



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Member News P. 5

New Member P. 6

Cooking with Cheese P. 8

Scholarship Winner P. 7

Behind the Scenes at the 2008 ADGA Cheese Competition

By Gianacis Caldwell

If you have ever entered a cheese competition then you know the anxiety that comes with waiting – waiting for the results and then waiting even longer for the score sheets! There is a surprising amount of apprehension that we cheesemakers experience, no matter the size of the competition. Whatever the competition, when we put our product and craftsmanship in front of the judges, we also put a lot of energy into the entire process.

I had the privilege this year to go behind the scenes at the 2008 American Dairy Goat Association (ADGA) Cheese competition and watch two very capable, professional, and entertaining judges at work. Dr. Moshe Rosenberg, technical judge, and Gordon Edgar, aesthetic judge, kindly allowed me to not only take notes on their candid comments and suggestions, but also insisted that both Terri Coleman (ADGA products committee member and fantastic-person-in-charge-of-all-the-competition-cheeses) taste a fair number of entries as well. While our responses had zero to do with the judging competition, it was a serious education for my palate. For cheesemakers such as Terri and me, it was an eye-opening two days.

ADGA's competition is judged in much the same way as the American Cheese Society (ACS) competition. Two judges, a technical and an aesthetic, are paired for each cheese. The technical judge (who needs to be qualified to

root out the technical flaws in a cheese) starts with 50 points and **takes away** points when a flaw is detected. The aesthetic judge (a cheese writer, aficionado, or monger) starts with a score of zero and then **adds** points up to 50. Both scores are added, so the maximum score (for the perfect, not-yet-made-cheese) is 100.

At ACS, a cheese must score 90 or above to receive a first, 80-89 for a second, and so on (think public school with A's, B's, etc). At the much smaller ADGA competition, first to third awards are given regardless. (This humbled me, as, years ago, one of our cheeses won first place, but it was the only cheese in its category!)

Let's talk more about the technical judge. This is often a food science PhD with a nose and palate that can, with uncanny certainty, detect the faintest hint of sanitizer, sulfocating cellar odor, or too acidic notes. Not only can this well-educated set of senses detect flaws, but they can accurately deduce the cheesemaker's mistakes during the make process. Kind of gives an artsy type the chills!

Now, if I were to be a judge, I would want to be the aesthetic variety. They are more of a bridge between what people will buy and what is good cheese. They don't care if a rind has a crease in it; indeed, in today's market the more handmade a product looks the better (as long as it has the flavor to back it up!).

Let's look at the cheesemaker's viewpoint. You send
continued on page 4 →

Out of the Mouths of

Here are some paraphrased tidbits gleaned from the judges at the ADGA 2008 Goat Cheese Competition:

"Be sure to thoroughly drain a fresh or soft cheese, if we open the package and whey runs out or has separated in the container, then it is an immediate fault."

"Even a soft cheese is scored on the condition of its exterior. If it is packaged in a manner that causes its surface to be damaged during the opening of the packaging, then it will be faulted."

"If you enter a cheese with a specific name, such as cheddar, crottin, brie, or limburger then it MUST exactly fit the profile of that traditional cheese or it will be faulted! So if your cheese is a bit different (even in size) CALL IT SOMETHING ELSE!"

"Flavor added cheeses must have the right balance of flavor to cheese. We need to still taste the cheese! Flavors should be like lovely background scenery that make the star (the cheese) look good!"

"No matter how "pretty" an added element – such as ash, peppercorns, etc. – looks, if it detracts from the experience of eating the cheese, then it will be faulted."

"A cheese is judged on its own merits – not on the merits or lack of in the other cheeses in the same category."

"It doesn't matter how big your company is, if you know cheese, then that is all that matters."

The American Cheese Society

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Member Services, Scholarship

Greetings From the President.....

Preparations for the Austin, Texas, ACS Conference (August 5-8, 2009) are in full swing. Our conference co-chairs, Cathy Strange and Jodie Wische, and their committee have recruited a new and exciting slate of speakers and with them have put together a compelling program addressing the complex questions we face today as farmstead, artisan and specialty cheese makers, retailers and distributors. And they have done this while holding costs to a minimum.

Your board has also been hard at work. The Marketing Committee has been diligently constructing a web-based community to provide access to the entire ACS Membership Network to build relationships and dialogue to advance business.

The PR Committee has created alliances with new industry publications like *Culture* and *Cheese Connoisseur* and has taken a proactive leadership role in investigating and developing a Crisis Management Template for members.

The Member Services Committee will report on our exciting new newsletter, *Cheesewire*, and is even now putting the final touches on the ACS Membership Directory.

The Alliance Committee is finalizing the ACS Pavilion at the Winter Fancy Food Show and reviewing industry affiliate memberships as a further benefit.

The Strategic Planning Committee is developing strategies to benefit membership (like the Standardized Accounting Ledger for Cheesemakers).

The Competition and Judging Committee is planning the 2009 Competition.

While the 2009 Conference Planning Committee is busy developing programming for the Austin conference, the 2010 Committee has already begun planning for Seattle. Kurt Dammeier, 2010 Conference Chair, has conducted site visits with our management group, FSA, and will soon be reaching out to Seattle members for help in building a compelling program.

Lastly, negotiations with our management group, FSA, were finalized in October. The resulting contract balances conference

planning and logistics, member initiatives, member services and benefits, judging and competition and marketing and public relations. It was negotiated with the assistance of our professional partners Steve Baer, partner, Baer and Associates, and Jennifer Bridges, partner, Davis Hearn. Christine Hyatt, ACS VP, and I conducted a site visit to FSA's headquarters in Louisville, Ky. We believe this new contract is sustainable and flexible and will carry ACS confidently into the future. We want to emphasize how impressed we were by the talent, systems and infrastructure FSA brings to support ACS members, initiatives and our conference.

A great deal of work has been done but there is so much more to do. ACS needs your creativity, your energy and your time. I personally invite each of you to contact your ACS board members and explore volunteer opportunities that are available in the committee structure. This is your organization.

Wishing you a happy and prosperous new year.

David Gremmels



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

Greetings and Happy New Year from ACS Headquarters! I hope that you are able to enjoy some downtime after the frenzy of holiday orders and year-end chaos.

The economy is on everyone's minds during these unsettling times, and we know that there is a great deal to accomplish in the new year. The ACS board of directors has made a concerted effort to increase tangible, year-round member benefits featuring cost savings and education to our members, including a quarterly webinar program, a social/industry networking site and a health insurance program in the works.

The webinar program would feature some of the top sessions from our 2008 Annual Conference for those members who were unable to travel to Chicago, for those who attended another session at the same time or who would simply like a refresher. More information on the program will be sent out via our new monthly newsletter, *The Cheesewire*.

The ACS marketing committee has identified a task force to create and promote a social networking site, which would allow unlimited communication and knowledge sharing. The great thing about this venture is that it will be powered by member activity – posting pictures, questions, answers, ideas and announcements. We are only limited by our own imaginations.

The board has formed a task force to investigate a member health insurance program. We know that so many of our members are small businesses who struggle with soaring health insurance prices every year. We want to provide members with tangible benefits that they cannot get anywhere else and impact the daily performance and operations of their businesses. Stay tuned for updates during the first quarter of 2009.

As is typical at this time of year, things are really picking up at headquarters. In addition to the programs mentioned above, we continue to forge industry alliances and look forward to the second annual ACS pavilion at the Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco. For a complete list of exhibiting member companies, visit the home page of our website. Conference planning for the 26th Annual Conference in Austin, Texas, August 5-8, is full speed ahead. Conference chairs Cathy Strange and Jodie Wische are planning a conference with more in-depth educational opportunities to choose from, as well as plenty of fun networking activities.

It's an important time to be a part of your professional trade organization, and we will keep you updated as ACS continues to evolve as an ever more valuable resource for its members.

Best regards for a good and healthy 2009!

Marci



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continued from page 1.

your most popular, best selling, prized cheese. What if it not only doesn't place, but your score sheets come back with an embarrassing total score of 72. Should you care?

People enter competitions for two main reasons: first to win, and second to learn. This is the learning: Take the score sheets (after you get over being bummed) and try to gain information that will help you make a better product, because the bottom line is that more and more people are making and selling cheese and your popular, best selling cheese might not be so popular if a better product comes along. If a qualified judge finds a flaw, it is worth at least considering as valuable feedback.

I concluded that if you have a product that you believe in, that your customers love, but you know will cause the judges problems due to the standards that they must

adhere to, then just sell it, eat it, and love it. If, on the other hand, you know your product could be better, follow through with the comments and seek to improve your process. If you don't know how to make those improvements, arrange a one-on-one tasting with an expert, technical or aesthetic. Remember, you can never learn too much.

Gianacis Caldwell along with her husband Vern and their daughter Amelia own and operate Pholia Farm Creamery LLC in Rogue River, Ore. Pholia Farm, which is completely off the power grid, is known for its aged, raw Nigerian Dwarf milk cheeses. While the Caldwell's support competitions, they no longer enter their own cheese. To learn more about Pholia Farm go to www.pholiafarm.com.

The Cheese Pavilion

Promoting American artisan cheese

For the second year, NASFT will be hosting the Annual ACS Pavilion at the 2009 Winter Fancy Food Show Jan. 18-20. Last year, for the first time, ACS took an area at the show in order to create a dynamic presence for artisan cheese.

Jeff Jirik of Faribault Dairy was at last year's show. "Our ACS aisle seemed to always have good traffic. Part of the 'draw' was having so many great cheeses in one area," he said of his experience. "We were next to Wendy Brewer of Grafton Village Cheese. One of my favorite moments was pairing her two-year-old Grafton cheddar with our St. Pete's – it resulted in a new cheese – Duet!"

John Eggena of Tournevent Dairy commented, "It was great to be all together in our own ACS Pavilion, as it amplified the energy and brought customers over. The synergy of so many cheesemakers together, even if competitors, was palpable and surprised many."

This year, some 13 spaces within the pavilion will showcase individual cheesemakers. All the spaces have now been filled and the cheesemakers taking part in this year's pavilion include Roth Kase, Vermont Butter & Cheese, The Mozzarella Co., Sartori, Cypress Grove, Meyenberg, Faribault Dairy, Tumalo, Grafton Village, Tillamook, Redwood Hill, Rogue Creamery and Mt. Vikos. "This will be a wonderful presence for ACS at the Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco," says ACS president David Gremmels of Rogue Creamery.

ACS members interested in being apart of the Pavilion in 2010 should contact Phyllis Mintz of the NASFT Fancy Food show at pmintz@NASFT.org. Reservations will be taken after Jan. 18.



John Eggena and Christine Hyatt at the 2008 Fancy Food Show.

DPI Specialty Foods is seeking to fill positions for Cheese Specialists in the following locations: Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, and Baltimore. Ideal candidates must have 3-5 years experience selling specialty/artisan cheese in either a retail or wholesale environment and possess excellent communication and computer skills. Please forward resumes to or-jobs@dpispecialtyfoods.com

The Comté Cheese Association has developed a new website specifically for U.S. trade partners. At www.comte-usa.com, download POS materials, images and videos, and request supplies. You'll also find useful links, events, an illustrated 16-page brochure that explores Comté from the pasture to table, its make, uses and more.

**The Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute
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makers on their award-winning cheeses.**



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Member News

Artisanal Premium Cheese (N.Y.) is entering a master distribution and marketing agreement with Harvest Song Ventures, LLC, a specialty food company that sources organic and natural food products and provides them to consumers across several market segments.

Bleu Mont Dairy's new 1600 sq ft, underground "cave" is in production, gracefully aging wheels of raw milk and pasteurized gold, ranging from 1-to-40 lbs. Thanks to the gang at Uplands, Henning's, and Cedar Grove they are turning out mold ripened and washed rind cheeses. Willi even managed to fit in his first attempt at a blue!



The Association of Cooperative Educators (ACE) honored **Cabot Creamery Cooperative** (Vt.) at its 2008 ACE Institute conference in Ontario. Cabot was recognized with the "Outstanding Contribution to Cooperative Education and Training Award." In presenting the award, ACE highlighted Cabot's long-standing tradition of leadership among cooperatives and an ongoing commitment to developing publications and training materials in support of cooperative education.

California's Third Annual Artisan Cheese Festival takes place the weekend of **March 20-23, 2009**, in Petaluma, Calif. This year, the non-profit festival will collaborate with the **California Artisan Cheese Guild** to build recognition for the Guild's member cheesemakers and benefit ongoing Guild programs. Visit: www.artisancheesefestival.com or www.cacheeseguild.org

Nancy Dacey, former cheese buyer for Dairyland, (N.Y.), is a food columnist for Westfair Communications, White Plains, N.Y. "Dishing it Out" is a bi-monthly column focused on new ingredients and noteworthy cheese stories. Dacey is also an independent marketing representative

for BelGioioso, (Wis.) and Tournevent-Damafro, (Quebec).

Estrella Family Creamery (Wash.), took gold twice (for Gridale Goat and the Weebles) and silver three times (Caldwell Crik Chevette, Bea Truffled, and Old Apple Tree Tomme) at the World Cheese Awards held in Dublin, Ireland this year.

Finger Lakes Dexter Creamery is making the very first and only probiotic, authentic raw milk, aged, artisanal, farmstead kefir cheese. Handcrafted with living kefir grains, and creamy milk from Irish Dexter cows, this is the only cheese of its kind in the western hemisphere.

Russ and Peg Hall presented "Beyond the Adirondack Crescent: The Rebirth of American Cheese" in October 2008 at Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Fla. Based on their investigation into changes in cheese production over the past 150 years, it places the story of American cheese within broad societal trends that now favor locally-grown and artisan-produced foods.

Geri Hamby worked part time until her passing in November. She was mother, grandmother, doctor and vet, teacher, master gardener, and the matriarch of the Hamby family. In 1954 Geraldine and Bob began their farming life together in Plattsburg on the Tri Honor Farm, a Holstein dairy. Cousins, foster children and exchange students were all included in the family farm experience. Geri and her husband Bob started Hamby Dairy Supply as a local service company in 1991. The company was sold to son Paul in 2001 and expanded to mail order.



Montchevre won Best in Class at the 2008 World Championship Cheese Contest for Plain Fresh Goat Cheese.

Provvista Specialty Foods Inc. will distribute farmstead cheese from Ancient

continued on page 10 ➔

New Members

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South Woodstock, VT

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Finger Lakes Dexter Creamery
King Ferry, NY

Luke Buholzer
Klondike Cheese Company
Monroe, WI

Phillipe Chevrollier
New Holland, PA

Gary Corbett
Fair Oaks Dairy Products, LLC
Fair Oaks, IN

Lynne Devereux
Butter Communications
Pleasant Hill, CA

Deanna Finegan
Norseland, Inc
Warren, NJ

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FoodWorks International LLC
Blue Bell, PA

Jane Lorberau
Alice, TX

David Major
Vermont Shepherd, LLC
Putney, VT

Susan Marquis
Cheese Enthusiast
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Patrick McCarthy
DeLaurenti Specialty Food
& Wine, Seattle, WA

Vaughn Oborn
Shepherd Dairy Products
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Cathy Power Pattisall
Cheese Shop of Virginia
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Kindred Spirits of Boston
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Murray's Cheese ,
New York, NY

Mark Whitney
Pineland Farms Creamery
New Gloucester, ME

New Member

By Peg Hall

Her colleagues at the St. Louis Zoo laughed when they learned, in a "one thing no one ever heard about you before" management training exercise, that she'd always dreamed about being a farmer. And, they knew she'd be good at it if she ever decided to farm.

They were right. Today, ACS member Barb Jenness is the successful owner of Dog Wood Farm in Byron Center, Mich. Her herd of Alpine goats provides milk from which she produces fresh chevre, ash ripened St. Maurve and crottin type cheeses, as well as goat milk soaps. Her Dancing Goat Chevre won 2nd Place in the Farmstead Cheese category at the 2008 American Cheese Society Annual Cheese Competition. It was her first time entering the competition.

The move from zoo to farmstead was typical of her, professional, personal, and deliberate. It built on her science background and experience as a veterinary technician at the zoo and subsequently at a clinic in Michigan. It built on the value she places on animals and her belief in the humane treatment of them. It built on her love of education.

When she and her husband Jim, whose primary career is in the auto industry, bought a farm they began acquiring goats because they liked them. She made goat milk soap. She helped establish the first local Farmers Market. She experimented with making cheese in the kitchen for home use, trying out different recipes and techniques out of curiosity about how cheese works.

To expand her skills, she went to Glengarry Cheesemaking in Ontario and took a class from Margaret Morris. She went to Pure Luck Goat Farm in Texas to see what they were doing. She took courses at North



Barb Jenness left her job as a veterinary technician at the St. Louis Zoo to look after her own special collection of animals.

Carolina State University. She joined ACS. She topped all that off with courses at the Vermont Institute of Artisan Cheese.

"Well, I am not exactly going to retire," Barb told the server at the party her colleagues threw when she left the clinic to move into her farmstead operation full-time. That was an understatement, as most fellow cheesemaker members of ACS would concur. And it turned out to be a helpful comment because the server shared Barb's story with the chef, who became an early and regular client.

Her operation is part of a growing appreciation for artisan and farmstead cheeses in rural Michigan and across the country. She is the employer-of-choice for the neighbor teens. They find it totally cool to be working with the goats and cheese. Her product sells briskly to local markets and chefs. She could sell more if she made more, and that makes future expansion an intriguing possibility. This is the "farmer" life that she had in mind when she shared the dream with her friends at the zoo.

2009 Sonoma Cheese Conference

By Judy Creighton

The 7th Annual Sonoma Valley Cheese Conference hosted by Ig Vella and Sheana Davis is being held Feb. 21-24, 2009, in the town of Sonoma, epicenter of California artisan cheeses. Each year the cheese community from around the country assembles to study the intricacies of the cheese business. It's an opportunity to hear notable speakers on current topics.

The weekend events are open to the public. On Saturday, visit the Winter Artisan Cheese Fair or take an Artisan Cheese Class. On Sunday, the Winter Artisan Cheese Tasting will feature cheese book authors Rob Kaufelt, Janet Fletcher and Jeannette Hurt. There is tour of Leveroni Dairy as well.

On Feb. 23-24, the trade-only conference theme is "Maintaining Value, Added Margins for All Cheesemakers and Retailers." Keynote speakers include Rob Kaufelt of Murray's Cheese Shop and Sid Cook of Carr Valley Cheese Company. No conference is complete without a grounding talk by Ig Vella – California's Godfather of Artisan Cheese. His topic is "The More Things Change, the More They Remain the Same."

Other guest speakers include: Dr Leslie Bees of UC-Davis, Petra Cooper of Fifth Town Artisan Cheese, Dee Harley of Harley Farms, Franklin Peluso of Franklin's Cheese, Ray Bair of Cheese Plus, Sam Mogannam of BiRite Market & Creamery, Kathleen Shannon

Finn of Columbus Distributing and Jesse Schwartzburg, Starr Market.

Gordon Edgar of the Rainbow Grocery Cooperative has gathered industry experts to cover a host of topics including: Marketing, Customer Relationships, Building a Cheese Facility, Purchasing Power of Small Shops Working Together, Distributor-Producer Relationships, Renaissance of American Cheddar, updates on USDA and FDA regulations, and Fitting Product Lines to Regions. Monday night features a Raw Milk Cheese & Craft Brew Tasting, Focused Cheddar tasting, local Sonoma wines and the cheese of local cheesemakers.

For more information, visit www.sheanadavis.com.

Story of a Scholarship Winner

In July 2008, Jackie Rebideau attended her first ever American Cheese Society Competition and Conference as the first ever winner of the John Crompton Memorial Scholarship. Created to honor the passion, dedication and commitment to the industry of John Crompton, who passed away in August 2006, the award is presented to a retailer showing these same qualities.

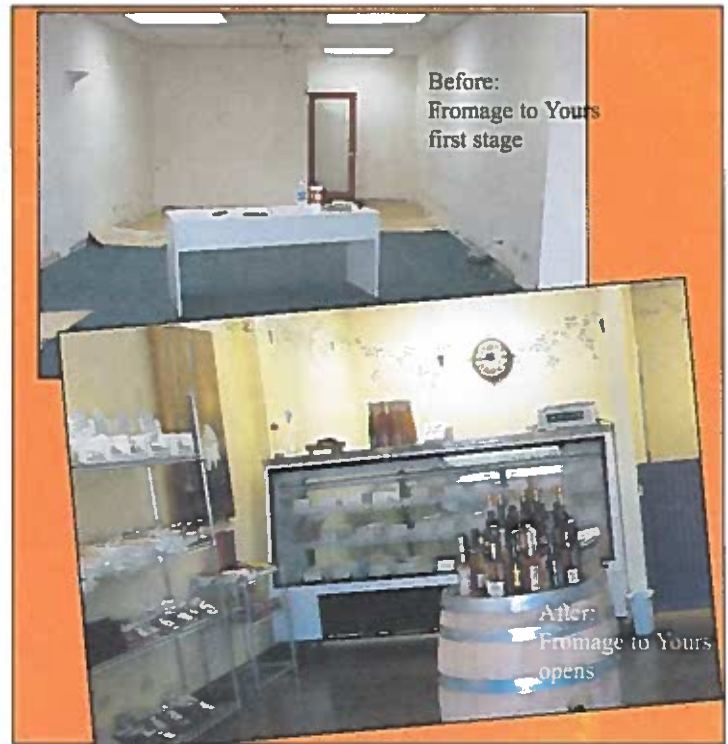
My name is Jackie Rebideau and I was a 2008 John Crompton Memorial Scholarship recipient. I am forever grateful to the ACS for giving me the opportunity to attend the Chicago conference. The experience was truly invaluable. That being said, let me back up several months to explain why a person working in the actuarial department of Kaiser Permanente was even considered for the scholarship.

The story goes that at some point in late 2007, I decided I wanted a career change. I had spent the last 13 years working in the health insurance industry and enjoyed good pay, great benefits, and job security. But who wants stability in their lives? Instead, I decided to open a gourmet cheese shop – during a struggling economy, no less.

Did I have prior cheese experience, you ask? I grew up in Vermont and own a fondue pot. Do they count?

Your answer is probably no. Therefore, I knew I had six months of hard work ahead of me: researching cheeses; finding the “perfect” location; ordering equipment and inventory; and, as I would later learn, organizing inspection after inspection after inspection.

During this time, I read about the John Crompton Scholarship on the ACS website. It seemed a chance in a million but I figured I had nothing to lose by applying. After all, if anybody needed financial assistance at this point it was me. I was, however, understandably skeptical about my chances since I was so completely new to the industry.



I won? I WON! I now knew I'd have the opportunity to meet some of America's finest artisan cheesemakers and sample their products. (By this point in my research I had decided that my shop would carry only American artisan cheeses – no imports. My customers have really appreciated this as well.)

August 1, 2008 was my last day at Kaiser Permanente. And the doors to Fromage to Yours officially opened on August 29. There has been an overwhelming reception to my little shop in South Denver. I have been on the radio several times and I was recently highlighted in the local newspapers. The area is so excited about my shop, I sometimes want to say “Relax. It's just cheese.” But as all of you know, it is never “just cheese.”

Jackie lives near downtown Denver with her dog and two cats. Visit her website at www.echeese.com.

Cheesy Publications

Veteran cheesemongers Kate Arding and Thalassa Skinner are the founders behind **Culture: The Word on Cheese**, the first consumer cheese magazine to be launched in North America. It premiered Dec. 1 amidst considerable excitement.

With gorgeous photography and design, articles by experts and journalists, insiders and taste leaders, **Culture** is dedicated to bringing the story of the farms, the producers and those involved with the



world of cheese to the attention of consumers.

The magazine is available either via subscription at www.culturecheesemag.com or at branches of Borders and Barnes & Noble, as well as independent retailers like Whole Foods Market and Krogers.

The first issue of **Cheese Enthusiast (CE)** is out. The newsletter's foundation is its support to the home cheesemaking community. **CE** then broadens its focus to those who love cheese and are fascinated by its history and how it is made. Visit www.cheeseenthusiast.net or



Cheese Enthusiast, P.O. Box 41827, Arlington, VA 22204

Phoenix Media Network, publishers of the acclaimed **Deli Business**, has launched **Cheese Connoisseur** as

the authority on all things cheese.

The lifestyle publication provides sophisticated, well-educated foodies and industry professionals with information about specialty cheeses, celebrity cheesemakers and chefs, wines, travel opportunities and complementary foods and beverages.

Cooking with Cheese

We have a wealth of wonderful cheesemakers and cheese writers from which to draw so we decided to showcase their creativity. Each issue will feature a recipe using American artisan cheese. We start with a recipe from one of America's favorite cheese cookbook authors.

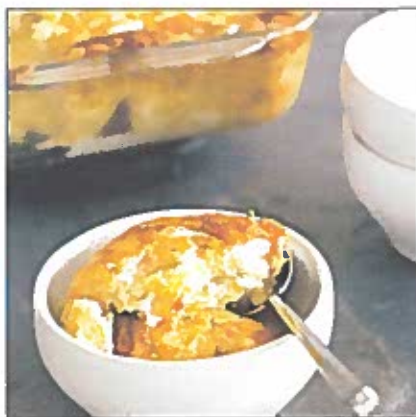
All American Cheese Strata

By Laura Werlin

A cheese strata is a casserole consisting of layers of cheese and bread with a little milk to moisten it and egg to lift it. When I was growing up, my mother referred to it as mock cheese soufflé. Strata plays an equally good role at the brunch, lunch, or dinner table because of its focus on cheese yet its relative lightness, and you can assemble it up to one day ahead. The cheeses in this recipe are American originals, both created in Wisconsin, and make a great combination in this classic recipe.

Ingredients

1 teaspoon butter, at room temperature
2 1/2 cups or whole or lowfat (2%) milk
6 large eggs, lightly beaten
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper



5 1/2-inch thick slices French bread, crusts removed
4 ounces Brick cheese, coarsely grated (or use Butterkäse or Havarti)
4 ounces Colby cheese, coarsely grated (or use Crowley or mild cheddar)

Directions

Preheat the oven to 375F. Butter an 8x8 pan. Set aside.

In a large bowl, mix together the milk, eggs, salt and pepper. In a medium bowl, toss the cheeses together.

Place two pieces of bread on the bottom of the prepared pan. The bread should cover most of the bottom. If it does not, add another piece of bread or part of one to fill in the gap. Sprinkle with one third of the cheese. Place the second layer of bread over the cheese and again, fill in any large gaps with extra bread. Carefully pour the milk and egg mixture over the entire casserole. It will seem like a lot, but the bread will soak it up as it cooks. Top with the remain-

ing cheese. (At this point you can cover and refrigerate the strata for up to 24 hours before baking).

Bake for 45 to 50 minutes, or until the casserole is very puffy and the cheese is golden brown on top. Let sit for about 10 minutes before cutting and serving. (Note: Because this is a soufflé-like dish, it will deflate a few minutes after you take it out.

A Friend of New Orleans

By Sheana Davis

Celebrated as a Cajun and Creole chef, John Folse is also a cheesemaker. The proprietor of Bittersweet Plantation Dairy proudly creates artisan cheeses showcasing Louisiana's rich culinary heritage.

Bittersweet Plantation Dairy, located in Gonzales, La., produces a variety of artisan cheeses including Creole Cream Cheese (a farmer-style cheese indigenous to Louisiana), Fleur-de-Lis Triple Cream and more than 30 additional products including a variety of cheeses, gelatos, butters and yogurts.

"John Folse makes some wonderful cheeses. His dairy is probably the finest representation of artisan cheesemaking in Louisiana," says Stephen Stryjewski, co-owner and chef of Cochon. "I enjoy the triple-cream goat cheese like Evangeline. With its tart smooth interior, it's wonderful simply with bread and fruit.

The Fleur de Teche is great on its own or anywhere you would use triple creme brie. I like to put a piece on my grits with supper."

Brett Anderson, restaurant critic and food writer with *The Times-Picayune* adds, "Folse has been a great help to restaurateurs rebuilding in New Orleans, particularly Leah Chase. I think his cheese is some of the best made in this region, although it's his Bulgarian-style yogurt I can't imagine living without."

What you might not have known is that Folse is dedicated to the rebuilding of New Orleans. The native of St. James Parish is a true Louisiana character and personality, and in post-Katrina times, has proved a dedicated volunteer.

When Hurricane Katrina hit land and the levees broke in August 2005, Chef Folse and company stepped in to cook for their community. Many residents were displaced and without



food and basic amenities while facing the daunting prospect that conditions were getting worse, not better. John Folse and his crew not only prepared and served 6,000 meals a day, but he also sent out requests to vendors and food producers around the country for raw food to prepare for those in need.

"He genuinely cares about the community and has taken some amazing steps to help people without necessarily advertising what he's done," says Aaron Wolfson, co-owner of Savvy Gourmet in New Orleans.

ACS salutes John Folse for his efforts.

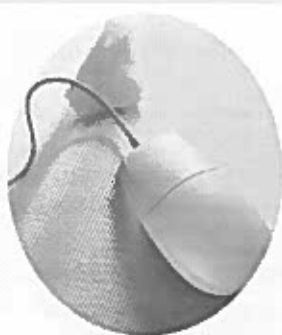
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Member News cont'd from page 5

Heritage Dairy (www.ancientheritagedairy.com). Kathy and Paul Obringer make vivid original cheese from sheep milk or blends of sheep and cow milk, including: Adelle, Hannah Bridge, and a new washed-rind cheese – Opal Creek – selling them locally. Tom Kooiman, Provvista co-owner and cheese specialist, was inspired by the care and quality evident in every facet of their process. Working with Provvista on distribution will provide much needed farm time.

Rising Sun Farms (Ore.) has won 13 impressive product awards in one year. Trophies came in from a variety of prestigious international competitions, including World Dairy Expo, American Cheese Society Competition, Los Angeles International Dairy Competition, World Cheese Awards, America's Best Event, and even *Inc Magazine*, as part of the "Top 5000 Fastest Growing Companies."

Sartori Reserve® Raspberry BellaVitano® took the U.S. Dairy Export Council Trophy for Best American Cheese at the World Cheese Awards, as well as the Horgans Delicatessen Supplies Trophy for Best New Cheese. This cheese also took a first place at the American Cheese Society earlier this year. This marks the second time that Sartori has taken the best American Cheese Award. **Sartori Reserve SarVecchio® Parmesan** took the honors in 2006.

The Seattle Cheese Festival '09 have been set for



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May 16 & 17, 2009. Check the website: seattlecheese-festival.com

Sierra Nevada Cheese Company's new logo portrays their artisanal nature and sustainable agriculture connections. This redesigned look is being introduced on their new single-origin local goats' milk line: Caprae Cheeses. Their organic milk and cream are now American Humane Association approved.

Will Studd's Cheese Slices – the first television series to explore the rich traditions and skills behind many of the world's best loved artisan and farmstead cheeses – is now available in DVD in the U.S. at Whole Foods Market (in recyclable and biodegradable PaperFoam® packaging) and selected specialty food and cheese retailers nationwide. Filmed on location across three continents, this highly informative and inspiring television series is hosted by Master of Cheese Will Studd. \$19.99 to \$24.99. (www.cheeseslices.com).

The **15th Biennial United States Championship Cheese Contest**, sponsored by the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, will be held March 17-19, 2009, in the new Atrium of Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wis. For entry information, visit www.wischeesemakers.org, or email Contest@wischeesemakersassn.org

The Vermont Butcher Block & Board Company's 15" Maple spoon was reviewed by *Cooks Illustrated* in July and received a favorable rating. Made from solid maple, walnut, and cherry, the handles are guaranteed from breaking.



Online Social Network

Many positive comments are received each year about the wonderful sense of community at the ACS annual conference. To increase opportunities for connection between members and to provide a robust forum for sharing information and questions, ACS will launch a new online Social Network in early 2009.

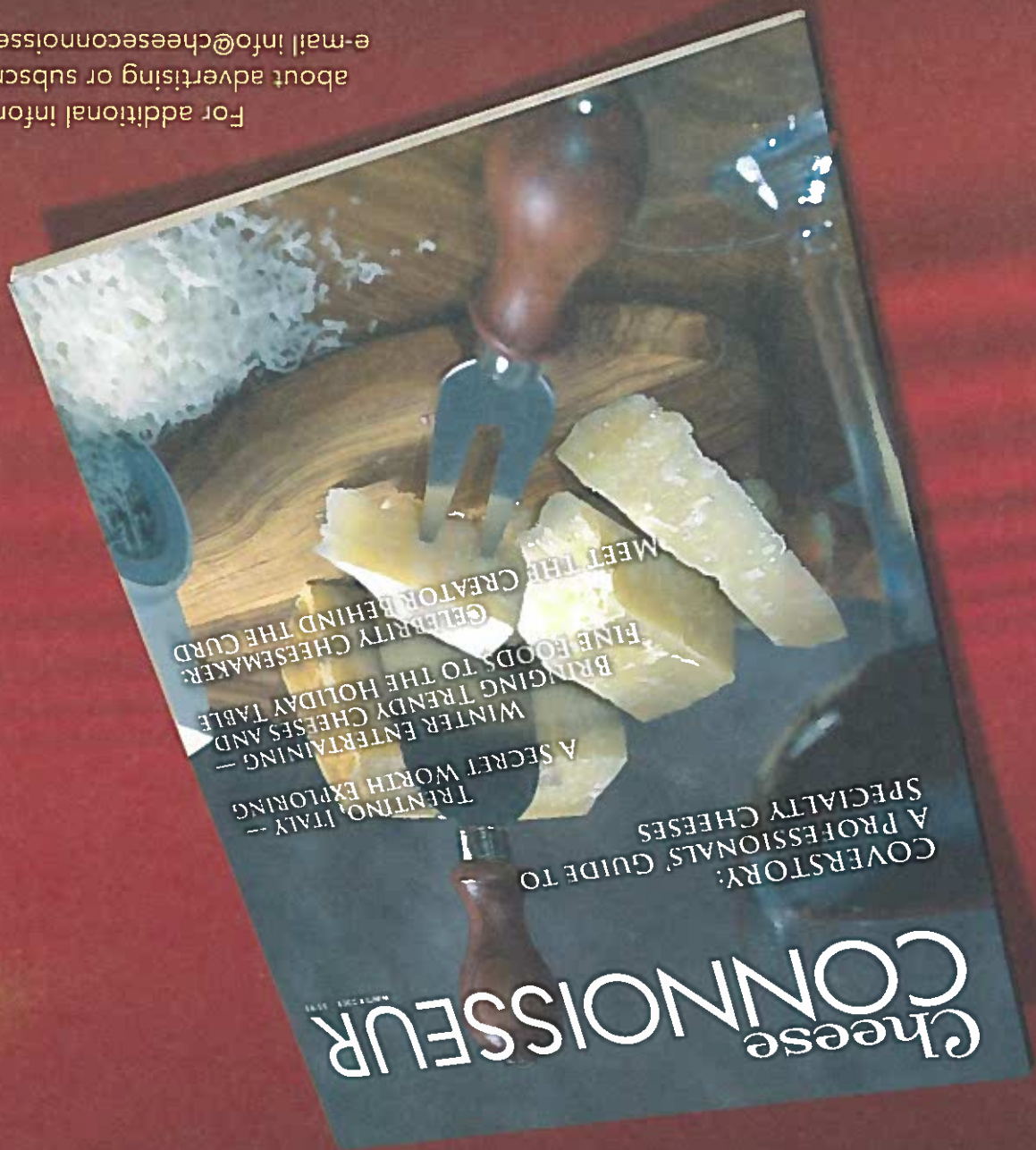
The site will provide enhanced communication tools designed for networking, individual member pages and forums and groups to ask and answer pressing questions on a variety of topics. It will also include articles by industry experts, a job board, photo sharing and event postings.

We are seeking members interested in moderating various forums, providing articles for featured content, and beta-testers to try out the "soft launch" scheduled for February 2009. The official launch will coincide with the mailing of the Conference Registration brochure in April. If you are interested in participating as a moderator, writer or tester, please e-mail Christine Hyatt at christine@cheese-chick.com.

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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:

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☐ Start an ACS cheese-buying club in your store

☐ Share Technical Expertise

☐ Write an Article for a Newspaper or Magazine

☐ Discount Offers for Members

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Quote of the year:

Steve Jenkins offers this advice to farmstead and artisan cheese makers in these tough economic times as we move into a new year:

Rejoice, O ye American artisanal cheesemaker! Your personal income will rise mightily as your buying public looks to you and your cheese for succour in these frightening times! Now's the time to raise your prices! Make 'em pay for the majesty of you!