



**NEWS RELEASE**  
**For Immediate Release**

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## **OVER 1,400 AMERICAN MADE CHEESES HOPE TO BE CROWNED BEST OF SHOW AT AMERICAN CHEESE SOCIETY 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON JULY 19TH**

DENVER, Colo. – July 11, 2023 – The American Cheese Society (ACS) held the 38<sup>th</sup> annual ACS Judging & Competition in Minneapolis, MN from May 15-19 at the Huntington Bank Stadium at the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis. More than 1,400 entries were received from 195 organizations in 131 unique categories. This was the second year that this event, the largest of its kind for American-made cheeses, has been held separately from the ACS Annual Conference. Winners of each category and Best of Show will be announced at this year's conference will be held in Des Moines, IA from July 18 through 21, 2023.

ACS teamed 17 judge pairs, one technical and one aesthetic in 2023, Each were assigned cheese categories based on their strengths and expertise. Technical judges are professors in dairy and food science, cheesemakers or graders, manufacturing experts or consults. Aesthetic judges are authors, retailers, importers and distributors, and food service professionals. Technical judges are tasked with identifying flaws and defects and deducting points from a perfect score of 50, while aesthetic judges are tasked with identifying outstanding characteristics and qualities and awarding points. "It's a really awesome experience," says Judge Izzy Creveling of Peterson Cheese. "As an aesthetic judge, you have an amazing opportunity to learn from the industry expert sitting next to you. Having a great judging partner to bounce what you're tasting off of and to learn is one of the highlights of my year!"

Minimum scores are required to be met in order to place, the top three scoring entries will receive 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place in their category. It is important to note that each cheese is evaluated individually, on its own merit. "We are looking for cheeses to meet various category-specific textural, aroma, flavor, and appearance notes for every category we're assigned," says Creveling.

Following the judging of each category, all judges convene for one final round to decide the Best of Show. Unlike regular judging, each judge selects their favorite top three cheeses of all the first-place winners and points are awarded accordingly. Best of Show is a coveted title for American cheesemakers, as it is not only a sign of true excellence, but also brings much attention to the cheese and its makers.

When the ACS J&C began 38 years ago, there were 89 entries. In 2023, ACS received a total of 1,454 entries. ACS J&C Committee Chair, Rachel Perez, believes that "the growth of this year's competition truly reflects the vibrancy of the American cheese industry."

### 2023 Judging & Competition Statistics:

- **Number of Entries:** 1,454
- **Number of Organizations Entered:** 195
- **Number of Categories:** 131
- **Category with Most Entries:** KN: Fresh Goat Cheese with sweet predominant flavor - aged under 30 days - 100% goat's milk
  - 36 entries
- **Category Growth:**

- 125% increase in MC: Farmstead Category - Aged 60 days or more - 39% or higher moisture - made from cow's milk
  - From 8 entries in 2022 to 18 entries in 2023 .
- 114.29% increase in LD: Smoked Cheddars - all milks
  - From 7 entries in 2022 to 15 entries in 2023
- **Number of Judges:** 34
  - Technical Judges: 17
  - Aesthetic Judges: 17

Whitney, from Jasper Hill Farm, took the title of Best of Show in 2022, and Zoe Brickley, Directory of Communications and E-Commerce at Jasper Hill Farm noted that "Whitney's Best of Show win symbolizes our team's commitment to radical deliciousness. The ACS Awards create a focal point for the industry on continuous improvement, helping artisan producers push the boundaries of quality for American Cheese. More interest and support for this kind of cheese can have a real, lasting impact on our rural economies."

First, second, and third place winners from each of the 131 categories and the coveted Best of Show will be announced at the 2023 Awards Ceremony sponsored by Gourmet Foods International on Wednesday, July 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:15 pm local time at the ACS Conference in Des Moines. The Award Ceremony will be streamed live on the [ACS Facebook page](#) and the full winners' list will be released after the Awards Ceremony on the [ACS website](#).

For a list of past J&C winners, please visit <https://www.cheesesociety.org/competition-winners>. For more information on Judging & Competition, please visit our media kit [here](#).

### **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, CO. To learn more about ACS, please visit [www.cheesesociety.org](http://www.cheesesociety.org) or contact 720-328-2788.

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