner for the next two days would be Kate Arding, a legend in the Bay Area. As a technical judge, her role was to find flaws and reduce the overall score, while I, the aesthetic judge, was there to find the perfections and build points on the score sheet. After some initial training, we were off. Our list of cheese for the next two days included 15 goat feta, a few cows milk brie, nearly two dozen gouda, 20 smoked cows milk cheeses (wow!), and another dozen flavored goat cheeses. And on the last day of the judging, the 80 1st place winners in all categories for the Best Of Show. That's a solid 150 cheeses!

The tasting is blind, meaning you only know the category of the cheese such as *D. AMERICAN MADE / INTERNATIONAL STYLE*. Excluded: all Cheddars (E), all Italian Type (H) cheeses, or DD: Dutch Style, All Milks (Gouda, Edam, etc.), my favorite of all my categories. The cheese would appear in a plain white wrapper with the category number, then the producer number, and the number of the cheese itself, which looks something like this: DD 150 03.

The judging is a simple process – sniff, taste, look, write – but it can be exceedingly difficult to find the subtleties amongst the masses. Each judge has a score sheet outlining the criteria of Aroma, Flavor, Texture/Body, Appearance/Rind with minimum and maximum score range, and room for comments, suggestions or compliments. We sign these and they're given to the cheesemaker. Awards are based on scores with minimum scores required for each level. Thus, it is possible to have no first place winner or several winners. We started by piercing the cheese with a cheese iron (a traditional method for sampling cheese), pulling a long cylindrical sample from the interior of the cheese.

There was a lot of sniffing. Sometimes, you could imagine the goats eating wild garlic or sweet herbs from the cheese aromas, but quite often it's just the lactic smells of yogurt or buttermilk, so you really need to con-

centrate to find the nuances.

Tasting, on the other hand, is often not about nuances, as many of the cheeses in our categories had aggressive, well developed flavors. First you look, then squish the cheese around your mouth trying to distinguish the overall textural characteristics. Finally, you look at the whole cheese to see if the rind is uniformly developed, the size and shape are pleasing, the wax is appealing, the overall packaging attractive.

Between cheeses we take a few breaks, eat lots of pineapple and grapes to clear the palate and drink water. Occasionally we'd look up and see something interesting on another judging table and have a nibble, or be asked to help settle a dispute about whether this or that cheese was *supposed* to look that way or taste this way.

By late afternoon of the second day, all the 1st place cheeses are put out for final tasting. In short order, our battered tastebuds would be required to evaluate 80 cheeses – flavored, smoked, lowfat, extra aged, butter, yogurt, blue, fried bread cheese. No comments needed, just 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices. It all takes only an hour.

Behind the scenes, dozens of volunteers have been working for days – receiving and tagging cheeses with top secret codes, and moving them in and out of coolers for the judges. A few days later we would see these 1,149 cheeses again, stacked and cubed by even more volunteers, with name cards and ribbons appropriately displayed for the Festival of Cheese. Now that's an impressive sight!



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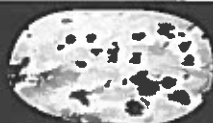
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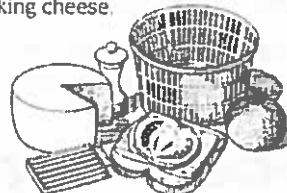
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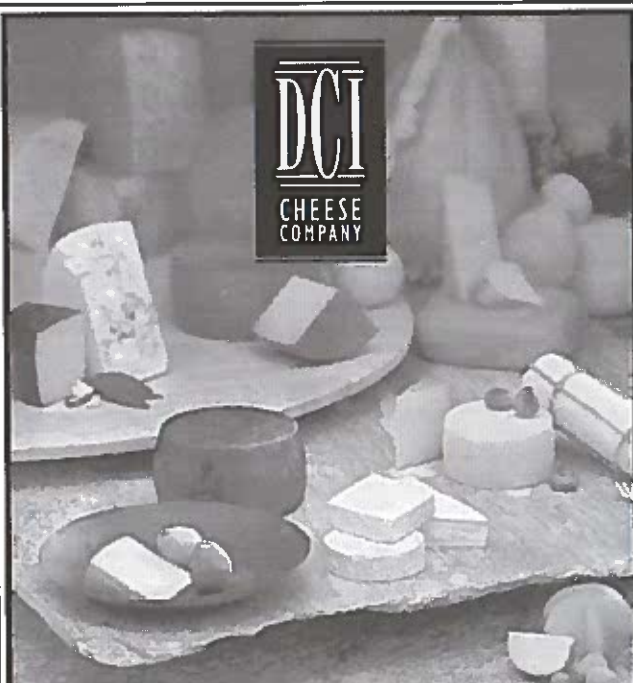
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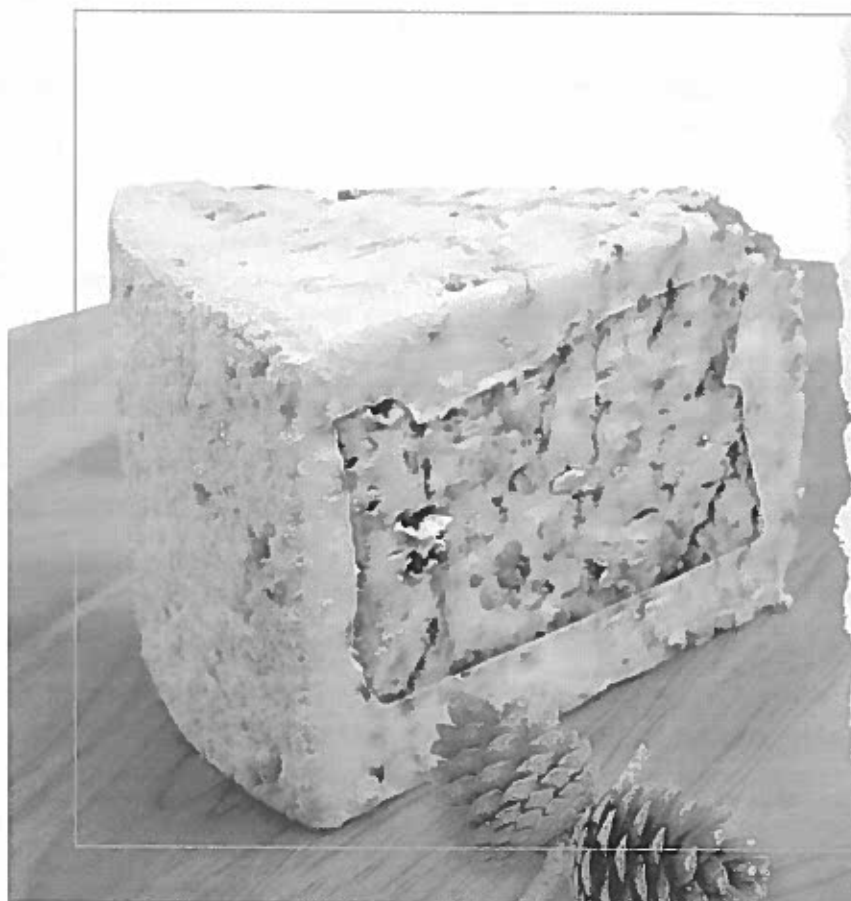


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Fromager Certification Alliance

From the Report of Sue Sturman, Chair

For 25 years, the American Cheese Society has served to educate and raise the standard for cheesemakers, thus bringing American cheesemaking from amateur to professional and even to star status. Our vision in bringing forth a program for certification of cheese professionals is to once more raise the level of quality and professionalism among people who work with cheese, once it has left the creamery.

The intention is to create a certification exam to provide independent verification from a respected expert source: the American Cheese Society. It is not, however, a training program, though undoubtedly training programs will be critical to its overall success. The exam will measure an individual's skill set and knowledge base. In order to be a valid tool for employers to use, it must be based on a full understanding of what tasks and knowledge their employees must master in order to do their jobs, so it must necessarily encompass more than simply cheese product knowledge.

For more than a year, a dedicated core team have been meeting monthly via conference call. They

include: Dave Leonhardi, WMMB, Max McCalman, Artisanal, Daphne Zepos, Essex Street Cheese, Taylor Coccalis, Murray's, and Sue Sturman, chair of the Fromager Certification Alliance. Sturman also acknowledged Kathy Guidi and Lori Greenburg, whose vision back in Louisville was their guiding light.

A survey conducted last fall with the help of Jeff Katcher of Cheesetopia, found that 82 percent believe that a certification program would be valuable to a broad spectrum of professionals, including business owners, retail cheese department managers and counter staff, cheese buyers, wholesalers/distributors, educators, fromagers in restaurants, and others. Two out of three respondents would apply for certification if convinced the program was of high quality. Some 75 percent of employers felt certification could benefit their employees, and two-thirds would consider a person's certification status when hiring, promoting, or deciding on the salary of an employee.

Survey respondents believed that certification could benefit their business in the following key ways: 1) achieving higher sales because of better informed customers, 2) enhancing the reputation of the business, 3) having more satisfied customers, 4) decreasing product loss and spoilage through better care of cheeses, and 5) being better able to

train their employees.

The median expected cost for certification was approximately \$600, with half of the respondents expecting to pay that amount or less, and half being willing to pay more. Over half of employers would be willing to contribute to training costs incurred to help their employees prepare for the certification examination. Two-thirds would pay all or part of their employees' certification fees. Four of five respondents thought that some job experience (in the range of 1-3 years) in the cheese industry should be required before seeking certification.

There was overwhelming support (95%) for ACS, as the organization that represents expertise in cheese in North America, to be involved in the sponsorship and/or direction of the proposed certification program. People believed that the ACS "stamp of approval" was necessary for the program to have credibility.

While creating a training program is beyond the current scope of the ACS, many member organizations already offer such programs. The ACS website should have a database of these by the end of 2008. The School Network Group has begun a process of identifying all the training programs, at any level, directed towards educating those who work with cheese, once the cheese has left the creamery.

Members who know of such programs should notify the committee.

Finally, the Job Survey needs support. The aim is to gather clear snapshots from all across the industry: what do you and your employees do in a day on your job? Send your response to dan@danstrongin.com, or you can post it up on the ACS forum.

Despite the strong support shown by ACS members, a concerted marketing effort will be needed throughout the development and implementation phases to encourage participation in the certification program.

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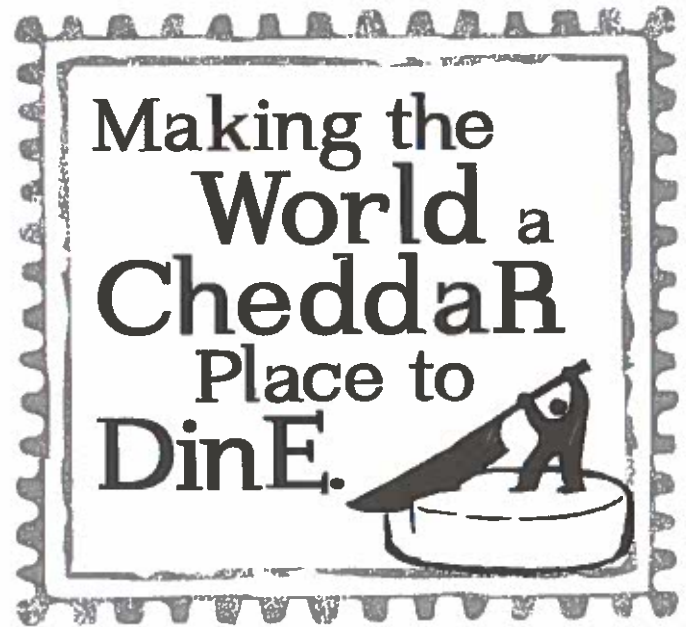
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Lifetime Achievement Award

Winner: Steve Jenkins, Cheesemonger

By Liz Campbell

At the 25th anniversary conference, the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Steve Jenkins, a straight-shooting, self-styled cheesemonger. "Everyone laughed at me when I used the term in the beginning," laughs Steve. "But I was proud of it; it's my job."

He's been called New York's City's "highest-profile grocer" (*New York Magazine*), the "enfant terrible of the fancy food business" (*The New York Times*), and "the eminence grise of American Cheese Mongers" (*The New York Times*). His reputation for telling it like it is probably comes from his Missouri roots.

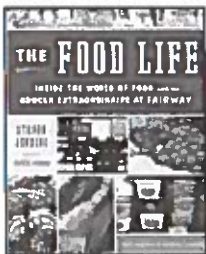
Back in 1975, at a time when Americans still knew nothing about cheese — not even European cheese — Steve came to the Big Apple and took his first job in an East Side cheese shop. Two years later, he was creating a brand new cheese counter at Dean and DeLuca, and traveling to France on his own dollars to learn more about French cheese. He also learned "to copy their merchandising strategies," he admits. "The French knew how to look after cheese and promote it."

By 1980, he took his passion to Fairway Markets and moved on to Italian cheeses. New Yorkers were delighted. Indeed, the city was becoming a Mecca for cheeselovers, fueled by one man. En route, he picked up further honors. He has been a member of France's elite and ancient *Guilde de St. Uguzon* since 1976. Then, in 1980, he was the first American to be inducted as a *Chevalier du Taste-Fromage*.

It was inevitable that this cheese afficionado would discover what his own country had to offer. When Steve fell in love with American artisan cheeses, he became a much-needed voice for the industry, and began to demand that American cheesemakers get the attention they deserve.

In articles, lectures, anywhere he could find a platform, Steve promoted American cheesemakers; he was the first to refer to them as artisans. His first book, *The Cheese Primer* (Workman, 1996), became a classic and won him the James Beard Award. His acceptance speech stood the assembly on its head when he announced, "It took you people a long time to pay respect to American cheesemakers. You can't relegate something as timeless as cheese to the status of a trend or a fad."

Steve's latest book is *The Food Life*, a meditation on all the wonderful food Steve has spent years sourcing and selling at Fairway Markets, making it one of the most diverse and exciting food stores in the world. He shares his hard-won knowledge about olive oil, sausage, bagels, and much more, with recipes. This is a book for the foodie and the greedy.



Winner of this year's Lifetime Achievement Award, Steve Jenkins, is recognized for his contributions to the industry.

Fairway Markets has grown to four outlets with three more to come, so these days Steve spends his time searching out new foods and trying to impassion the young people behind the cheese counters. As he speaks, his enthusiasm is evident. "I like stuff that tastes good," he says. "So I'll just keep looking for it and making sure I get it out there."

ROGUE

ROGUE BELONGS WITH CHEESE

New Member

Al Bekkum has been making cheese for more than 15 years for cheesemaking concerns like Westby Co-Op Creamery and Mt. Sterling. But just over a year ago, he started working with Bob Wills at Cedar Grove Creamery, making his own cheese under his own banner – Nordic Creamery. “I’ve made a lot of cheese for other people,” he says. “We decided to start something we could pass down to our children.”

The Bekkum family – Al, Sarah and their six children – lives on the same family farm on which Sarah grew up. The Langaard family has farmed it since their arrival from Norway in 1888. Located in the lush Coulee region of Wisconsin, the Bekkums raise beef cattle, and the children, starting with the eldest, Scott, (13), all help out. “The farm and cheesemaking are a family business and will stay a family business,” says Al firmly. “I’m hoping at least one of my kids will take it and continue making cheese.”

Using goat milk from Quality Goat Dairy Co-Op and cow’s milk from Cedar Grove Cheese Co., he currently makes four cheeses. All are American Originals, small-batch artisan cheeses, formed in wheels and cellar-aged.

Two are pure goat milk: aged cheddar made with pasteurized goat milk (which took silver at ACS this year) and a jack called Mountain Jack (which won gold at the World Championship Cheese Contest earlier this year).

Two are made with goat and cow milk: Caprico, a semi-hard, cheddar-style cheese with smooth rind and nutty flavor, won gold at ACS this year while his signature Feddost, a 10-lb. wheel of Norwegian style cheese aged with cumin and cloves, took silver.

At present all the cheeses are made and aged at Cedar Grove; Bob and Al share the competition entries.



The Bekkum family poses on a tractor on their farm in the lush Coulee region of Ohio. Al and Sarah and their five children

But the business plan has already been prepared. The Bekkum family is going to build their own plant to make specialty butters as well as cheese.

Al is a licensed butter maker and has plans to produce several different types of butter using different milks. “I get calls all the time from chefs looking for special butter,” he says. “Those who make it, make small amounts.” Just as cheesemakers open their plants to those wanting to make cheese, Al hopes to offer his facilities for those who might want to make butter. “The idea is that they can bring their milk and I can use my experience to help them make butter.” He sees a market for butter and plans to make cultured, flavored and specialty butters himself.

The success of his cheeses has resulted in rapid growth though the income is going right back into the new plant. “I could have earned more money by making cheese for someone else,” he says forthrightly. “But we’re building something here – this is for my family.”

Organic Milk from Pasture-Fed Cows Contains Higher Levels of Beneficial Nutrients

Cows that graze on fresh pasture produce milk with higher levels of antioxidants and beneficial fatty acids, such as conjugated linoleic acid and omega-3’s, as shown by a recently published study from Newcastle University in the UK.

“Grazing dairy cows on grass or grass and clover swards produces milk with a healthier fatty acid profile and higher levels of fat soluble vitamins and antioxidants,” notes Gillian Butler, livestock project manager for the Nafferton Ecological Farming Group at Newcastle University.

Previous studies have shown that organic milk has higher levels of

favorable nutrients. This one points to the diet of organic cows—fresh grass and clover—as the major reason for these nutritional benefits. “This study joins a growing body of science indicating strong links between what we feed our farm animals and the nutritional quality of what they feed us. Not only are you what you eat, but you are what what you eat eats too,” says Michael Pollan, author of best-sellers *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*.

The study is part of the ongoing Cross-European Quality Low Input Food project, which looks into animal health and welfare, milk quality, and

working toward minimizing the use of antibiotics in dairy production.

Butler also noted that cows don’t have to be certified organic, but that organic certification can give the assurance that grazing makes a major contribution to their diet. “If more herds made more use of grazing, butter and cream would have a healthier fatty acid profile,” she says.

The conclusions reached in Newcastle University’s organic dairy study parallel the findings of a broad analysis of recent studies examining the comparative nutritional properties of organic and conventional fruits and vegetables.



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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.