



U.S. Cheesemakers Fare Well at UK Competition

January 11, 2012

United States cheesemakers came away with 85 medals at the World Cheese Awards, the most ever for U.S. entrants in the competition. Hundreds of cheese companies worldwide participated, sending more than 2,500 cheeses to Birmingham, England, where they were judged by a field of more than 200 expert tasters from around the world.



American cheesemakers sent four cheeses to the final round of 16. Limited Edition Cognac BellaVitano, from **Sartori Foods**, Plymouth, Wis., took third place overall from the final evaluation, also earning it a trophy for the “Best U.S. Cow’s Milk Cheese,” an award sponsored by the U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC).

“This past 10 years has witnessed a phenomenal rise in U.S. cheeses on the world stage,” says Bob Farrand, award chairman of the competition, which is organized by The Guild of Fine Food. “To come third in the world is a tremendous achievement and the volume of awards amassed this year is a fitting testimony to a generation of U.S. cheese makers at the very top of their game.”

USDEC encourages stateside participation by sponsoring the “Best U.S. Cow’s Milk Cheese” trophy each year. USDEC involvement with the World Cheese Awards, supported by U.S. dairy producers through their checkoff program, along with other USDEC market development programs and activities, help drive global demand for U.S. cheese and other dairy products by enhancing the quality image of U.S. supply in overseas markets.

“When U.S. cheeses shine in a competition like this on a global stage, it reflects on the quality of all U.S. dairy products,” says Angélique Hollister, director of cheese and manufactured products, USDEC.

Another Sartori entry – Sartori Reserve Cinnamon-rubbed BellaVitano – also made it to the final round of 16. It was joined by Cardona, from **Carr Valley Cheese Co.**, Lavalley, Wis., and Bloomsdale, from Baetje Farms, Bloomsdale, Mo. In addition, two more U.S. cheeses – Bandaged Wrapped Cheddar from **Fiscalini Cheese**, Modesto, Calif., and Spring Brook Farm Tarentaise from the **Farms for City Kids Foundation**, Reading, Vt. – reached the intermediate round of 50 to earn coveted “Super Gold” medals.

Wisconsin-based **BelGioioso Cheese** won six medals. Three awards recognized the company's entire line of BelGioioso Gorgonzola cheeses. CreamyGorg and Crumbly Gorgonzola with Sheep's Milk received silver medals, while Crumbly Gorgonzola earned a bronze medal. The company received a silver medal its Burrata, a bronze for Mascarpone and a bronze for Whole Milk Ricotta con Latte.

Grafton Village Cheese, Grafton, Vt., received five awards, including one gold and four bronze medals, all from its new Grafton Cave Aged line. The Vermont Clothbound Cheddar earned a gold medal in the medium traditional cheddar category, and its Barndance and Shepsog cheeses received bronze awards in the category for cheese made from the milk of more than one animal. Truffled Bismark earned bronze in the ewes' milk cheese with added flavors category and Red Vask earned bronze in the category for new cheese.

Grafton's cave-aging facility and accessibility to local, premium raw milk has allowed me to create some really unique mixed-milk varieties," said Dane Huebner, Master Cheesemaker at Grafton Village Cheese. "I'm extremely excited about the recognition our newest cheeses are receiving, especially on an international level."

There were 46 U.S. companies entering a total of 383 U.S.-made cheeses in the World Cheese Awards this year. Carr Valley paced the field with 11 medals. Other multiple-award winning companies included internationally affiliated companies like **Sorrento Lactalis** and **Lactalis USA Group**, and cheeses originating on small Vermont farmsteads, finished and entered by the Cellars of Jasper Hill.

The overall top award this year went to a 10-month Ossau Iraty from French farmhouse producer Fromagerie Agou. The runner-up was Cornish Blue by Britain's Cornish Blue Co.

— *Information provided by U.S Dairy Export Council, with additional details from BelGioioso Cheese and Grafton Village Cheese*

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