

“No Two Alike” At First Regional Cheese Awards

From one breed’s milk, a riot of flavors, textures, colors and aromas were captured in the 77 cheeses and butters entered by 29 producers from 15 states and Quebec in the first North American Jersey Cheese Awards, July 2 and 3 in Syracuse, N.Y.

Held in conjunction with the joint annual meetings of the American Jersey Cattle Association, National All-Jersey Inc. and World Jersey Cattle Bureau, this inaugural judging of products made from exclusively Jersey milk exceeded all expectations for number of entries, quality and variety, and public interest. In the end, one thing was perfectly clear to head judge and Artisan Cheese Marketing president Kathy Guidi of Toronto, Ontario.

“Jersey milk artisan cheesemakers are doing what they love with passion, to bring out the best in your milk—Jersey milk,” she proclaimed to the crowd of 400-plus gathered for the *Jersey Worlds Combine* celebration at Sycamore Hill Gardens on the evening of July 3.

“There aren’t two cheeses alike on that table,” she said, motioning to the 46 cheeses displayed for tasting, “and the others that aren’t medal winners are equally interesting and different.”

Cobb Hill Cheese’s Ascotney Mountain was selected by the six-member judging panel as North America’s Best Jersey Cheese. “I was utterly impressed by this cheese,” enthused Guidi about the entry from Hartland, Vt. “They’ve only been making cheese for nine years. This is one gorgeous cheese.”

The runner-up for best in show was Blau Wein Kase, one of seven medal winners from Flat Creek Lodge at Swainsboro, Ga. This “exquisite cheese” features an exterior rind that “looks like snakeskin.” The secret? The cheese is washed with blue wine made from the farm’s summer berries.

Another Vermont entry, Spring Brook Farm Tarentaise from the Farms for City

Kids Foundation ranked third overall. While Tarentaise has been a multiple award winner for its developers, John and Janine Putnam of Thistle Hill Farm at Pomfret, Vt., it has been made for just over one year at Spring Brook’s facility in Reading.

“How the milks are being expressed through the cheeses is remarkable.”



Guidi pointed out. “You are really fortunate to have these wonderful cheesemakers in your camp.”

Jersey Initiatives Seen As “Visionary”

“I believe the Jersey initiatives like Queen of Quality® and this North American Jersey Cheese Awards are exactly on target for the cheese industry and for your business,” Guidi continued.

“The National All-Jersey Queen of Quality® program is visionary because it is about quality. It is about value and what consumers are about now.

This Jersey cheese judging and the World Jersey cheese judging last year are the first of their kind. There are no cow organizations that do this. There never

was really important for (companies like) McDonald’s and Coke to have the same product across the world.

“That was what was important, so we took Jersey Jack and Jersey Cheddar and cut it a little differently, made some of it in wheels, and developed a marketing program that you could do across the country.

Highlighting that it was Jersey milk in the cheese made real sense. We got an added value for the cheesemaker and the producer.

“But the world moves on as it always does,” Guidi continued. “Consumers are bored with consistency. They want variety and quality. They want to know what’s in their food and where it came from. They want to eat healthy. They want this ancient food, this perfect food—cheese. And the definition of value now includes ‘local’ and ‘artisan’ and ‘farm.’ This food that they are looking for: it costs more and they are willing to pay for it because they know it’s more wholesome.

“So you are on the right track here supporting the artisan cheese movement and highlighting the quality of Jersey milk.

“Consumers realize that artisan cheese is where it’s at. People want to know more about the farm, more about that connection to the cow, what it eats, and how that impacts the cheese. These are all things you bring to the party as Jersey cow farmers. I find it really exciting. This humble magician of milk—the cheesemaker—is really your best partner.”

“In my 35-plus years of working in the cheese industry, this is the only time I have ever seen milk producers celebrate the people who use their milk in fine cheese.”

Kathy Guidi, Head Judge
North American Jersey Cheese Awards

Boundless Opportunities

The future appears boundless for artisan cheeses using Jersey milk, Guidi said. “Whenever I talk to my students about Old World versus New

World cheeses, I am forever saying to them, the Europeans had millenniums of making cheese. We’ve been at it in North America with any great style for 25 years, maybe. That is not very long.

“So can you imagine what our cheeses will look like in a matter of another 10 or 15 years? It’s going to be amazing!

“So jump on the bandwagon. Think about making some cheese, or helping

have been. You are first.

“You are really on target to add value to your product through competitions like this.”

Guidi provided perspective for her observations by recalling her work to develop and implement NAJ’s Jersey Pride program 25 years earlier. “It was revolutionary in its time,” she said. “Its time was when consistency was king. It

NORTH AMERICA'S BEST JERSEY CHEESE AND GOLD MEDAL WINNERS



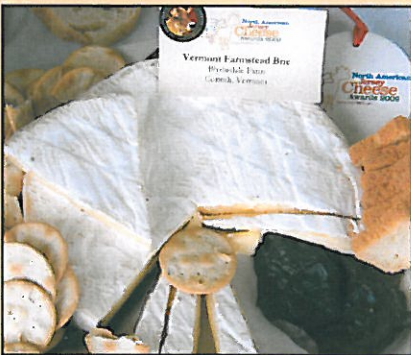
Ascutney Mountain, Best in Show
Cobb Hill Cheese, Hartland, Vt.



Blau Wein Kase, Second Best In Show
Flat Creek Lodge, Swainsboro, Ga.



Spring Brook Tarentaise, Third Best in Show
Farm for City Kids Foundation, Reading, Vt.



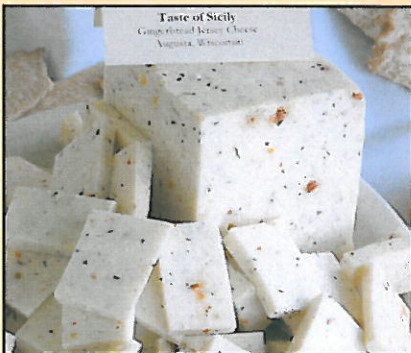
Vermont Farmstead Brie
Blythedale Farm, Corinth, Vt.



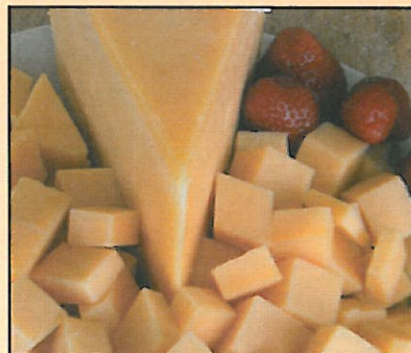
Inverness
Cowgirl Creamery, Petaluma, California



Rupert
Consider Bardwell Farm, West Pawlet, Vt.



Taste of Sicily
Gingerbread Jersey Cheese, Augusta, Wis.



Golden Glow
Homestead Creamery, Jamesport, Mo.



Fromage Blanc Con Ali
Acoustic Farms, Springville, Iowa

someone who is trying to make some cheese.”

One model according to Guidi is found in the development of Tarentaise.

“It was created by an artisan who found some issues with growing. They couldn’t grow. This is so typical. It takes a lot of money. It takes a lot of leveraging. Usually these people like their lifestyle and they just don’t want to grow. They want to keep the farm and the cheesemaking.

“So what did they do? Something really

brilliant. They found another Vermont cheesemaker, another Jersey herd, that was willing to make the cheese to the same specifications. So (the Putnams) licensed this recipe that has won many awards to the new cheesemakers.

“In a way our old Jersey Pride program was like this. This can be repeated. There are lots of people willing to collaborate.”

Judging To Make A Better Cheese

Having a judging helps cheesemakers

know what’s important in good cheesemaking, Kathy Guidi told the audience. Both last year’s World and the North American Jersey Cheese Awards are helping set criteria for what quality looks like.

“The whole purpose of the judging,” she explained, “is to give cheesemakers input so that they can make better cheese.

“In two years, when we do this competition again, they will be back with even stronger cheese entries.”

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The 50-point scorecard developed for the World Jersey Cheese Awards was used for this judging, giving a maximum of 10 points for general appearance, 15 points to the cheese's body and texture, and 25 points for its aroma, flavor and balance. Cheeses earning 46 to 50 points, practically "faultless," were awarded Gold Medals. Scores of 41 to 45 points earned Silver Medals, cheeses that are "excellent, but not quite at their peak." Bronze Medals were presented to cheeses with scores between 36 and 40 points. The judges awarded as many or as few medals in a class as appropriate.

The 48 medal winners, all of which were displayed for tasting at the *Jersey Worlds Combine* celebration on July 3, were:

Class 1. Fresh and cream cheese, plain

Silver: Jersey Maid Farmer's Cheese, The Farmstead at Mine Brook, Charlemont, Mass.
Bronze: Fromage Blanc, Bellwether Farms, Petaluma, Calif.

Class 2. Mold ripened soft or unpressed cheese, plain

Gold: Vermont Farmstead Brie, Blythedale Farm, Cornith, Vt.
Silver: Krista's Little Camembert, Branched Oak Farm, Raymond, Neb.
Silver: St. Pat, Cowgirl Creamery, Petaluma, Calif.
Bronze: Camembert Vermont, Blythedale Farm
Bronze: Jersey Maid Neige en Ette, The Farmstead at Mine Brook

Class 3. Soft or unpressed cheese, ripened, plain

Gold: Inverness, Cowgirl Creamery
Silver: Carmody, Bellwether Farms
Silver: Le Belle de Jersey, Les Bergeries du Fjord, Seguenay, La Baie, Québec

Class 5. Continental style hard cheese

Gold: Rupert, Consider Bardwell Farm, West Pawlet, Vt.

Class 6. British style hard cheese

Bronze: Grafton Traditional Clothbound Cheddar, Grafton Village Cheese Company, Grafton, Vt.

Class 7. Continental style semi-hard cheese

Silver: Idaho Danish Pearl, Ballard Cheese LLC, Gooding, Idaho
Bronze: Pawlet, Consider Bardwell Farm
Bronze: Ocheese, Flat Creek Lodge

Class 10. Rind washed cheese

Gold: Blau Wein Kase, Flat Creek Lodge
Silver: L'Hercule de Charlevoix, Laiterie Charlevoix Inc., Baie St-Paul, Québec

Bronze: Cato Corner Hooligan, Cato Corner Farm, Colchester, Conn.

Bronze: Dorset, Consider Bardwell Farm

Class 11. Smoked cheese

Silver: Smoked Cheddar Cheese, Gingerbread Jersey Cheese, Augusta, Wis.



On behalf of Vermont's Cobb Hill Cheese, AJCA Director Wesley Snow (second from right) receives the trophy plate for Ascutney Mountain, judged best in show at the first North American Regional Jersey Cheese Awards. Making the presentation, from left, are Dr. Gonzalo Maldonado, president of the World Jersey Cattle Bureau; head judge Kathy Guidi; and James Godfrey, WJCB Secretary.

Class 13. Flavoured cheese, savoury

Gold: Taste of Sicily, Gingerbread Jersey Cheese
Bronze: Cilantro Leiden, Flat Creek Lodge
Bronze: Aztec Cheddar, Flat Creek Lodge



Expert Charles Lindberg of Belfast, N.Y., Supervising Dairy Products Specialist with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, makes notes during the judging. Other judges were Eric Dutton, Adams, N.Y., retired Regional Supervisor for the state Department of Ag and Markets; Marcela Hanford, Syracuse, N.Y.; Debra Groom, agribusiness writer for *The Post-Standard*, Syracuse; and Jenni Avins, Brooklyn, N.Y., a contributing writer for food magazine *Saveur*.

Class 15. Farmstead hard cheese

Gold: Ascutney Mountain, Cobb Hill Cheese, Hartland, Vt.
Silver: Parma Canon in D, Acoustic Farms, Springville, Iowa
Silver: Dixie Swiss, Buckeye Grove Farm Cheese, Beallsville, Ohio
Silver: Natural Rind Cheddar, Flat Creek Lodge
Silver: Cypress Cheddar Aged, Flat Creek Lodge
Silver: Country Classic, Homestead Creamery, Springport, Mo.
Silver: Jersey Maid Jersey Cheddar, The Farmstead at Mine Brook
Silver: Serena, Three Sisters Farmstead Cheese, Lindsay, Calif.
Silver: Mona Lisa, Wake Robin Farm, Jordan, N.Y.
Bronze: Holy Cow Cheese, Ballard Cheese LLC
Bronze: Hill Folk Jersey, Buckeye Grove Farm Cheese
Bronze: Boeren Kaas Gouda, Buckeye Grove Farm Cheese
Bronze: Monterey Jack, Fromagerie Le Détour, Notre-Dame-du-Lac, Québec
Bronze: Fresh Cheddar, Gingerbread Jersey Cheese

Bronze: Le Jersey du Fjord, Les Bergeries du Fjord

Class 16. Farmstead semi-hard cheese

Gold: Spring Brook Farm Tarentaise, Farms for City Kids Foundation, Reading, Vt.
Gold: Golden Glow, Homestead Creamery
Silver: Paris 1853, Flat Creek Lodge
Silver: Strykly Caraway Cheddar, Stryk Jersey Farm, Schulenburg, Texas
Bronze: Vermeer, Keswick Creamery at Carrock Farm LLC, Newburg, Pa.

Class 17. Farmstead soft cheese

Gold: Fromage Blanc Con Ali, Acoustic Farms
Bronze: Fromage Blanc Con Citrone, Acoustic Farms
Bronze: Quark, Keswick Creamery at Carrock Farm LLC

Class 18. Jersey cream butter

Silver: Lightly Salted Butter, High Lawn Farm, Lee, Mass.
Silver: Unsalted Butter, High Lawn Farm

The second World Jersey Cheese Awards will be held June 12-13, 2010 at the Royal Jersey Agricultural & Horticultural Society in Trinity, Jersey. According to WJCB Secretary James Godfrey, 2011 will see regional judgings in North America, Latin America and Europe. "The success of the World Jersey Cheese Awards has resulted in cheeses being promoted as 100% Jersey, thus reinforcing the minds of consumers that 'Jersey is another name for quality.'"