



NEWS RELEASE

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American Cheese Society Blazing the Trail for Cheese

New executive director to guide industry leader to 39th Annual Conference in Portland

DENVER (August 18, 2021) – Following the success of its virtual 38th [Annual Conference](#), the American Cheese Society announces Tara Holmes as the new executive director who will guide the leading industry organization toward its 39th conference in Portland in 2022. Holmes will serve alongside [board members](#) led by president Lynn Giacomini Stray of Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company, and vice-president Mike Koch of FireFly Farms. Jamie Png becomes the ACS Cheese Industry Professional.

The virtual 38th ACS Annual Conference, which was held July 28-30, 2021, enabled an international audience of cheese professionals from the US to Europe and New Zealand, to hear from renowned [speakers](#) and engage in timely education and networking [sessions](#) that would not have been possible without a virtual platform. In his opening address, ACS past president, Jeremy Stephenson, noted the extraordinary challenges and triumphs experienced by the cheese industry during the pandemic, echoed by others including Kurt Dammeier from Beecher’s Handmade Cheese, Adeline Druart from Vermont Creamery, Jessica Fernández from Lactography and Mexican Mongers, and Ari Weinzweig from Zingerman's.

For the first time, access to the ACS educational sessions and Exhibit Hall remains available to registrants until the end of October. This offers unprecedented opportunities for cheese professionals to attend every scheduled program, including popular sessions like “[Virtual Tastings and Instruction: Why They’re Here to Stay](#)”. 2300 sessions have already been viewed, and [post-conference registration](#) is still available.

Holmes, who will transition from team leader for ACS at Civica Management, notes, “Before taking over as executive director, I’ve had the pleasure of working with the ACS board, staff, committees, and members in the run up to the last Annual Conference. I’m proud of what the team has been able to accomplish in a short amount of time, and while I know there is a lot of work to be done, I’m looking

forward to helping this vibrant community move forward towards new possibilities equipped with timely education, professional certifications, and a strong voice,” she notes.

The ACS voice will be amplified by its recent acquisition of [Victory Cheese](#), an initiative launched by cheesemakers, mongers, chefs, and cheese enthusiasts to help support and sustain specialty and artisan cheesemakers in the United States during and after the pandemic. Co-founder, Greg O’Neill notes, “ACS is the perfect home for Victory Cheese because it will serve as the association’s business to consumer (B2C) voice supporting artisan and specialty cheese. Strengthening the vital B2C connection for the long term is good for the entire industry.”

Focusing on the future, the ACS team will be organizing the American Cheese Society Judging and Competition (J&C), the largest event of its kind for American-made cheeses. The 2022 J&C will open for entries in October 2021, with 1500 expected to be entered in 120 categories. Cheeses will be received May 17-18, 2022, with competition judging from May 19-20, at the TCF Bank Stadium on the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis campus. Winners will be announced at the 39th ACS Annual Conference, ‘Blazing the Trail for Cheese’, in Portland, Oregon, July 20-23, 2022.

“The success of the virtual conference this year is testament to the resilience of our cheese industry professionals,” notes Lynn Giacomini Stray, board president. “None of this would be possible without the commitment of our conference [sponsors](#), and we’d particularly like to thank our Partners with Purpose – Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, DPI Specialty Foods, Gourmet Foods International, Murray’s Cheese, Whole Foods Market, and the American Cheese Education Foundation – and Platinum Sponsors, Dairy Connection, and Real California Milk.”

Post-conference registration for access to educational sessions is still available. For more information <https://www.cheesesociety.org/2021-conference/>.

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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 <http://www.cheesesociety.org> or contact 720-328-2788.