

SPRING 2024

Grate.Pair.Share.

COOKING & ENTERTAINING WITH WISCONSIN CHEESE

Award-Winning Cheeses

TASTE THE BEST
OF THE BEST



BRIE + BERRIES | RICOTTA GNOCCHI HOW-TO | WORLD CHAMPION GRAND CRU® SURCHOIX

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



There are regions prized for the juiciest oranges, the tastiest barbecue and the finest champagnes. Wisconsin is famous for its incredible cheeses. But do you know just *how* obsessed the community is with crafting the best cheeses on the planet? It's the only state that requires a cheesemaking license and the only place outside Switzerland where you can become a Master Cheesemaker. We are The State of Cheese for many reasons,

but here's the result of all that passion: Wisconsin wins more awards for our cheeses than *any* other state or country.

I've attended many cheese competitions, and they're serious business. (Turn to page 11 to learn more.) A team carefully handles cheeses crafted worldwide to maintain quality and anonymity while experts taste their way through each category. The judges know what they're looking for as they smell, touch and taste each piece. And like you may follow the Oscars, we follow the cheese awards. In Wisconsin, we know that the winning cheeses will likely sell out fast, and we want to be sure to get some!

Roth Grand Cru® Surchoix was named World Champion in 2016. It's one of those cheeses that makes you feel like a champ when you share it. The cheese is easy to eat with caramel and fruity notes and an underlying richness that adds a layer of flavor, turning any dish into a five-star recipe! Learn more about its award-winning flavor and story on page 27.

We're showcasing another superstar, BelGioioso Ricotta con Latte®, on page 37. It won Best of Class at the 2016 World Championship Cheese Contest and Gold at the 2009 World Cheese Awards and is the secret ingredient to light, fluffy gnocchi. Making gnocchi is one of my family's favorite traditions. I can't say they're all perfect, but my mom always told me that's how you know the food is homemade. I CAN say they are delicious, and I guarantee you'll have a memorable time together. That sounds like a win-win to me.

Cheers to cheese!

Suzanne Fanning

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Suzanne Fanning

Senior Vice President,
Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

Chief Marketing Officer,
Wisconsin Cheese

EDITORIAL TEAM

Amy Thieding

Managing Editor

DIGITAL TEAM

LuAnn Lodl

Director, Interactive Communications

PUBLIC RELATIONS TEAM

Rachel Kerr

Sr. Director, Experiential & Brand Marketing

EDITORIAL PARTNERS

Stephan & Brady, Inc.

Troy Giesege

Associate Creative Director

Megan Bykowski-Giesege

Partner, Public Relations Director

Sarah Curry

Social Media Director

Rachael Liska

Contributing Writer & Editor

Radlund Photography

Mark Ambrose

Photographer

Breana Moeller

Food Stylist



Grate. Pair. Share.

is published by
Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin.

For more information about
Wisconsin Cheese, visit:

WisconsinCheese.com





IN THIS ISSUE



Ricotta Cheese: The Secret to Light, Fluffy Gnocchi

Say “hello” to spring with delightful gnocchetti made better with small-batch, fresh ricotta from BelGioioso® Cheese.



An Inside Look into Award-Winning Cheeses

Discover what it takes to be the big cheese at the most prestigious cheese competitions.



Grand Cru® Surchoix: A World Champion

Taste “the best of the best” and indulge in a Wisconsin treasure honed by tradition, evolution and artistry.

IN EVERY ISSUE

First Bite

Brie and Berries Cheese Board

Cheeselandia

Celebrating Moments with Cheese

Sweet Endings

Lemon Olive Oil Cake with Merlot BellaVitano®

Wisconsin Cheese Company Directory



★★★★★ 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).

Artisan Cheeses with Fruit Salsa



Fresh Flavors, Beautiful Display

I made this fantastic spring recipe for brunch today. I paired the salsa with Roth Original Butterkäse and an applewood smoked cheddar. The kids loved it with tortilla chips. It was a nice way to freshen the meal with a sweet-salty-spicy treat!

— Ashley

Focaccia Cheese Board



Next Level Cheese Board

It was the showstopper! I used cheddar, havarti, herbs, tomatoes, salami and blueberry lemon jam. Once the toppings were gone, the "board" was dipped in seasoned olive oil and balsamic. The best part was being creative with the assembly.

— Ashhams5

Creamy BellaVitano® Pasta Primavera



Perfect for Spring

I expected this to be heavier, but it was perfect with all the vegetables. Next time, I'd like to add some asparagus as well.

— sdocain

Mascarpone Panna Cotta



Creamy and Light

This was absolutely delightful! The texture was thick and creamy. But it tasted nice and light, not overly sweet. I could taste the mascarpone flavor, but it wasn't overpowering. The panna cotta was really good with fruit.

— 333lilyp



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



Brie and Berries Cheese Board

Servings 8

Ingredients

Macerated Berries:

- 1/2 cup fresh blackberries
- 2 tablespoons sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons orange liqueur or orange juice, divided
- 1/2 cup fresh raspberries

Brie:

- 2 wheels (8 ounces each) **Schroeder Käse Triple Creme Brie cheese**, halved and cut into wedges
- 1/2 cup fresh blueberries
- 1/2 cup fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced
- Orange marmalade, warmed
- Honey, warmed
- Fresh mint leaves
- Edible flowers
- Warm French bread baguette slices or crostini

Instructions

Macerated Berries:

Combine the blackberries, 1 tablespoon sugar and 1 teaspoon orange liqueur in a small bowl. Repeat step with raspberries in another bowl. Let stand for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Brie:

Arrange brie on a serving board. Top each wedge with macerated and fresh berries. Spoon orange marmalade and honey over wedges. Garnish with mint and flowers. Serve with bread.





Cheeselandia helped New Yorkers *fa-la-la-la-la* in love with Wisconsin Cheese over the holidays at Cheeselandian Rachel Zern's Super Host event in Brooklyn, New York. Her festive party featured vintage vibes, a curated playlist, purple and gold accents, and an array of artisan cheeses like Hoard's Dairyman Farm Creamery Sark Butterkase, White Jasmine Sajji BBQ Gouda, Kingston Creamery Heritage™ Blue Cheese and Meister Cheese Muscoda Mayhem Colby Jack. Guests also participated in a "Perfect Pairing" activity challenge, where the winner was Sartori Black Pepper BellaVitano® paired with a craft coquito cocktail.



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.

AN INSIDE LOOK INTO AWARD-WINNING CHEESES

Competitions. They bring out our finest, test our boundaries and push us toward perfection. It's no different for cheesemakers. Prestigious cheese competitions like the World Championship Cheese Contest, United States Championship Cheese Contest, and American Cheese Society Judging & Competition not only offer big-time bragging rights to cheese artisans crafting at the top of their game but also advance Wisconsin's cheese industry with feedback, turning great cheeses into the world's best. Get an insider's look into three renowned cheese competitions, learn about a day in the life of a cheese judge, and discover four championship cheeses that will win over any cheese lover.

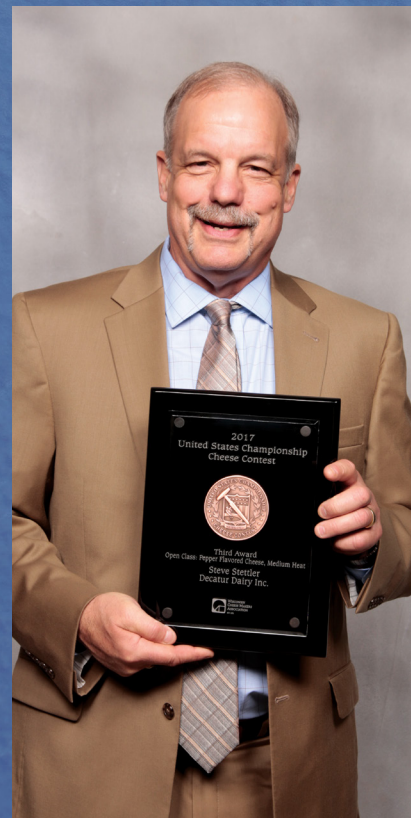


A WINNING CULTURE

Cheese competitions celebrate cheesemakers by showcasing their talents, excellence in cheesemaking and commitment to the craft. While only a few winners are awarded the coveted First, Second and Third Place spot in each category out of potentially thousands of cheese entries during these much-anticipated showdowns, everybody wins.

These contests support cheesemakers by providing feedback on how their entries stack up against similar cheeses from competitors. They're welcome to review the results from expert judges, some of the most elite cheese professionals in the world. These evaluations include expert suggestions on what improvements cheesemakers might want to make to their cheese.

Our world-class cheesemakers lead the way and are innovators, so having a culture of open dialogue around quality is essential. Since they rank so well in these competitions, the events highlight the entire state's cheesemaking community and the quality of the cheeses made in Wisconsin.



THE BIG THREE

Here's a look at three premier cheese competitions.

The **World Championship Cheese Contest** has been hosted biennially by the Wisconsin Cheesemakers Association since 1957. This year's competition runs March 5 to 7 in Madison, marking its 35th anniversary. Both the cheeses submitted and the team of technical judges evaluating the entries are from around the world.



Hosted biennially by the Wisconsin Cheesemakers Association since 1981, the **United States Championship Cheese Contest** celebrates domestic cheesemakers. The last U.S. Championship Cheese Contest occurred in Green Bay in 2023, marking its 21st edition. A team of technical judges evaluates the entries.



The annual **American Cheese Society (ACS) Judging & Competition** recognizes American-made cheeses for technical excellence and the highest aesthetic qualities. Teams of technical *and* aesthetic judges evaluate the cheeses. This format is crucial to cheeses that may not subscribe to traditional categories—cheddar blues, cheddar gruyere and more.



MEET THESE ESTEEMED JUDGES

Judging a cheese competition is an exceptional experience for even the most seasoned cheese professionals, and most will say it's a high honor and privilege carrying tremendous responsibility. Cheesemakers enter their best cheeses, and the judges must be highly skilled; defects like aroma, flavor, body and texture, color, finish and other attributes are incredibly subtle. A great deal is at stake in their decisions, and a fraction of a point can make or break a cheesemaker's day. We spoke with four industry professionals for an insider's look at a day in the life of a cheese judge.



MARIANNE SMUKOWSKI

Outreach Program Manager (Retired), Center for Dairy Research (CDR) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Marianne is an expert on food safety, quality and regulatory matters for the Wisconsin dairy industry.

Judge for 25+ years

MARK JOHNSON, PH.D.

Senior Management Team, Assistant Director, Center for Dairy Research (CDR) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

A National Cheese Institute Laureate Award winner, Mark's research interests include developing, manufacturing, and ripening protocols for unique cheeses and the study of cheese characteristics and cheese defects.

Judge for nearly 25 years



DEAN SOMMER

Senior Management Team, Cheese & Food Technologist, Center for Dairy Research (CDR) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Dean has been grading cheese for 38 years, and he's a technical resource to the cheese industry, assisting manufacturers as a consultant and educator often involved with troubleshooting.

Judge for 10 years



MOLLY BROWNE

Education Director, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

An ACS CCP®, CCSE® and vice chair of the ACS Certification Committee, Molly is the creator of Cheese State University, a resource for cheese professionals launched in 2023.

Judge for 3 years



What is it like to judge a cheese competition?

Marianne: I feel so humbled to judge next to my fellow experts. To be chosen as a judge, they look at your background, knowledge and experience with the cheese varieties. It may also be based on your reputation in the cheese industry.

Mark: As a judge, I must know the cheese and how it's made to give feedback. Fortunately, because of my experiences with European cheesemakers and technologists, I have a working knowledge of just about every type of cheese. I especially enjoy the World Championship Cheese Contest because I'm paired with a partner outside the U.S., and we can discuss what makes a good cheese. I get to learn.

Dean: There's a ton of excitement, from seeing who wins the cheese categories or Best of Show to the crowd of folks observing us as we judge. My eyes are always drawn to the beautiful array of cheeses. The smells are also wonderful and, in some cases, almost overwhelming—smeared cheeses like limburger, peppery pepper jacks and the distinct aromas of blue-veined cheeses.

Molly: It's a lot of responsibility and an endurance test, as it can be hard to keep your palate and brain in the game when judging the same style of cheese. Flavored and spicy cheeses are particularly hard (to judge) because you can get palate fatigue fast. Giving the same effort, attention and clarity to the cheeses you're judging towards the end of a category as the ones up front is really important.



How many cheeses do you judge in a day?

Marianne: I typically judge around 30 to 50 cheeses. You don't want to judge too many due to sensory overload. For example, judging a pepper-flavored cheese, I may taste about 30 cheeses daily.

Mark: It's usually between 45 and 55 cheeses daily for two days. On the final day, I will taste an additional 30 or more in the preliminary round and then 20 in the final round.

Dean: On average, I may judge 50 to 60 cheese samples distributed daily over 3 to 4 categories.

Molly: A lot. It's possible to judge 50 to 70 on a typical day. It's wild.

How do you train your palate to judge cheese?

Mark: I taste and eat a lot of cheese. We evaluate hundreds of cheeses over the year at the Center for Dairy Research (CDR), many of which have faults. We also have courses on grading, judging and cheesemaking, and we make a variety of cheeses for clients, too.

Dean: The only way to educate my palate is by repetition and tasting more cheese. I taste many samples of cheese weekly, representing many varieties. I'm also constantly training my palate by tasting cheese with other experienced cheese graders and then sharing what we each taste in the sample.

Molly: I try to be thoughtful about everything I put in my mouth and focus on the abundance of flavors I interact with daily. It's one of the easiest ways to train because of the many opportunities to do it. Eating intentionally and paying attention to layers of flavor creates building blocks of flavor memory that help me judge cheese.





What are defects resulting in point deductions?

Marianne: In a cheese like cheddar or colby, I may taste acid, bitter, flat or lacking characteristic flavor defects. I may see a pasty and weak texture or body. Mottling or acid cuts would be faults in color.

Molly: Salt is a big one. All cheese has salt, but salt intensities are attributed to specific categories. Alpine-style cheeses are famously low in salt. If I taste a salty gruyère, it would be a defect. But feta is an intensely salty cheese, so too low salt would be a fault in its category.



What defines ideal cheese, technically or aesthetically?

Marianne: When judging, I'm looking for the one cheese that defines the category. I want the flavor to stand out and the aroma pleasing with no texture or body defects and with a good appearance... it has to "knock my socks off" or have a wow factor to be the perfect cheese.

Mark: No off-flavors; we call it clean flavor. And the cheese has to taste like the variety it's meant to be. Appearance is also important. For example, I want to see even veining throughout blue-veined cheeses, notably near the surface. A rind of more than 1/2 inch with no bluing is a fault to me. The flavor will be salty but not overwhelming, and the "blue notes" should be balanced. It's a very complex cheese.

Dean: A technically perfect cheese has the correct appearance, color, texture and flavor for the variety. For example, I want to see a uniform color with cheddar, no seaminess or mottling. The pulled plug should be fused tightly, look like a candle with no holes or cracks, have a nice waxy feeling, and be smooth and firm. It will bend in the middle. The flavor should be pleasant, with cheddary notes and proper saltiness.

SAVOR AWARD-WINNING CHEESES

*Wisconsin cheesemakers win more awards than any other state or country.
Taste the quality and flavors of the award-winning cheeses in the following recipes.*

PINEAPPLE FOSTER MINI DUTCH BABIES

Makes 1 Dozen

Ingredients

- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 6 tablespoons butter, cubed and divided
- 6 ounces **Red Barn Vintage Cūpola Artisan Cheese**, shredded and divided (1 1/2 cups)
- 1 small fresh pineapple, peeled, cored and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 3 cups)
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup dark rum
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Toasted coconut flakes

Instructions

Place a muffin pan into the oven on the middle rack. Heat oven to 425°F.

Beat eggs in a large bowl until blended. Beat in the milk, flour, sugar and vanilla until frothy.

Melt 3 tablespoons butter. Remove pan from the oven. (Pan will be hot!) Brush muffin cups with butter. Fill each muffin cup about three-fourths full with batter; sprinkle with 1 cup Cūpola. Bake for 15-17 minutes or until puffed and edges are golden brown.

Meanwhile, melt remaining butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add the pineapple, brown sugar, rum and cinnamon; cook and stir for 5-7 minutes or until pineapple is tender.

Spoon pineapple mixture into pancakes. Sprinkle with coconut flakes and remaining Cūpola. Serve warm.

VINTAGE CŪPOLA ARTISAN CHEESE

by Red Barn Family Farms

Handcrafted in small batches and aged, this raw milk cheese boasts gouda and parmesan vibes, caramel notes, and crystallization.

2023 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest, Best of Class and Overall First Runner-Up

2023, 2022 and 2019 ACS Cheese Judging & Competition, Vintage Cūpola and Cūpola First Place





MARINATED COLBY COBB SALAD

Servings 4-6

Ingredients

Marinated Colby:

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon
- 1 teaspoon snipped fresh dill
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 8 ounces **Hook's Colby cheese**, cut into triangles

Salad:

- 2 heads romaine lettuce, torn
- 6 to 8 small rainbow carrots, julienned
- 2 hard-cooked large eggs, peeled and halved
- 1 English cucumber, sliced
- 1 medium avocado, pitted, peeled and sliced
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced watermelon radishes
- 1/2 cup sugar snap peas, trimmed
- 8 bacon strips cooked and crumbled
- 6 ounces **Hook's EWE CALF to be KIDding!™ Blue Cheese**, crumbled (1 cup)
- Green goddess salad dressing

Instructions

Marinated Colby:

Combine the first eight ingredients in a large jar or bowl. Add colby. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

Salad:

Arrange lettuce on a large serving platter. Layer with the carrots, eggs, cucumber, avocado, radishes, peas and bacon. Top with colby. Sprinkle with EWE CALF to be KIDding!™. Serve with green goddess dressing.

EWE CALF TO BE KIDDING!™ BLUE AND COLBY by Hook's® Cheese Company

Hook's® Cheese Company is known for its artisan cheddars, blues, traditional colby, swiss, mixed milk cheeses like multi-award-winning EWE CALF to be KIDding!™ Blue, and more. Their signature colby was crowned World Champion in the 1982 World Cheese Championship Contest. Cheesemaker Julie Hook is the first and only woman to win this overall championship award.

2022, 2019 and 2011 ACS Cheese Judging & Competition, Colby Third Place

1982 World Cheese Championship Contest, World Champion

CRISPY SMASHED POTATOES

Servings 6

Ingredients

1 1/2 pounds small baby red potatoes (about 24)

3 tablespoons olive oil

6 tablespoons butter, cubed and melted

Salt and pepper

6 ounces **Door Artisan Top Hat™ Bandaged Cheddar cheese**, shredded (1 1/2 cups)

1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme

1 tablespoon snipped fresh chives

Instructions

Heat oven to 450°F.

Place potatoes into a large saucepan; cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium. Cook, uncovered, for 15-20 minutes or until potatoes are just tender. Drain and cool.

When cool enough to handle, toss potatoes with olive oil on two 17 x 12-inch baking pans. Arrange potatoes in a single layer. Press potatoes with the flat bottom of a heavy glass until smashed, each about 1/2-inch thick. Drizzle potatoes with butter. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with cheddar and thyme.

Bake for 20-25 minutes or until potatoes are crisp around the edges. Sprinkle with chives.

TOP HAT™ BANDAGED CHEDDAR by Door Artisan Cheese™ Company

This traditional English-style cheddar is cave-aged for at least six months, yielding a smooth, rich flavor.

2022 World Championship Cheese Contest, Second Place

2019 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest, Best of Class

2018 World Championship Cheese Contest, Best of Class



GRAND CRU® SURCHOIX: A World Champion

Wisconsin breeds champions. No, we're *not* talking about sports (though we have a proud history of that, too). We're talking cheese—a World Champion cheese. Named after two French wine terms that mean ‘the best of the best,’ **Roth Grand Cru® Surchoix**, a Wisconsin treasure inspired by traditional Swiss gruyère, lives up to its moniker. The only U.S. cheese since 1988 to win the top title at the World Championship Cheese Contest, Grand Cru® Surchoix was crowned the 2016 World Champion cheese! It also won Super Gold at the 2019 World Cheese Awards and, most recently, Best of Class at the 2022 World Championship Cheese Contest. Perhaps it's to be expected when the perfect storm of tradition, artistry and evolution come together to make a cheese as exceptional and exquisite as this standout.

BEHIND THE BEST OF THE BEST

The crescendo in the line of Roth Cheese’s washed-rind, alpine-style cheeses is their Grand Cru® Surchoix. Made with Swiss traditions and the finest Wisconsin milk, the cheese is crafted in copper vats and cellar-aged on spruce boards, both imported from Switzerland. Each wheel is regularly washed with a custom brine and flipped during aging for at least nine months. In each bite, the notes of Wisconsin’s unique terroir—the land and the climate—shine. The local landscape is essential to the fresh milk’s flavor, and the best milk is vital to their cheesemaking. It is the very thing that brought the Roth family and their love of cheese to the lush, green fields of Green County.

“To me, Grand Cru® Surchoix is distinctly Wisconsin. It is authentic to Wisconsin because, although it may have Swiss influence and inspiration, we are crafting the cheese in Wisconsin, and that has everything to do with what it turns into on your plate, on your table.”

— Madeline Kuhn | Roth Cheese
Research and Development Cheesemaker

A LINE OF LEGACY

The Roth Grand Cru® line—their one-of-a-kind Grand Cru®, the Reserve, and the Surchoix—is crafted with affinage finishes like brining, flipping and turning to express the flavor complexity of the milk, ultimately creating the signature robust flavors of each cheese. Under the watchful eye of cellarmasters, their care and expertise determine how long the wheels age while refining the cheeses to optimal textures and flavors. Depending on the cheese, aging ranges from over four months to at least nine months or more. The result? There is a wonderfully delicious cheese for every palate and occasion.

Roth Grand Cru® is the flagship and youngest cheese, aged over four months. This full-bodied beauty is nutty with light floral and fruity notes and a mellow finish, perfect for snacking, cooking, and baking. (Try it in a galette, risotto or the breakfast strata on page 33.)

Roth Grand Cru® Reserve is carefully selected to age over six months. Beloved for its bold, savory taste and nutty flavor, it’s ideal for everything from melting into sauces (page 36) to cheese boards for entertaining.

Roth Grand Cru® Surchoix is aged for at least nine months. This World Champion is only released when the cheese reaches its peak complex caramel, fruit and mushroom flavors.

“Roth Cheese was at the helm of the movement, bringing European traditions into the U.S., spurring what we know today as the modern artisan cheese movement. It really pushed Wisconsin forward as a place known for cheesemaking.”

— Abby Despins | Roth Cheese
Director of Communications and Digital Marketing



A FEAST FIT FOR A CHAMPION

Display Grand Cru® Surchoix as the centerpiece of your cheese board. Pair it with onion jam, cured meats, fresh figs, hazelnuts, almonds and olives to amplify its fruity and savory notes. Libations like Riesling, pinot gris, chardonnay, bock beer, porter and stout provide a refreshing exclamation point to this over-the-top tasting experience. Or enhance your favorite dishes by adding it to anything that yearns to go beyond the ordinary—shave it over pasta or salads or employ it to elevate sophisticated, warm appetizers and bread. The flavors are truly magical and indulgent.

ROTH GRAND CRU® SURCHOIX CHEESE

Riesling Wine + Salami +
Onion Jam + Fruit and Nut Crisps



ALPINE-STYLE CROISSANT STRATA

Servings 8

Ingredients

- 1 pound croissants (about 5 to 7 each), cut in half lengthwise
- 1 pound bulk Italian sausage
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons butter, cubed
- 2 medium shallots, thinly sliced
- 12 ounces **Roth Grand Cru® cheese**, shredded (3 cups)
- 8 large eggs
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 teaspoon each salt and pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- Fresh thyme leaves

Instructions

Heat oven to 475°F.

Place croissants cut side up on an ungreased 15 x 10-inch baking pan. Bake for 3-4 minutes or until lightly toasted. Cool on a wire rack. When cool enough to handle, cut croissants into 2-inch pieces.

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

Melt butter in the same pan over medium heat. Add shallots; cook and stir for 4-5 minutes or until tender.

Arrange half of the croissants in a greased 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Layer with half of the sausage, shallots and Grand Cru®. Repeat step, starting with croissants.

Whisk the eggs, milk, cream, salt, pepper and red pepper flakes in a large bowl; pour over Grand Cru®, pressing down lightly. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Remove strata from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Heat oven to 350°F.

Bake, covered, for 20 minutes. Uncover; bake for 18-22 minutes longer or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean and a thermometer inserted into egg mixture reads 160°F. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. Garnish with thyme.





ARTICHOKE CHICKEN IN CREAMY WINE SAUCE

Servings 4

Ingredients

- 1 cup Israeli couscous
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (6 ounces each)
- Salt and pepper
- 6 tablespoons butter, cubed and divided
- 2 medium leeks (white and light green portions only), thinly sliced (about 2 cups)
- 1 medium sweet red bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 4 ounces **Roth Grand Cru® Reserve cheese**, shredded (1 cup)
- 1 can (14 ounces) water-packed quartered artichoke hearts, rinsed, drained and coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Instructions

Cook couscous according to package directions. Keep warm.

Flatten chicken to 1/2-inch thickness. Season with salt and pepper. Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a 4-quart Dutch oven or large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken; cook for 5-6 minutes on each side or until a thermometer inserted into meat reads 165°F. Transfer chicken to a plate. Keep warm.

Melt remaining butter in the same pan over medium heat. Add the leeks, red bell pepper and garlic; cook and stir for 3 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low. Stir in flour until light brown. Gradually stir in milk and wine. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Cook and stir for 2-3 minutes or until thickened.

Reduce heat to low. Gradually stir in Grand Cru® until melted. Stir in artichoke hearts and parsley. Return chicken to the pan. Cover and cook for 2-3 minutes longer or until chicken is heated through. Remove from the heat. Season with salt and pepper. Serve with couscous.

RICOTTA CHEESE:

THE SECRET TO LIGHT, FLUFFY GNOCCHI

After winter's long hibernation, the promise of spring awakens our culinary senses, beckoning us into the kitchen to create dreamy ricotta gnocchi. It's fun for sharing *and* making memorable moments with loved ones. Throw open the windows, let the sunshine in, and invite a few friends over as you channel your inner Nonnas and chat the day away, falling into the rhythm of rolling handmade gnocchi together.



ADD RICHNESS WITH RICOTTA

Many gnocchi recipes use potatoes mixed with flour. Our base recipe gets a leg up with creamy **BelGioioso Ricotta con Latte®** cheese. The delicious reward? Luxurious, light and fluffy pillows to accompany any sauce you can dream up.

Ricotta con Latte® is among the finest ricotta cheeses available. Soft and mild, this Italian fresh cheese is made to order in small batches and boasts a clean, milky flavor. It won Second Place at the 2023 American Cheese Society Cheese Competition, Best of Class at the 2016 World Championship Cheese Contest and Gold at the 2009 World Cheese Awards. You can savor this ultra-creamy treat with fresh berries and granola or use it to upgrade lasagna and stuffed shells. Take a walk on the sweet side by blending it with confectioners' sugar, vanilla and mini chocolate chips to fill cannoli or mini phyllo tart shells.

The homemade ricotta gnocchi in the cacio e pepe-inspired recipe (page 42) is delightful tossed with a simple cheese sauce starring tender shallot, classic peppery notes and award-winning BelGioioso American Grana®. (After all, creating an extraordinary meal with just a few ingredients is easy when cooking with Wisconsin's artisan cheeses.) Then, toss the featured ricotta gnocchi with a vodka sauce dotted with fresh mozzarella or a bright lemon-cheddar gruyere sauce ideal for spring. So what are you waiting for? Ready, set...gnocchi!

ON A ROLL

Achieve picture-perfect gnocchi every time. Dust the back of a fork with flour and use light pressure with your thumb to gently roll each piece of pasta down its grooves, creating a small dimple on one side and embedding ridges for the sauce to cling to on the other.



CACIO E PEPE-INSPIRED RICOTTA GNOCCHI

SERVINGS 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 container (16 ounces) whole milk **BelGioioso Ricotta con Latte®** cheese
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/4 teaspoons pepper, divided
- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 tablespoons butter, cubed
- 1 medium shallot, finely chopped
- 3 ounces **BelGioioso American Grana®** cheese, finely grated (1 cup)
- 1/2 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
- Additional finely grated **BelGioioso American Grana®** cheese
- Additional minced fresh rosemary

INSTRUCTIONS

Place ricotta on a paper towel-lined plate. Press ricotta with paper towels to remove excess moisture.

Combine the ricotta, eggs, salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in a large bowl. Add 2 cups flour; stir to combine. Add remaining flour, a tablespoon at a time, until a soft dough forms. (Dough will not be sticky.)

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface; knead five times. Divide dough into six portions. Roll out each portion into a 3/4-inch-thick rope. Cut rope widthwise into 3/4-inch pieces. Roll each piece against the tines of a fork to create ridges. Transfer pieces to a rimmed baking sheet dusted with flour.

Bring water to a boil in a Dutch oven or stockpot. Add gnocchi in batches; cook for 3-4 minutes or until gnocchi floats. Remove gnocchi with a slotted spoon. Keep warm. Bring water back to a boil before cooking remaining gnocchi. Drain, reserving 1 cup hot gnocchi water. Yields about 1-3/4 pounds gnocchi (5 cups).

Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add shallot and remaining pepper; cook and stir for 3-4 minutes or until shallot is tender. Add gnocchi and 1/3 cup reserved gnocchi water; cook and toss for 1-2 minutes or until water is slightly reduced.

Remove from the heat. Gradually add American Grana®, tossing well after each addition. Toss with rosemary. Add remaining gnocchi water, a tablespoon at a time, until desired consistency. Garnish with additional American Grana® and rosemary.

AMERICAN GRANA® BY BELGIOIOSO® CHEESE

Savor the deep, nutty flavor and granular texture of this sophisticated parmesan, extra aged for at least 18 months in special caves. A judges' top pick, this cheese won First Place at the 2023 American Cheese Society Cheese Competition, Best of Class at the 2015 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest and Best of Class at the 2014 World Championship Cheese Contest.

SICILIAN GNOCCHI

SERVINGS 6-8

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces sliced pancetta, diced
- 2 tablespoons butter, cubed
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can (6 ounces) tomato paste
- 1 can (28 ounces) whole San Marzano tomatoes, cut with kitchen shears
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/3 cup vodka
- 1 jar (3.5 ounces) capers, drained
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 pounds gnocchi (store-bought or homemade)
- 1 container (8 ounces) **Crave Brothers Farmstead Classics® Fresh Mozzarella cheese—CilieGINE** (cherry-sized balls), drained and halved
- 1 cup sliced Kalamata olives
- Fresh basil leaves, chiffonade

INSTRUCTIONS

Fry pancetta in a large skillet over medium heat until crisp. Remove pancetta with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain.

Melt butter in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onion; cook and stir for 6-8 minutes or until crisp-tender. Add garlic; cook and stir for 1 minute. Add tomato paste; cook and stir for 1 minute longer. Stir in the tomatoes, fennel seeds and red pepper flakes. Cook for 10-12 minutes or until slightly thickened, stirring frequently.

Reduce heat to low. Gradually stir in cream. Remove from the heat. Cool slightly. Process sauce, in batches, in a blender or with an immersion blender until smooth. Return to the pan.

Stir in vodka and capers. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to low. Simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Bring water to a boil in a Dutch oven or stockpot. Cook gnocchi, in batches, according to directions. Remove gnocchi with a slotted spoon. Keep warm. Bring water back to a boil before cooking remaining gnocchi. Drain. Return to the pan. Add 2 cups sauce; toss to coat.

Top servings with fresh mozzarella, olives, pancetta and additional sauce. Garnish with basil.

FRESH MOZZARELLA BY CRAVE BROTHERS FARMSTEAD CHEESE

Cheesemakers at Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese craft their fresh mozzarella by artfully stretching and working heated curds into smooth, molten masses before forming them into logs and balls of various sizes. This cheese won First Place at the 2022 American Cheese Society Competition and Best of Class at the 2022 World Championship Cheese Contest.





LEMON-ASPARAGUS GNOCCHI

SERVINGS 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound gnocchi (store-bought or homemade)
- 6 tablespoons butter, cubed and divided
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound fresh asparagus spears, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 package (8 ounces) sliced baby portobello mushrooms
- 1 small red onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Zest and juice of 1 medium lemon
- 6 ounces **Wood River Creamery™ Cheddar Gruyere cheese**, shredded (1 1/2 cups)
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Additional shaved **Wood River Creamery™ Cheddar Gruyere cheese**
- Additional lemon zest

INSTRUCTIONS

Bring water to a boil in a Dutch oven. Cook gnocchi according to directions. Drain, reserving 1 cup hot gnocchi water. Wipe out the pan.

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in the same pan over medium heat. Add half of the gnocchi; cook for 2-3 minutes or until browned. (Do not stir.) Cook and stir for 1 minute longer. Remove from the pan. Keep warm. Repeat step with remaining gnocchi. Remove from the pan. Keep warm.

Warm 2 tablespoons butter and olive oil in the same pan over medium heat. Add the asparagus, mushrooms and red onion; cook and stir for 3-4 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender. Add garlic; cook and stir for 1 minute.

Reduce heat to low. Add 1/4 cup reserved gnocchi water; cook and toss for 1-2 minutes or until water is slightly reduced. Toss in the gnocchi, lemon zest, lemon juice and remaining butter.

Remove from the heat. Gradually add cheddar gruyere, tossing well after each addition. Add remaining gnocchi water, a tablespoon at a time, until desired consistency. Toss with parsley. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with additional cheddar gruyere and lemon zest.

CHEDDAR GRUYERE BY WOOD RIVER CREAMERY™

Handcrafted in limited quantities and small batches by Master Cheesemaker Bruce Willis, this one-of-a-kind artisan cheese is a decadent fusion of two favorites, cheddar and gruyere. This aged specialty is creamy with sweet and nutty notes, and it's the perfect complement to the entrée's spring veggies and buttery lemon flavors.



Lemon Olive Oil Cake with Merlot BellaVitano®

Servings 12

Ingredients

Olive Oil Cake:

- 1 3/4 cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- 4 large eggs
- 1 1/3 cups olive oil
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 6 ounces **Sartori Merlot BellaVitano® cheese**, finely shredded (1 1/2 cups)

Lemon Glaze:

- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- Fresh raspberries
- Additional shaved **Sartori Merlot BellaVitano® cheese**

Instructions

Olive Oil Cake:

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a 10-inch (about 12 cups) fluted tube pan.

Combine sugar and lemon zest in a large bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating each until well combined. While beating, slowly drizzle in olive oil until blended.

Whisk the milk, lemon juice and vanilla in a bowl. Combine the flour, baking powder, salt and baking soda in another large bowl; gradually add to olive oil mixture alternately with milk mixture, beating each addition until combined. Fold in Merlot BellaVitano®.

Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake for 45-55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes in pan before removing to a wire rack to cool completely.

Lemon Glaze:

Combine confectioners' sugar and lemon juice in a bowl until smooth. Drizzle glaze over the cake.

Serve cake with raspberries and additional Merlot BellaVitano®.



WISCONSIN CHEESE COMPANY DIRECTORY

CHEESEMAKERS IN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN 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.**

Agropur, Inc.
All Star, LTD
Arena Cheese, Inc.
Arla Foods, Inc.
Associated Milk Producers, Inc.—Corporate
Babcock Hall Dairy Plant
Baker Cheese, Inc.
Bass Lake Cheese Factory
Bel Brands USA
BelGioioso Cheese, Inc.—Corporate
Brunkow Cheese of Wisconsin
Burnett Dairy Cooperative
Cady Cheese
Caprine Supreme, LLC
Carr Valley Cheese Company, Inc.
Cascade Cheese Company
Castle Rock Organic Farms
Cedar Grove Cheese
Cedar Valley Cheese, Inc.
Cesar’s Cheese
Chalet Cheese Cooperative
Clock Shadow Creamery
Cosmic Wheel Creamery
Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, LLC
Crystal Farms Cheese
Decatur Dairy, Inc.
Deer Creek Cheese
Delta Dream, LLC
Door Artisan Cheese Company

Dupont Cheese, Inc.
Eau Galle Cheese Factory, Inc.
Edelweiss Creamery
Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery
F&A Dairy Products, Inc.
Foremost Farms USA Cooperative
Gibbsville Cheese Company, Inc.
Gile Cheese, LLC / Carr Cheese Factory
Gilman Cheese Corporation
Harmony Specialty Dairy Foods, LLC
Henning’s Wisconsin Cheese
Hidden Springs Creamery
Hill Valley Dairy, LLC
Hoard’s Dairyman Farm Creamery
Hook’s Cheese Company, Inc.
Keystone Farms Cheese
Kingston Creamery
Klondike Cheese Company
Koepke Family Farms
Laack Brothers Cheese Company, Inc.
LaClare Farms—Mosaic Meadows
Lactalis American Group, Inc.
LaGrandier’s Hillside Dairy, Inc.
Land O’Lakes, Inc.
Landmark Creamery
LoveTree Farmstead Cheese
Lynn Dairy, Inc.
Malcore Foods, Inc.
Maple Grove Cheese, Inc.

Maple Leaf Cheese
Marieke Gouda
McCluskey Brothers Organic Farms
Meister Cheese Company
Mexican Cheese Producers, Inc.
Milkhaus Dairy
Mill Creek Cheese Factory
Mullins Cheese, Inc.
Nasonville Dairy, Inc.
Noble View Cheese
Nordic Creamery
North Country Packaging, Inc.
Oak Grove Dairy, Inc.
Omega Naturals
Organic Valley
Pasture Pride Cheese, LLC
Pine River Pre-Pack
Ponderosa Dairy Products, LLC
Prairie Farms Cheese Division
Red Apple Cheese
Red Barn Family Farms
Renard’s Cheese
Roelli Cheese Haus
Roth Cheese
Saputo Cheese USA, Inc.
Sartori Company
Saxon Homestead Farm, LLC
Schreiber Foods, Inc.—Corporate
Schroeder Kase

Schuman Cheese
Scott’s of Wisconsin
Scray Cheese Company
Shullsburg Creamery
Silver-Lewis Cheese Factory Cooperative
Specialty Cheese Company, Inc.
Springside Cheese Corporation
Thuli Family Creamery
Union Star Corporation
Uplands Cheese Company
Valley View Cheese Cooperative
V&V Supremo Foods, Inc.
W&W Dairy, Inc.
Wakker Cheese
Westby Cooperative Creamery
Weyauwega Cheese
Weyauwega Star Dairy, Inc.
White Jasmine
Widmer’s Cheese Cellars, Inc.
Willow Creek Cheese
Wisconsin Aging & Grading Cheese, Inc.
Wisconsin Cheese Group (Sabrosura Foods)
Wisconsin Dairy State Cheese Company
Wiskerchen Cheese, Inc.
Wohlt Cheese
Yellowstone Cheese, Inc.
Zimmerman Cheese, Inc.

BRAVO'S

TOP CHEF

is heading to

Wisconsin



Season 21 premieres on March 20, 2024

This season, you won't want to miss the cheftestants in a cutthroat cheese festival featuring some of Wisconsin's award-winning cheeses and other culinary delights. Watch for cameos of some of your favorite Wisconsin cheesemakers!



Catch the entire season of supersized episodes every Wednesday night from 8:00 to 9:15pm CST on Bravo. Episodes will be available the next day on Peacock.