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VERMONT CHEESE WEEK LAUNCHES

New cheese event feeds the souls and stomachs of cheese fanatics and lovers

Waitsfield, VT (May 29, 2024) - Last week Vermont Cheese Council publicly launched Vermont Cheese Week™ – a state-wide, weeklong celebration of Vermont cheese that will be taking place September 7-15, 2024. The week includes a combination of events designed to provide foodies and cheese lovers with unique learning, tasting, pairing, and local “Vermontish” experiences.

The public can participate in an array of activities, each designed for people looking for different experiences. For example, people can start the week off enjoying a cheese feast at the Harpoon Brewery Kickoff event in Windsor; pick up a basket of local cheeses and snacks and enjoy a mellow, curated picnic on a farm in the Champlain Valley; watch cheesemaking and tour international award-winning cheesemaking creameries around the state; attend a pairing event in Norwich at King Arthur Flour, recently recognized for its advancements in regenerative agriculture as the fifth most innovative consumer goods brand in Fast Company’s prestigious list of the World’s Most Innovative Companies; and even sign up for cheese camp at Hildene, the Lincoln Family Home in Manchester, where they will get to meet cheesemakers from around the state, learn about cheese from one of Vermont’s most well-known cheesemongers, and tour Hildene’s farm and cheesemaking spaces while learning about the history of cheese.

“One thing that’s unique about Vermont is how many cheese producers we have in such a small state. You can visit a cheesemaker in one corner of the state one day, then go to a pairing event in the opposite corner the next day with a relatively short drive compared to some of the larger cheese producing states,” shares Marty Mundy, Executive Director for Vermont Cheese Council. “When people drive through Vermont – which is gorgeous and often draws in people who live and visit us here – over 80 percent of the rolling pastures and farmland they see is dairy and cheese-related. Hundreds of the farms people see support Vermont’s dairy producers – and we want to celebrate that.”

The week isn’t just for consumers though: It includes the Vermont Cheese Summit, a 2-day event that helps retailers, cheesemongers, grocery stores, restaurants, distributors, and cheese industry professionals connect with cheese producers firsthand. The weekend includes cheesemaker site tours, education sessions, networking, and one-on-one sampling with Vermont’s cheese producers at Basin Harbor Resort in Vergennes.

“We’re excited to be able to show off the range and diversity of cheeses we make in the Green Mountain State. One compelling aspect of our work is the focus our cheesemakers and farmers give to sustainability efforts. It’s part of what makes Vermont and its dairy products special and something that we all try to work on in different ways,” explained Jed Davis, moderator for one of the Vermont Cheese Summit’s sustainability-related educational panels and Sustainability Lead at Cabot Creamery Cooperative, the largest cheese producer in the state.

Vermont produces hundreds of different kinds of cheese – using cow, goat, and sheep’s milk. Many smaller producers use milk from their own farm to produce their cheese, while others may use their own milk and/or milk from between 2 and 400+ farms with whom they partner. Over two-thirds of Vermont producers have only 1-10 staff members and make cheese by hand. These smaller producers sell at farmers markets – or sometimes their own farmstands, though Vermont’s small size doesn’t keep its producers from garnering big reputations. In 2023 Vermont cheese producers won a whopping 142 cheese competition awards, one third

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of which came from international events like the World Cheese Awards and the International Cheese & Dairy Awards.

Molly Pindell, owner and cheesemaker of Sage Farm Goat Dairy, a two-person farm whose cheese has won awards previously at the American Cheese Society's Judging & Competition event, adds, "It's really exciting when your cheeses win awards on the national stage, and then you get to celebrate that with the Vermont community, both customers and other cheesemakers. As one of the smallest cheese producers in Vermont, I appreciate events where I get the opportunity to connect in person with other cheesemakers from all over the state. It's great to have a reason to get off the farm and socialize and network, and to celebrate what we all do. From the smallest to the largest of us, it's so gratifying to see and taste the contributions we all make to this vibrant, collaborative cheese community in Vermont. The Cheese Week kickoff event will be a wonderful way for our community to gather, share, and celebrate what we do."

While the event provides unique learning opportunities and experiences for its audiences, it also is a fundraiser for the Vermont Cheese Council, which has partnered with breweries, wineries, towns, restaurants, and others throughout the state to build this week-long foodie adventure. The Vermont Cheese Council is a nonprofit organization that provides education and business support to Vermont cheese producers. It is the host of Vermont Cheese Week™; the Vermont Cheese Trail™; The Hunt™, a scavenger hunt for cheese lovers and Vermont explorers; the Artisan Cheesemakers Winter Conference™ – which is attended by cheesemakers and researchers from across the globe; and the Business Miniversity™, a business skill development program for cheese producers and their distribution and retail partners.

Additional links:

- Vermont Cheese Week webpage: www.vtcheese.com/cheeseweek
- Vermont Cheese Summit: www.vtcheese.com/summit
- Vermont Cheese 2023 Awards List: www.vtcheese.com/awards
- Vermont Cheese Trail: www.vtcheese.com/trail
- Vermont Cheese Council: www.vtcheese.com

Editors Note: A limited number of complimentary press passes are available for Vermont Cheese Week events. Please contact Marty Mundy if interested. marty@vtcheese.com

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