



MEDIA KIT



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NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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American Cheese Society Celebrates 35th Annual Conference and Competition in Pittsburgh, July 25-28

'Forged in Cheese' to culminate with public celebration featuring more than 2,000 cheeses

PITTSBURGH (May 03, 2018) — Over 1,400 cheese and specialty food professionals are expected to attend the [American Cheese Society's](#) (ACS) 35th Annual Conference & Competition, 'Forged in Cheese' at [The David L. Lawrence Convention Center](#), in Pittsburgh, Penn., July 25-28, 2018. More than 2,000 different cheese products are expected to be judged in the world-renowned ACS Judging & Competition, with the top cheeses named 'Best of Show'. The public can sample and purchase competition cheeses at the Festival of Cheese and Cheese Sale on Saturday, July 28, from 7:00 – 9:30pm. Proceeds from the Cheese Sale benefit the nonprofit American Cheese Education Foundation. Tickets can be purchased at bit.ly/CheeseFest18.

Acknowledged as the foremost educational gathering for the cheese industry in North America, the ACS Conference and Competition broke all previous records in 2017, with 2,024 entries of cheeses and cultured dairy products from 281 companies, a 10 percent growth over the prior year. 36 U.S. states, four Canadian provinces, Mexico, and Colombia were represented, with a similar attendance expected in Pittsburgh at the 35th Annual Conference.

"It's exciting to see the growth of this event each year," said Nora Weiser, executive director of ACS. "It is a testament to how strong the cheese community truly is. Cheesemakers, buyers, retailers, distributors – pretty much anyone who cares about making, selling, and enjoying great cheese – comes together for education, networking, and camaraderie. Business gets done, connections get made, and friendships get solidified. There is really no other professional industry event quite like it!" she added.

The ACS Judging & Competition will take place over two days, with winners announced at the Awards Ceremony on Fri., July 27. A panel of internationally renowned judges will evaluate the entries for their aesthetic and technical merits. Last year's 'Best of Show' was 'Tarentaise Reserve' from Spring Brook Farm /Farms for City Kids Foundation in Vermont. 'St. Malachi' from The Farm at Doe Run in Pennsylvania was second, while third place Best of Show was awarded to 'Harbison' from Cellars at Jasper Hill in Vermont. 2018 winners will be highlighted at the "Festival of Cheese" on July 28, where conference attendees and the general public can taste competition cheeses while sampling craft beer, cider and specialty foods from artisan producers around the country.

Education plays a central role at the ACS Conference, including:

- Opening keynote: 'Ignite Your Goals: Simple steps to accomplish more and accelerate your success,' presented by Gerry O'Brion, author of *What Big Brands Know*.





- More than 40 educational sessions geared toward cheesemakers, retailers and distributors.
- Sensory Deep Dive: *'How Sweet Are You? The Science of Taste'* session with Russell Smith of Dairy Australia (one session offered each day).
- First come, first serve tasting sessions, including *'Celebrating a Fermentation Renaissance'*, *'Drink the Apples – Eat the Cheese!'*, *'Old and New Frontiers in Bandaged Cheddar'* and *'The Cornerstone Project: An American Original'*.
- ACS Certified Cheese Professional® Exam
- Inaugural ACS T.A.S.T.E. Test™ (Technical, Aesthetic, Sensory, Tasting Evaluation)
- 'Meet the Cheesemaker': Conference attendees can meet and sample cheese and cultured dairy products from more than 100 producers

Registration for Forged in Cheese is available at www.cheesesociety.org. Press passes are available to qualified individuals upon request.

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About the American Cheese Society

The American Cheese Society (ACS) is the leader in promoting and supporting American cheeses. At 1,800 members strong, ACS provides the cheese community with educational resources and networking opportunities, while encouraging the highest standards of cheesemaking focused on safety and sustainability. ACS strives to continually raise the quality and availability of artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheese in the Americas. Since its founding in 1983, ACS proudly hosts America's foremost annual educational conference and world-renowned cheese judging and competition. For more information, visit www.cheesesociety.org.





35th Annual ACS Conference & Competition

July 25-28, 2018 • Pittsburgh, Penn.

WHAT: **Forged in Cheese**, The American Cheese Society's (ACS) 35th Annual Conference & Competition, is the foremost educational conference and world-renowned cheese competition in the Americas. Leading professionals, purchasers and influencers attend each year to network, sample products and learn from one another.

WHEN: July 25-28, 2018.

WHERE: At [The David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh, Penn.](#)

WHO: More than 1,400 cheese and specialty food industry members from throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and beyond are expected to attend. In conjunction with its Annual Conference, ACS hosts the foremost judging of cheeses and cultured dairy products made in the Americas. In 2017, 2,024 different products were entered into the ACS Judging & Competition, which recognizes products of the highest quality for their aesthetic and technical merits. After two intense days of evaluation in Pittsburgh, first-place winners in each category will be judged head-to-head, with an overall "Best of Show" selected. Winners will be revealed at an Awards Ceremony on Friday, July 27. More information about the ACS Judging & Competition and a full list of past winners can be found at www.cheesejudging.org.

Forged in Cheese will culminate with the Festival of Cheese and fundraising Cheese Sale on Saturday, July 28 — events designed to celebrate the cheeses entered into the ACS Judging & Competition. The festival is attended by more than 1,800 individuals (industry members and general public), all of whom enjoy cheese while sampling craft beer, cider, and specialty foods. The Cheese Sale allows cheese lovers to purchase competition cheeses at incredible prices as they exit the Festival, all to benefit the nonprofit American Cheese Education Foundation.

HOW: Purchase tickets at <https://festivalofcheese.brownpapertickets.com/>.





The American Cheese Society (ACS) is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas.

Vision:

ACS is the leader in promoting and supporting American cheeses.

Mission Statement:

ACS provides the cheese community with educational resources and networking opportunities, while encouraging the highest standards of cheesemaking focused on safety and sustainability.

Core Values:

- Engagement: Support, promote, connect, and represent cheesemakers to the broader community and industry.
- Education: Create and provide access to resources, programs, and education for our evolving industry.
- Sustainability: Commit to a holistic approach to sustainability ensuring long-term physical and financial viability, so members survive and thrive.



Since its founding in 1983, ACS proudly hosts the foremost annual educational conference and world-renowned cheese judging and competition in North America. In 2018, 1,400 ACS members are expected to gather in Pittsburgh to participate in educational workshops, network with industry partners, sample new products, and explore new pairings and trends. The three-day conference culminates in the annual Festival of Cheese, a public celebration featuring more than 2,000 competition cheeses on display for tasting alongside craft beers, wines, and specialty foods.



Key Definitions

The American Cheese Society defines these key industry terms as follows:

Artisan Cheese

Artisan cheese is produced primarily by hand, in small batches, with particular attention paid to the tradition of the cheesemaker's art, and thus using as little mechanization as possible in the production of the cheese.

Farmstead Cheese

Farmstead cheese must be primarily made by hand with milk from the farmer's own herd, or flock, on the farm where the animals are raised. Milk used in the production of farmstead cheeses may not be obtained from any outside source. Care and attention must be paid to the purity, quality, and flavor of the milk. The cheese must be ripened naturally, with emphasis on development of characteristic flavor and texture and without the use of shortcuts and techniques to increase yield and shelf life at the expense of quality. Respect for the traditions and history of cheesemaking are expected regardless of the size of the production.

Specialty Cheese

Specialty cheese is defined as a cheese of limited production, with particular attention paid to natural flavor and texture profiles.

Certified Cheese Professional® Exam

The ACS Certified Cheese Professional® Exam – the only exam of its kind – was established to encourage high standards of comprehensive cheese knowledge and service, offering professionals in the cheese industry the opportunity to earn the distinguished title of ACS Certified Cheese Professional®, or ACS CCP®. The exam is based on the knowledge and skills required to successfully perform cheese-related tasks in jobs across the industry. Testing encompasses a broad range of subjects including raw ingredients, the cheesemaking process, storing and handling cheese, selecting distributors, marketing and communicating about cheese, nutrition, and regulations and sanitation. ACS CCPs® are required to demonstrate continued active participation and professional development within the industry to maintain their credentials, and they must recertify every three years. An online directory of more than 900 ACS CCPs® is available on the ACS website.

American Cheese Month

American Cheese Month is an annual celebration of North America's delicious and diverse cheeses, and the farmers, cheesemakers, retailers, and chefs who bring them to the table. American Cheese Month takes place every October with hundreds of special events and promotions held in cities around the country.

The American Cheese Society is a 501(c)6 nonprofit association headquartered in Denver, Colorado. To learn more about ACS, please visit www.cheesesociety.org or contact 720-328-2788.





Who attends the Annual ACS Conference?

Retailers	33%
Cheesemakers/Buttermakers	25%
Brokers/Distributors	10%
Farmers/Dairy Operators	4%
Academics/Advisors	3%
Foodservice/Restaurateurs	3%
Media/Food Writers	3%
Cheese Guilds/Marketing Boards	2%
Trade Suppliers	2%
Enthusiasts	2%
Other	13%

What is the ACS Judging & Competition?

- The foremost judging of cheeses and cultured dairy products in the Americas.
- Recognizes products of the highest quality for their aesthetic and technical merit.
- Provides cheesemakers with valuable feedback about their products.
- Each cheese is judged by a team of two judges: one aesthetic and one technical.
- Winners are announced at an Awards Ceremony at the Annual ACS Conference.
- A media kit featuring detailed results is available online soon after the awards are announced.

How has the ACS Judging & Competition grown since its inception?

The first ACS Judging & Competition had just 89 entries (1985). In 2017, the ACS Judging & Competition saw 2,024 different products entered from 281 different companies, a 10 percent growth over the prior year. Competing companies represented 36 U.S. states, four Canadian provinces, Mexico, and Colombia. ACS awarded a total of 410 ribbons: 111 first place ribbons, 142 second place ribbons and 157 third place ribbons.





What differentiates the ACS Judging & Competition from other cheese contests?

The ACS Judging & Competition consists of two categories of evaluation: technical and aesthetic. Unlike many other competitions where cheeses are judged solely based on technical defects, ACS's goal is to recognize cheeses that are of the highest quality in both their aesthetic and technical qualities. Cheese scores are marked down for technical flaws and marked up for desirable attributes.

How does the judging process work?

- 44 expert judges work in teams of two, consisting of a technical and aesthetic judge.
- International judges come from Canada, Australia, the UK, even Brazil.
- Judges use scoresheets to evaluate the cheeses, customized for different entry categories. Awards are based on the total points awarded (totaling 100 points possible) for first, second, or third place. A minimum number of points must be earned, or no award is given.
- The top cheeses in each of the 123 categories enters a special round of Best of Show judging, where the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place Best of Show cheeses are selected.



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Keynote: Ignite Your Goals:** Simple steps to accomplish more and accelerate your success. Join Gerry O'Brien, author of *What Big Brands Know*, to learn what successful people do to achieve more in business and in life.
- More than 40 educational sessions geared toward cheesemakers, retailers and distributors.
- Tasting sessions including 'Celebrating a Fermentation Renaissance', 'Drink the Apples – Eat the Cheese!', 'Old and New Frontiers in Bandaged Cheddar' and 'The Cornerstone Project: An American Original'.
- Sensory Deep Dive: 'How Sweet Are You? *The Science of Taste*' session with Russell Smith of Dairy Australia (one session offered each day)
- ACS Certified Cheese Professional® Exam
- Inaugural ACS T.A.S.T.E. Test™ (Technical, Aesthetic, Sensory, Tasting Evaluation)
- **Meet the Cheesemaker:** Meet more than 100 artisan, farmstead, and specialty producers and sample their cheeses and cultured dairy products
- **Awards Ceremony** honoring the winners of the 2018 ACS Judging & Competition
- **Festival of Cheese:** Sample more than 2,000 artisan and specialty cheeses, alongside gourmet foods, beer, and cider at this at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center:
 - 5:30 pm – 6:00 pm Media Preview (Media Credentials Required)
 - 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Members-Only Admission
 - 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm General Admission (\$65 for the general public)
- **Exit through the Cheese Shop:** The Festival of Cheese will end with a Cheese Sale to benefit the American Cheese Education Foundation: buy great cheese to bring home, and support cheesemaker scholarships

A full program of conference events can be found at:
<http://www.cheesesociety.org/conference>

FAST FACTS

The American Cheese Society

- Founded in 1983, the American Cheese Society is the leader in promoting and supporting American cheeses
- ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for a diverse mix of cheese industry professionals
- Membership is available to anyone involved in the trade or simply passionate about artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheese

The State of the U.S. Artisan/Specialty Cheese Industry

There are more than 900 artisan, farmstead and specialty producers operating in the United States.

According to ACS's inaugural 2016 State of the U.S. Artisan/Specialty Cheese Industry Survey:

- 74% of American artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheesemakers produce 50,000 pounds of cheese or less each year; only 5% produce more than 1 million pounds of cheese annually.
- 66% of cheesemakers make their cheese using milk from their own animals.
- 67% of businesses report gross revenues under \$500,000.
- 42% of cheesemakers produce other dairy items in addition to cheese.
- On average, cheesemakers produce 11 different types of cheese
- 62% of cheeses are made with pasteurized milk, while 38% are made with unpasteurized milk.
- 23% of cheesemakers did not turn a profit. Among those who did, the average profit margin was just 23%.

Industry Growth

- The American artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheese industry has been growing for years, with more producers venturing into cheesemaking to meet growing consumer demand for unique, local, natural cheeses.
- Cheese was the top category of specialty food sales in 2015, at more than 4 billion dollars—a 15% increase from 2013, according to the Specialty Food Association.
- In 1983, the 1st ACS gathering welcomed 150 attendees. In 2018, ACS expects over 1,400 attendees to come together for “Forged in Cheese” in Pittsburgh.
- The ACS Judging & Competition has grown from 89 entries in 1985 to 2,024 entries of cheeses and cultured dairy products from 281 companies in 2017
- ACS membership has grown to more than 1,800 members
- There are 900+ artisan and specialty cheesemakers in the U.S., according to ACS's inaugural 2016 “State of the U.S. Artisan/Specialty Cheese Industry Survey”



The ACS Certified Cheese Professional® Exam

- The only exam of its kind, the ACS CCP® Exam was launched in 2012 to encourage improved standards of cheese knowledge and service, offering professionals in the cheese industry the opportunity to earn the distinguished title of ACS CCP®
- Today, there are more than 900 ACS CCPs in the US and Canada, and even in Europe
- Nearly 250 individuals will sit for the ACS CCP® Exam in Pittsburgh on July 25, 2018

The ACS T.A.S.T.E. Test

The new ACS T.A.S.T.E. Test™ (Technical, Aesthetic, Sensory, Tasting Evaluation) evaluates cheese professionals' knowledge and skills in the assessment of cheese, from determining cheese condition and quality, to evaluating cheese flavor, body, texture, and appearance. Individuals who pass the exam will earn the title of ACS Certified Cheese Sensory Evaluator™, or ACS CCSE™.

The exam is 3 hours in length and includes the following tasks:

- Cheese assessment and evaluation. Each candidate will be provided with up to 12 unidentified cheeses. For each cheese, the candidates must assess and evaluate both positive and negative attributes in the context of that cheese's style, including sight, taste, touch, and smell.
- Single attribute identification. Each candidate will be provided with 10 different prepared solutions, each providing a unique aroma/taste found in cheese. The candidates must identify these attributes.

ACS Position Statements

ACS has issued the following industry Position Statements:

- [ACS Statement on Safe Cheesemaking](#)
- [ACS Statement on the Safety of Raw Milk Cheese](#)
- [ACS Statement on the Importance of Artisan, Farmstead, and Specialty Cheese](#)
- [ACS Statement on the Safety of Aging Cheese on Wood](#)
- [ACS Statement on the Definition of Milk, Milk Products, and Cheese](#)



BIOGRAPHIES



Nora Weiser, Executive Director

Nora joined the American Cheese Society as Executive Director in 2010 to shepherd the organization away from an association management company to a self-management structure. The association has since grown to eight full-time staff members and has broadened its services to include the ACS Certified Cheese Professional® program, regulatory advocacy, year-round online education, and an Annual Conference & Competition that now welcomes more than 1,400 attendees each year.

Nora's background is in non-profit management, and she has worked extensively in museums in the curatorial field, as well as spending six years as Deputy Director of the Museum Store Association. She also has experience as an entrepreneur having launched, managed, and sold an online retail business with her

husband, Nicolas. In 2013, she helped the burgeoning American cider industry form its own organization, the United States Association of Cider Makers, by facilitating their first governance meeting and the election of their charter Board of Directors. She holds BAs in Art History and French from Washington University in St. Louis; studied abroad at the Université de Caen in France; and earned a master's degree in Art History from the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.

Nora has a passion for design and marketing, and loves working on all of ACS's cheese-related merchandise and marketing campaigns. ACS's "The Cheese Party" campaign was recently recognized with the 2017 PR News' Nonprofit PR Award for Marketing. She enjoys Colorado's great outdoors with her husband and two children, and in her free time enjoys cooking, art, travel, reading, and writing haiku.



John Antonelli, ACS President

John is CEO of Antonelli's Cheese Shop, an Austin business he founded with his wife Kendall after a honeymoon decision to quit his job in search of a passion with purpose. Through their two retail shops and bistro downtown, e-commerce sales, wholesale to 175 Central Texas partners, and 200+ yearly events, the Antonelli's Cheese team daily lives its mission: Do Good. Eat Good. John is both a CPA and CCP (certified cheese professional) and currently serves as the President of Board of the American Cheese Society, an international nonprofit, and on the advisory board of Philanthropitch, in addition to providing mentoring for SKU businesses and confidentially serving on a number of grant review committees. He judges food competitions, including the Good Food Awards and New Zealand Cheese Championships, and is a selected member of

the Guilde Internationale des Fromagers. John most enjoys a shared cheese and charcuterie board while traveling with his two kids Everett and Elia.



Kerry E. Kaylegian, *Forged in Cheese* Co-Chair

Kerry is an assistant research professor at Penn State. She provides technical support to the dairy industry and directs workshops on improving the safety and quality of dairy products. Her research focuses on creating resources for small-scale cheesemakers, such as the Penn State Cheese Tracking System to relate cheese make variables to the quality of the finished cheeses. Her lab is currently developing resources to help small-scale cheesemakers meet FSMA regulations.

Kerry is a technical judge for ACS and has been judging at other cheese contests for 15 years. She developed and runs the Pennsylvania Farm Show Cheese Contest and is coach of the Penn State Collegiate Dairy Products Evaluation Team. Kerry serves as

an academic advisor to the Pennsylvania Cheese Guild and the Pennsylvania Association of Milk, Food, and Environmental Sanitarians.

MEDIA CONTACTS

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PRESS PASS POLICIES

Press passes are reserved for well-qualified editorial staff from approved media outlets. Press passes are not carried over year to year; you must register each year.

To qualify for a complimentary press pass for Forged in Cheese, the applicant should cover the artisan cheese, food, retail, news, business, and/or agricultural industry on a regular basis by publishing articles or writing regular reports or blog posts. Private consultants who are paid by an individual company are not eligible to receive a press pass. Press credentials must be submitted by individuals requesting a press pass for the event.

PRESS CREDENTIALS consist of a business card with your name, media outlet, and title as well as ONE of the following:

1. Traditional Print Media (online versions as well) Examples include: Newsletter, Trade Journal, Magazine, eNewsletter.
 - a) Please provide a sample of two articles, published within the past six months that clearly display authorship and are within the realm of the artisan cheese, food, retail, news, business or agriculture category*
 - b) OR, a copy of publication masthead including your name*

*Links or pdfs are acceptable to submit for verification.
2. TV/Radio: Please submit a link to your show or segments, as well as a screenshot of your station's issued press credentials.
3. Freelance: Please provide letter of assignment, on outlet's letterhead.
4. Social Media Influencers/Bloggers: Please provide a link to your blog or social feed from the past six months that is within the artisan cheese, food, agriculture, retail, business, news, or lifestyle space. Specific requirements:
 - 5,000 followers on Twitter OR
 - 2,000 friends or likes on Facebook OR
 - 1,000 followers on Pinterest/Instagram/Blog

(NOTE: Social Media Influencers/Bloggers will be registered for the Festival of Cheese on Saturday, July 28, not the full American Cheese Society conference, unless otherwise specified.)

Note:

These qualifications must be submitted in full within 10 days of applying, otherwise your press credentials may not be accepted. If you have not submitted your credentials before arriving on site at the event, please plan to bring proof of credentials, per above, with you.

The American Cheese Society reserves the right to refuse press passes, without cause, during pre-registration as well as onsite press registration. Due to high demand, press passes are limited in number.

