

**News Release**

**For Immediate Release**

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**American Cheese Society Announces Virtual 38th Annual Conference**

*Cheese industry professionals to gather for exclusive educational and networking opportunities*

**DENVER** (February 23, 2021) --The [38th Annual American Cheese Society \(ACS\) Conference](#), originally to be hosted in Des Moines, Iowa, has been transitioned to a virtual educational and networking event to be held on July 28-30, 2021. Addressing critical concerns, the theme of this year's event is *"Moving Forward Together with Purpose."* The ACS will provide a wide range of online interactive opportunities to foster community, help members successfully navigate the changing industry, and celebrate accomplishments in artisan cheesemaking.

"Our top priority is the health and safety of our community," said Jeremy Stephenson, board president of [ACS](#). "A virtual conference will help protect our members while providing us with a unique opportunity to connect cheese industry professionals not just in North America, but from across the globe, to lend fresh perspective and insight to our conference programming."

In addition to year-long listening sessions and fireside chats, data from a [May 2020 ACS survey](#) of 980 artisan cheese community members has been used to shape the virtual conference programming. The survey, which gauged the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cheesemakers, cheesemongers, retailers, buyers, and other industry stakeholders revealed acute impacts: 71 percent of survey takers sought debt relief or financial assistance to stay afloat, and nearly a third laid off or furloughed employees. There were also indications that members were taking advantage of opportunities to pause and improve business models, as well as explore new methods to package and distribute their products directly to consumers.

To continue to offer practical strategies, engagement and value to ACS members, sponsors and constituents of the industry, 30 educational sessions will take place throughout the three-day conference including:

- The artisan cheese industry has faced an historic year filled with market change, financial challenge, and business evolution. To help members bounce back, conference attendees will

benefit from educational sessions on *Financial Management for Small Businesses* and reaching new channels through *Ecommerce and Shipping*.

- Educational sessions on *Climate Change and Sustainability*, and *Advancements in Science and Academia*, will help cheese professionals drive brands forward with renewed purpose in this comeback year, and into the future.
- Acknowledging that members and sponsors are the lifeblood of ACS, inspiring educational sessions including *Navigating COVID-19 as a Consumer-Facing Business*, and *Dairy Farming in a Milk Crisis*, will help provide the strategies necessary to adapt to a changing world.

The virtual conference will host artisan cheesemakers, industry professionals, purchasers and influencers from the United States, Canada and Europe through seminars and workshops. To help protect the health and safety of cheese professionals, the Annual Judging & Competition has been postponed to a later date and will be supplemented with alternative programming reminiscent of previous years that were designed to provide cheese makers with technical and sensory feedback on their products from industry experts. While ACS works to confirm the details of this alternative programming it will make available a survey to cheese makers for input in March.

The [Certified Cheese Professional Exam](#) (ACS CCP) will continue to be a key element of the conference.

“It’s time to come together!” said Lynn Giacomini Stray, board vice president of ACS. “This virtual gathering provides an opportunity for all of us—even those who may not have been able to travel and attend past conferences in person—to gather as a cheese community to learn and share and reconnect with one another.”

For more details, membership inquiries, and updates on conference educational opportunities, visit <https://www.cheesesociety.org/conference/>.

### **About American Cheese Society**

ACS is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas. At 2,300 members strong, ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for cheesemakers, retailers, enthusiasts, and extended industry. ACS strives to continually raise the quality and availability of cheese in the Americas. Since its founding in 1983, ACS proudly hosts the foremost annual educational conference and world-renowned cheese judging and competition in North America. ACS is a 501(c)6 nonprofit association headquartered in Denver, Colo. To learn more about ACS, please visit [www.cheesesociety.org](http://www.cheesesociety.org) or contact 720-328-2788.

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