

Grate.Pair.Share.

COOKING & ENTERTAINING WITH WISCONSIN CHEESE

DISCOVER THE DRIFTLESS AREA

Explore the region's
cheesemakers and
award-winning cheeses



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



We really treasure our days of sunshine here in Wisconsin. From the very first sign of spring, as soon as we can see just a little green grass again, we can't wait to live our best lives outside. Welcome to dinner on the porch, fresh veggies, grill-side chats, party lights, and friends and family in the backyard all season long!

Spring also signals the start of our outdoor farmers markets. The Dane

County Farmers' Market in Madison is one of my favorites. It's a place to gather and see growers and producers beaming with pride, but the best part is getting squeaky cheese curds still warm in the bag. The delicious cheese doesn't stop there. You can also find world-champion cheesemakers like Tony and Julie Hook from Hook's® Cheese Company selling their award-winning cheddars, flavored monterey jacks, blues and more! Turn to page 11 for recipes with cheeses that elevate your handpicked harvest haul.

Venture just a bit west of Madison, and you'll hit the state's Driftless region. It's a gem in the Midwest and is known for its lovely rolling hills, gourmet food and some of the most passionate cheesemakers on the planet. There you'll find Master Cheesemaker Bob Wills at Cedar Grove Cheese. Brilliant, articulate, caring, genuine and humble, he's delightfully entertaining and mentors many successful cheesemakers. I could listen to him talk for hours, especially about his innovative and earth-friendly Living Machine. Want to learn more about Bob? Turn to page 33.

And while you're there, don't forget to visit Executive Chef Luke Zahm at the Driftless Café in Viroqua. (Read his interview on page 23.) His passion and dedication to sourcing and serving great local food are inspiring. Luke loves cooking with cheeses crafted in the region, and it's absolutely mesmerizing to watch him in the kitchen. He's cooked for me many times, with each yummy bite more amazing than the last. After being cooped up all winter, there's no better time to explore the Driftless Area (page 17) and its incredible cheeses.

Happy spring travels!

Suzanne Fanning

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IN THIS ISSUE



Innovation and Dedication

Get to know environmental advocate and Master Cheesemaker Bob Wills. Read about his Living Machine and artisan cheeses and what's on the horizon for this pioneer of cheesemaking.



Distinctly Driftless

Learn what makes this beautiful and rugged region of Wisconsin so unique and how those distinctions have created a culinary hot spot for some of the world's best cheesemaking.



Good to Grow

Discover how to match the best in fresh produce, like tender ramps and sweet peas, with handcrafted cheeses to create springtime pasta pleasers.

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★★★★★ *Grate it. Rate it.*

We love receiving reviews and helpful advice from passionate cooks and bakers who have tried our recipes.

The reviews are valuable to us and much appreciated. Please keep the feedback coming!

If you've tried a recipe, leave your opinions and any recipe tips at: [WisconsinCheese.com/Recipes](https://www.wisconsincheese.com/Recipes).

Wisconsin Cheese Flower Bouquets

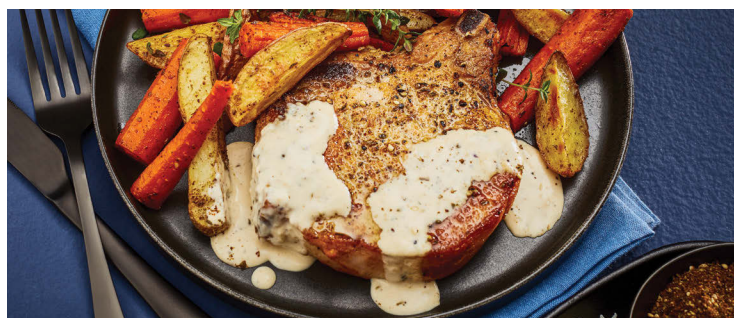


Beautiful and Easy

I made these flowers for our wedding anniversary. They were beautiful, easy and fun to make! I used cheddar cheese and salami to make the flowers.

— *Jbw6*

Za'atar Pork Chops with Parmesan Sauce



Earthy, Tangy Flavors

I finally had a use for the za'atar seasoning I bought a while ago. The seasoning gives the dish an earthy, tangy flavor, mellowed by the parmesan sauce. I opted to air fry my pork chops because they were double-thick cuts. I paired them with lemon-garlic and parmesan zucchini for some green on my plate.

— *Tristis*

Swiss Cheese Rösti



Many Variations Possible

Rösti is a traditional side dish in Switzerland, found everywhere there. Although I prefer just the potatoes and cheese (no bacon or onion), there are many variations of rösti as long as the two "givens" are included—potatoes and swiss cheese, of course!

— *Swiss Gal*

Strawberry-Mascarpone Cream Tart



Perfect for Spring

This was light, airy and refreshing, and so easy to make. Very tasty! Unfortunately, I couldn't get my hands on fresh chamomile flowers without special ordering, but I had plenty of wild violets to make it pop.

— *sdocain*



[WisconsinCheese.com](https://www.wisconsincheese.com)



Antipasto-Stuffed Endive

Makes 10-12 Stuffed Leaves

Ingredients

- 1 medium tomato, seeded and chopped
- 4 ounces **Weyauwega Star Dairy Fontina cheese**, diced (about 1 cup)
- 1/2 cup chopped water-packed artichoke hearts, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup chopped pitted Kalamata olives
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1/2 cup chopped Peppadew® peppers or roasted sweet red peppers, drained
- 1/2 cup chopped hard salami
- 1/3 cup red wine vinaigrette

Croutons:

- 4 slices crusty Italian bread, cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons butter, cubed and melted
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- Salt and pepper
- 1 medium Belgian endive, separated into leaves (about 12 leaves)
- 2 ounces **Weyauwega Star Dairy Parmesan cheese**, shaved (1/2 cup)

Instructions

Heat oven to 375°F. Line a 15 x 10-inch baking pan with aluminum foil.

Combine the tomato, fontina, artichoke hearts, olives, parsley, Peppadew® peppers and salami in a large bowl. Drizzle with red wine vinaigrette; gently toss to coat.

Croutons:

Place bread cubes on prepared pan. Combine the butter, olive oil, garlic and onion powder in a small bowl. Drizzle butter mixture over bread cubes; gently toss to coat. Arrange bread cubes in a single layer. Season with salt and pepper. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until toasted, turning once.

Fill endive leaves with antipasto. Top with warm croutons and parmesan.





Cheeselandia is a magical community where Wisconsin's artisan cheese is celebrated and enjoyed by every member. Memorable moments are created for Cheeselandians who attend virtual events, enroll in the School of Cheese, take on fun Quest challenges, host a House Party and participate in this journey centered around aged cheddars, funky blues, original colbys and more.



Want in on the fun? Be part of an enthusiastic community of Wisconsin cheese lovers and participate through in-person and virtual experiences. You'll learn from the best and have an opportunity to share your cheese-inspired creativity with others. Join today at: www.cheeseapplication.com/apply.

GOOD TO GROW

Just-picked sweet peas, crisp asparagus and delicate ramps—let farm-to-table produce combined with artisan cheeses be your inspiration for tasty meals this spring. Discover the best of fresh with a CSA box or a visit to your local farmers market. Then look to The State of Cheese for some of our most cherished offerings, like **Sartori Gold BellaVitano®** and **BelGioioso's Parmesan** and **Fontina**, to elevate your spring harvest haul. Give these recipes that celebrate the happy marriage between our lovingly crafted gourmet cheeses and homegrown veggies a try!





SAUSAGE AND VEGGIE ALFREDO LASAGNA

Servings 10-12

Ingredients

Creamy Leeks Alfredo Sauce:

- 2 tablespoons butter, cubed
- 3 large leeks (white and light green portions only), thinly sliced (about 3 cups)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups heavy whipping cream
- 4 ounces **BelGioioso Parmesan cheese**, grated (1 1/3 cups)
- Salt and pepper

Lasagna:

- 1 pound bulk Italian sausage
- 1 package (16 ounces) sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1 medium sweet red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 bags (5 ounces each) fresh baby spinach (about 10 cups)
- Salt and pepper
- 1 container (16 ounces) whole milk **BelGioioso Ricotta con Latte®** cheese
- 2 large eggs
- 1 ounce **BelGioioso Parmesan cheese**, grated (1/3 cup)
- 12 oven-ready lasagna noodles
- 12 ounces **BelGioioso Fontina cheese**, shredded (3 cups)

Instructions

Creamy Leeks Alfredo Sauce:

Melt butter in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add leeks; cook and stir for 4-5 minutes or until tender. Add garlic; cook and stir for 1 minute.

Reduce heat to medium-low. Gradually stir in cream. Bring just to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to low. Simmer, uncovered, for 5-6 minutes or until slightly thickened, stirring frequently. Remove from the heat. Whisk in parmesan. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Lasagna:

Heat oven to 375°F.

Cook sausage in a large skillet over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Transfer sausage to a bowl. Wipe out the pan.

Sauté mushrooms and red bell pepper in olive oil in the same pan over medium-high heat for 4-6 minutes or until tender. Add spinach; cook and stir until spinach is wilted. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat.

Combine the ricotta, eggs and parmesan in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper.

Spread 2/3 cup reserved Alfredo sauce in the bottom of a greased 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Layer with four noodles, 2/3 cup ricotta mixture, 2/3 cup vegetable mixture, 2/3 cup sausage, 2/3 cup Alfredo sauce and 1 cup fontina. Repeat layers twice, starting with four noodles.

Cover dish with greased aluminum foil. Bake for 45 minutes. Uncover; bake for 15 minutes longer or until bubbly and cheese is lightly browned. Let stand for 15 minutes before serving.

CREAMY BELLAVITANO® PASTA PRIMAVERA

Servings 4

Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh broccoli florets, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup fresh or frozen peas, thawed
- 1 package (16 ounces) uncooked bucatini pasta or spaghetti
- 3 bunches ramps or green onions
- 4 tablespoons butter, cubed and divided
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and julienned
- Zest and juice of 1 medium lemon
- 4 ounces **Sartori Gold BellaVitano®** cheese, finely shredded (1 cup)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Additional shaved **Sartori Gold BellaVitano®** cheese

Instructions

Bring water to a boil in a Dutch oven or stockpot. Salt water as desired. Add broccoli and peas; cook for 2-3 minutes or until crisp-tender. Remove vegetables with a slotted spoon.

Bring water back to a boil. Cook pasta according to package directions until al dente. Drain, reserving 1 cup hot pasta water. Wipe out the pan.

Meanwhile, trim ramps. Thinly slice the white portions of ramps and cut the green portions into 1-inch pieces.

Warm 2 tablespoons butter and olive oil in the same pan over medium heat. Add white portions of ramps and carrots. Cook and stir for 4-5 minutes or until carrots are crisp-tender. Add broccoli, peas and remaining ramp greens; cook and stir for 1 minute.

Reduce heat to low. Add pasta and 1/2 cup reserved pasta water; cook and toss for 1-2 minutes or until water is slightly reduced. Stir in the lemon zest, lemon juice and remaining butter.

Remove from the heat. Gradually add **Gold BellaVitano®**, tossing well after each addition. Add remaining pasta water, a tablespoon at a time, until desired consistency. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with additional shaved **Gold BellaVitano®**.



DISTINCTLY DRIFTLESS

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**WITH ITS DEEP RIVER VALLEYS,
STEEP BLUFFS, AND SOME OF THE
WORLD'S MOST HIGHLY DECORATED
CHEESES AND CHEESEMAKERS—THIS
IS WISCONSIN'S DRIFTLESS REGION.**

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Untouched by glaciers that passed over the Wisconsin more than 10,000 years ago, the southwest corner of The State of Cheese boasts an undulated topography unique to the rest of the Midwest. Instead of being host to endless flat prairies attractive to large agricultural practices, rolling hills in the Driftless Area have afforded smaller farms and creameries the space to thrive, resulting in artisan cheeses that taste as unique as the land itself.



A TASTE OF PLACE

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Cold water streams, limestone bedrock and incredible vistas are iconic Driftless region features. They combine with other regional characteristics to create what’s known as *terroir*. A French term that means “taste of place,” *terroir* is defined as the environmental conditions—soil and climate—thought to give local food a distinct or enhanced flavor (similar to the famous wine regions of Bordeaux and Champagne in France). Cheesemakers in the Driftless credit the local landscape as crucial to the milk’s flavor, and, for some, it also inspires the place used to age many of the region’s artisanal cheeses.

Perhaps it’s why the most-awarded cheese in American history resides here. Crafted by Head Cheesemaker Andy Hatch of **Uplands Cheese Company, Pleasant Ridge Reserve** is notably named after the land formation on which the farm sits. It’s made only in the summer from grass-fed raw milk as cows amble and graze upon the area’s lush pastures abundant with herbs, wildflowers and grasses. In turn, this land lends complex and sweet flavors to the milk used to make this aged, alpine-style cheese that’s rich and salty with a long, fruity finish—and coveted worldwide by cheese connoisseurs.



Cheesemaker Tony Hook



Cheesemaker Andy Hatch



There are caves in the Driftless, too. Natural, stalactite-studded caverns, as well as man-made caves built to precisely control the temperature, humidity and environment for aging cheese. Cave-like inspired ripening rooms create an atmosphere for affinage that enhances the cheese’s earthy nuances and complex flavors. **Hook’s® Cheese Company** in picturesque Mineral Point ages their artisan cheeses in curing caves. Each batch of cheddar is taste tested to ensure that only the highest quality cheeses continue through the aging process. The best cheddars are aged a decade or more, such as 2006 American Cheese Society First Place winner **Hook’s 10-Year-Sharp Cheddar**. If you want an even rarer cheese experience, a limited batch of **Hook’s 20-Year-Sharp Cheddar** will be available in May 2023.

FLAVORED WITH HERITAGE

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In the mid-19th century, cheesemakers from Germany and Scandinavia were the first immigrant groups to realize the potential of the Driftless Area. Bringing with them Old-World cheesemaking techniques and recipes from Europe, this long-standing heritage is often recognized as another reason this area is a powerhouse of cheesemaking expertise and creativity. After all, there aren’t many other places in the U.S. that possess a hundred-year history of dairy farming and an assemblage of families with four generations of cheesemaking know-how.

Meet Master Cheesemaker Chris Roelli, owner of **Roelli Cheese Haus**—his family has been making cheese in Lafayette County since the 1920s when Swiss native Adolph Roelli settled in the area. Today, Chris makes artisan cheeses like the 2023 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest Best of Class winner **Roelli Haus Select Cheddar**, 2014 and 2017 American Cheese Society winner **Dunbarton Blue®**, 2022 World Championship Cheese and 2013 U.S. Championship Cheese Contests Best of Class winner **Red Rock**, and 2016 American Cheese Society Best of Show winner **Little Mountain**.



Cheesemaker Chris Roelli



Cheesemaking families like the Roelli family have cultivated a well-connected network, which offers information, encourages experimentation and shares resources with other area cheesemakers. What does this unique collaboration mean for cheese lovers? Amazing artisan cheeses from the Driftless region continue to evolve and delight.

A DRIFTLESS CHEESE CHAMPION

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Some say the Driftless Area is a well-kept secret. But that’s something Executive Chef Luke Zahm, owner of the Driftless Café in Viroqua and new venture The Owl Farm, and the host of television’s Wisconsin Foodie, is working to change.

“The café was started with the intention of it being the authority on local food, beverage and service,” says Luke. “I wanted to spotlight our region’s local farmers and food producers.” The majority of the café’s budget, 72%, is spent in a 90-mile radius of the restaurant—a stat Luke is proud of.

“Local cheese is a medium we can use to tell a story,” Luke explains. “It allows us to converse about who we are as food artisans, cheesemakers, and farmers and, hopefully, grow an awareness of the Midwest that differs from the version that many people have.”



Executive Chef Luke Zahm



For Luke, the Driftless provides inspiration and delectable fodder for his locally sourced menu, which includes a cheese plate with rotating cheeses like **Carr Valley Creama Kasa®**, **Roelli Red Rock**, **Uplands Pleasant Ridge Reserve**, **Hook’s Blue Paradise**, as well as other specialty cheeses from Wisconsin like **BelGioioso’s Fresh Mozzarella**. Wood-fired pizzas featuring unique cheeses like **Carr Valley Glacier Penta Crème™** are also popular customer favorites.

“You throw me in a cheese shop, and I’m a kid in a candy store,” shares Luke. “It’s an opportunity to play with different textures and styles, and inevitably I come across a unique cheese that helps to shape the menu.”

And living in the Driftless supplies Luke with an almost endless supply of delicious muses. “Sid Cook of **Carr Valley Cheese** is the most-awarded cheesemaker in North America. He’s the Willy Wonka of cheesemaking, and he’s here in this quiet pocket of Wisconsin,” Luke says excitedly. “**Pleasant Ridge Reserve** is always a staple...and I know people are taken aback whenever we put any of Chris Roelli’s cheeses on our cheese board. Then there’s **Roth Cheese**. Their **Grand Cru® Surchoix** was crowned World Champion in the 2016 World Championship Cheese Contest. As a Wisconsin chef, that’s such a point of swagger.”



WISCONSIN'S DRIFTLESS CHEESEMAKERS

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- Arena Cheese, Arena
- Brunkow Cheese, Darlington
- Cady Cheese™, Wilson
- Carr Valley Cheese, La Valle
- Cedar Grove Cheese, Plain
- Chalet Cheese Cooperative, Monroe
- Decatur Dairy, Brodhead
- Edelweiss Creamery, Monticello
- Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, Ellsworth
- Gile Cheese Factory, Cuba City
- Hook's® Cheese Company, Mineral Point
- Klondike Cheese Company, Monroe
- Lactalis® American Group, Inc., Belmont
- Meister Cheese, Muscoda
- Milkhaus Dairy, Fennimore
- Nordic Creamery, Westby
- Organic Valley®, La Farge
- Pasture Pride Cheese, Cashton
- Roelli Cheese Haus, Shullsburg
- Roth Cheese, Monroe
- Shullsburg Creamery, Shullsburg
- Silver Lewis Cheese Cooperative, Monticello
- Uplands Cheese Company, Dodgeville
- Valley View Cheese Cooperative, South Wayne
- V&V Supremo Foods, Inc., Browntown
- Westby Cooperative Creamery, Westby
- Wisconsin Cheese Group (Sabrosura Foods), Monroe

Take a tasty trip to the Driftless region without leaving your home by trying unique cheeses from the area and these recipes.

PESTO JACK CHICKEN WITH RHUBARB BARBECUE SAUCE

SERVINGS 6

INGREDIENTS

RHUBARB BARBECUE SAUCE:

- 2 cups chopped rhubarb (about 1/2 pound)
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 cup ketchup
- 2/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

GRILLED CHICKEN:

- 6 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (6 ounces each)
- 6 ounces **Hook's Pesto Jack cheese**, cut into six slices (1 ounce each)
- 1 medium tomato, sliced
- 1/2 medium avocado, sliced
- Fresh basil leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

RHUBARB BARBECUE SAUCE:

Bring the rhubarb, water, onion and garlic to a boil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low. Simmer, uncovered, for 8-10 minutes or until rhubarb is softened. Stir in the remaining sauce ingredients. Cook for 10-15 minutes longer or until sauce is thickened, stirring occasionally. Cool slightly.

Process sauce in a blender or with an immersion blender until smooth. Set aside 1 1/2 cups sauce for this recipe. Store remaining sauce in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.

GRILLED CHICKEN:

Grease grill grate. Heat grill to medium.

Divide reserved 1 1/2 cups rhubarb barbecue sauce in half. Set aside 3/4 cup sauce for serving.

Grill chicken, covered, over medium heat for 3-4 minutes on each side, brushing with barbecue sauce after flipping. Repeat, flipping and brushing chicken every 3-4 minutes or until a thermometer inserted into meat reads 165°F, about 12-15 minutes. Top with pesto jack. Cover and cook for 1-3 minutes longer or until cheese is melted.

Warm reserved sauce. Transfer chicken to serving plates; top with tomato, avocado and basil. Serve chicken with sauce.



GRILLED STEAK, BERRIES AND BLUE SALAD

SERVINGS 4-6

INGREDIENTS

STEAK:

- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon ground mustard
- 1 teaspoon each salt and pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 3 pounds beef flank or skirt steak

CHAMPAGNE VINAIGRETTE:

- 1/2 cup champagne vinegar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 1/2 ounces **Carr Valley Glacier Point Blue™ Cheese**, crumbled (1/4 cup)
- Salt and pepper to taste

SALAD:

- 10 ounces spring mix salad greens (about 10 cups)
- 1 cup thinly sliced watermelon radishes
- 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
- 1/2 cup sliced red onion
- 6 ounces **Carr Valley Glacier Point Blue™ Cheese**, crumbled (1 cup)

INSTRUCTIONS

STEAK:

Grease grill grate. Heat grill to medium-high.

Combine the brown sugar, garlic powder, onion powder, mustard, salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper in a small bowl; rub over steak. Let stand for 30 minutes.

Grill steak, covered, over medium-high heat for 4-5 minutes on each side or until a thermometer inserted into meat reads 145°F. Transfer steak to a cutting board; tent with aluminum foil. Let rest for 10 minutes. Thinly slice steak against the grain.

CHAMPAGNE VINAIGRETTE:

Whisk the champagne vinegar, Dijon mustard, honey and garlic in a bowl. Slowly whisk in olive oil. Stir in blue cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

SALAD:

Arrange salad greens on a large serving platter. Layer with the radishes, strawberries and red onion. Top with steak. Drizzle with vinaigrette. Sprinkle with blue cheese.





EGGS BENEDICT BAKE

SERVINGS 8

INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 8 large eggs
- 4 tablespoons butter, softened
- 4 English muffins, split
- 16 thin slices **Uplands Pleasant Ridge Reserve cheese** (8 ounces)
- 8 slices Canadian bacon
- 16 fresh asparagus spears, trimmed and blanched

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE:

- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon water
- 12 tablespoons cold butter, cubed
- 3 ounces **Uplands Pleasant Ridge Reserve cheese**, finely shredded (3/4 cup)
- Salt to taste
- 1/4 cup snipped fresh chives

INSTRUCTIONS

Fill a large saucepan or deep skillet half full of water. Stir in white vinegar. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to a gentle simmer. Break eggs, one at a time, into a measuring or custard cup. Carefully slip the egg into the water mixture. Simmer four eggs, uncovered, for 3-5 minutes or until whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken. Remove eggs to a paper towel-lined plate with a slotted spoon. Repeat step with remaining eggs.

Spread butter on muffin halves; place cut side up on an ungreased 15 x 10-inch baking pan. Broil 4-6 inches from the heat for 1-2 minutes or until muffins are lightly toasted.

Heat oven to 325°F.

Transfer muffins to a greased 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Layer each with a slice of Pleasant Ridge Reserve, Canadian bacon, two asparagus spears and remaining Pleasant Ridge Reserve. Top each with a poached egg. Cover tightly with aluminum foil. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until cheese is melted.

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE:

Whisk the egg yolks, lemon juice and water in a small, heavy saucepan. Add 6 tablespoons cold butter. Cook over very low heat until butter is melted, whisking constantly. Add remaining cold butter. Continue whisking until butter is melted and sauce is slightly thickened. Remove from the heat. Gradually whisk in Pleasant Ridge Reserve until smooth. Season with salt to taste.

Spoon sauce over muffins. Sprinkle with chives. Serve immediately.

INNOVATION + DEDICATION



A passion for the environment combined with a love for artisan cheesemaking and collaboration is why Master Cheesemaker Bob Wills continues to be one of the most respected influencers in Wisconsin cheesemaking.

Bob Wills is a man of many achievements. He's worked as a legislative aide in Washington D.C., earned a Ph.D. in economics, and became a research associate and instructor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. And while these noteworthy accomplishments would provide enough feathers in one's cap for the most ambitious purveyor of pursuits, Bob didn't stop there.

Over the last 30-plus years, he has added certified Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker, owner of **Cedar Grove Cheese** and **Clock Shadow Creamery**, board member of the American Cheese Society and chair of the American Cheese Education Foundation, prestigious cheesemaking mentor and passionate environmental steward to his impressive list.





“The one thing I say about cheesemaking is that I’ve not had a boring day since I got into it,” says Bob, who bought Cedar Grove Cheese in Plain, Wisconsin, in 1989 and transformed it into a bastion of artisan cheesemaking. He also established Clock Shadow Creamery in Milwaukee in 2012—Wisconsin’s first urban cheese factory. Innovation and environmental stewardship are Bob’s calling cards. Cedar Grove Cheese was the first cheese business in the U.S. to go rBGH free in 1993, and it was also one of the first companies to make organic cheeses. It’s home to the Living Machine, an on-site greenhouse that uses wetland plants to clean and purify the factory’s wastewater before it’s returned to the ground, a lagoon and a creek. The water helps grow the grass and corn that the cows eat, and the cycle begins again.

Creating a culture that combines the science of making cheese with the cheesemaker’s art is something Bob takes to heart. He hosts and collaborates with other Wisconsin cheesemakers like **Hill Valley Dairy**, **Landmark Creamery** and **Cesar’s Cheese** at both factories, which have become launchpads for some of the most innovative, award-winning new cheeses in the world.

“I don’t know that I intended to change the world,” Bob says. “But my businesses became vehicles for reflecting what I cared about.”

Grate. Pair. Share. spoke with Bob about his passions for collaborating with other Wisconsin cheesemakers and protecting the environment, as well as what's on the horizon for this always-evolving pioneer of cheesemaking.

What inspired the Living Machine?

Edgewood College faculty connected me with John Todd, owner of Living Technologies, at a time when we had to find a solution to Cedar Grove Cheese's waste treatment. His approach enabled nature's way of cleaning water. We took microbes from our lagoon, the local creek and the municipal plant and discovered what they (microbes) like to eat from the residuals of cheese production. And we used aquatic plants to turn those nutrients into growth. Now we are preparing to convert leftover materials into fertilizer and sequester phosphorus, a scarce natural mineral necessary for plant life.

From former economics instructor to Master Cheesemaker, what inspires your drive?

There is so much to learn. In my 33 years in the industry, I have never had a day without a discovery or new mystery to investigate and try to solve. The path is rarely clear, and the destination is shrouded in fog. You either embrace that challenge as invigorating or become overwhelmed. As a former competitive athlete, I keep on swimming.



Living Machine

You're well known for working with other Wisconsin cheesemakers and the local community. What do you enjoy about the collaborative process?

Collaboration with other dairy professionals and community members melds our experiences and perspectives. I get new ideas and contribute ideas that I don't have the capacity to pursue. Empowering cheesemakers and farmers to attain their dreams is fulfilling. One of my favorite collaborations was with John Riepenhoff, a Milwaukee artist. We started riffing on creativity, like building new ideas from familiar and recognizable bases. The first cheese I made when I bought Cedar Grove Cheese was colby. John and I decided Clock Shadow Creamery should produce a **Double Cream Colby** that he could share at his art exhibitions. I admire how he broke the bounds of media to integrate food with fine art.



You're always at the forefront of cheesemaking. What projects do you have in the works?

Climate change and environmental challenges always force their way back into our work. Nature may be intelligent, but it is not indestructible. Although many companies are jumping on the earth-friendly marketing bandwagon, most of the real work is on the land. My goal is to support and encourage our farmers' environmental efforts by telling their stories to customers.

I also work with Quigistics, an integrated production and supply chain data company. We created QR code access for consumers to obtain timely information about their cheese. And we've been gathering resources so consumers can learn about the diverse and innovative practices of the farmers who provide our milk. Therefore, our farmers can be rewarded for their climate-friendly practices.

What are Cedar Grove’s most unique or must-try cheeses?

I love quark cheese. Its versatility is unparalleled, from cheesecakes and ice cream to pizza and crab rangoon.

Another style that we have been enjoying is a variation on Brazilian grilling cheese—dubbed **Chees-E-Que**. We scrambled its roots a bit by making a version adding bratwurst seasonings (still vegetarian like all of our cheeses). I think it’s the ideal tailgate cheese. Eat it hot off of the barbecue.

I am also still partial to our butterkäse. It was one of our first specialty cheese varieties. And along with cheddar, I chose butterkäse for the Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker® Program recognition.



CHEESES AT CEDAR GROVE

Cedar Grove Cheese produces award-winning traditional butterkäse, cheddars, cheese curds, colby, monterey jack, quark and more; the cheeses are handcrafted with milk sourced from over 35 local, family-owned farms. At Cedar Grove Cheese, you’ll also find the following:

Organic cheeses: Made from the freshest, Grade A, certified organic whole milk. The cheeses are turned by hand and made with love, select from aged cheddars to rich muenster. And when available, be sure to sample the squeaky organic cheese curds!

Grass-fed cheeses: Prairie Premium cheeses are made from grass-grazed cows’ milk that’s creamy and brims with lush grass and clover flavor notes.

Indulge in the
handcrafted taste of
Cedar Grove’s artisan cheeses
in the following recipes.





Zucchini and Corn Fritters

Makes 8-10 Fritters

Ingredients

- 2 cups shredded zucchini (about 2 medium zucchini)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 10 ounces **Cedar Grove Garlic & Dill Cheddar cheese**, shredded and divided (2 1/2 cups)
- 1 cup fresh or frozen corn, thawed
- 1/2 cup cornmeal
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons snipped fresh dill
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 large egg
- Salt and pepper
- 1/4 cup olive oil

Toppings: sliced avocado, capers, fresh dill, hot pepper sauce, sliced jalapeño, lemon wedges, sliced radishes, diced red onion, smoked salmon and watercress

Instructions

Toss zucchini with salt in a large bowl. Let stand for 10 minutes. Place zucchini in a cheesecloth or clean kitchen towel; twist to squeeze dry. Return zucchini to the same bowl. Stir in the 1 cup cheddar, corn, cornmeal, flour, garlic, dill and lemon zest.

Whisk buttermilk and egg in another bowl. Stir into zucchini mixture. Season with salt and pepper.

Warm olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Drop batter by 1/4 cupfuls into skillet; gently press to flatten slightly. Cook for 3-4 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Top fritters with remaining cheddar; cover and cook for 1-2 minutes longer or until cheese is melted.

Serve fritters warm with toppings.



Focaccia Cheese Board

Servings 8-10

Ingredients

- 1 packet (2 1/4 teaspoons) active dry yeast
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 1/2 cups warm water (110°F to 115°F)
- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 7 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- Fresh chives
- Fresh sage leaves
- Capers, drained
- Whole Sweetie Drop miniature peppers or roasted sweet red peppers, drained
- Flaky sea salt

Cheese Board:

- Cedar Grove Extra Sharp Cheddar cheese
- Cedar Grove Havarti cheese
- Cedar Grove Monterey Jack with Jalapeno Peppers cheese (pepper jack)
- Thinly sliced salami
- Fig jam or jam of choice
- Pitted green and Kalamata olives
- Fresh thyme sprigs

Instructions

Dissolve yeast and sugar in warm water in a large bowl. Let stand for 5-6 minutes or until foamy. Combine flour and salt in a large bowl; gradually add to yeast mixture just until a dough forms. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface; knead just to combine. Place dough into a large bowl coated with 3 tablespoons olive oil. Flip to grease top. Cover and let rise until doubled, about 3-4 hours. Heat oven to 450°F. Brush a 15 x 10-inch rimmed baking pan with 3 tablespoons olive oil. Gently stretch dough to fill the pan. Using fingers, press dimples into dough. Wrap a small ramekin in aluminum foil. Fill with pie weights or dried beans. Lightly press ramekin into dough to make a bowl for jam, taking care to not press deeply. Press the garlic, chives, sage, capers and miniature peppers into the dough to create a design. Brush dough with remaining olive oil. Sprinkle with sea salt. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until puffed and golden brown. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Carefully remove the ramekin, using a knife to loosen if necessary. Transfer focaccia to a serving board.

Cheese Board:

Arrange the cheddar, havarti and pepper jack on focaccia. Fill in with salami flowers, jam and olives. Garnish with sage and thyme.





Artisan Cheeses with Fruit Salsa

Servings 8 (2 Cups Salsa)

Ingredients

- 2 medium tart apples (green and red), cored and chopped
- Juice of 4 medium limes, divided
- 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
- 1 cup fresh cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped dried cherries
- 1 medium jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 6 thick-cut bacon strips, cooked and chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
- 8 ounces **Cedar Grove Butterkase cheese**
- 8 ounces **Cedar Grove Havarti cheese** or **Cedar Grove Sharp Cheddar cheese**
- Oat crackers

Instructions

Toss apples with half of the lime juice in a large bowl. Add the strawberries, cilantro, dried cherries and jalapeno pepper; toss to coat.

Whisk honey and remaining lime juice in a bowl. Drizzle over salsa; toss to coat. Stir in bacon and walnuts.

Cut butterkase and havarti into triangles or rectangles, each slice about 1/4-inch thick. Place a glass (about 3-inches diameter) into the center of a large serving bowl or platter. Arrange butterkase and havarti upright around the glass. Remove the glass. Spoon salsa into the middle of cheese ring. Serve with crackers.

Recipe Tip

If cheese is cut into rectangles, place cheese upright on the long side with the short side towards the glass.





Mascarpone Panna Cotta

Servings 8

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons unflavored gelatin
- 1/4 cup cold lime juice
- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup **Crave Brothers Farmstead Classics Mascarpone cheese** (4 ounces)

Mixed Berry Coulis:

- 1/2 cup fresh blackberries
- 1/2 cup fresh blueberries
- 1/2 cup fresh raspberries
- 1/2 cup sliced fresh strawberries
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- Juice of 1 medium lime
- Assorted fresh berries

Instructions

Sprinkle gelatin over cold lime juice in a small bowl. Let stand for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, warm the cream, milk and sugar in a large saucepan over medium-low heat. Cook and stir for 3-4 minutes or until sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat.

Gradually add gelatin mixture to the saucepan, stirring until gelatin is dissolved completely. Stir in mascarpone until smooth. Spoon cream mixture into eight 4-ounce greased ramekins. Cool to room temperature. Cover ramekins loosely with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours or until set.

Mixed Berry Coulis:

Combine the berries, sugar and water in a large saucepan. Bring to a gentle boil over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally. Cook and stir for 4-5 minutes or until berries are softened. Cool slightly.

Process berry mixture in a blender or with an immersion blender until smooth. Pour mixture through a fine mesh strainer into a large bowl; discard solids. Stir in lime juice. Cover and refrigerate until serving.

Gently run the tip of a thin knife around the top edges of each ramekin. Dip ramekins, one at a time, into warm water for 5 seconds. Invert ramekins onto serving plates. Serve panna cotta with coulis and berries.

Make-Ahead Tip

Prepare the mixed berry coulis up to five days ahead. Cool completely. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.





WISCONSIN CHEESE COMPANY DIRECTORY

CHEESEMAKERS IN THE STATE OF CHEESE PRODUCE MORE THAN 600 VARIETIES, TYPES AND STYLES OF WISCONSIN CHEESE. LOOK FOR WISCONSIN CHEESE AND OTHER DAIRY PRODUCTS MADE BY THESE COMPANIES. **COMPANIES IN BOLD ARE FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE.**

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