

UNITED STATES CHAMPIONSHIP
CHEESE CONTEST

HOSTED BY WISCONSIN CHEESE
MAKERS ASSOCIATION

MARCH 17 - 19, 2009

LAMBEAU FIELD ATRIUM
GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN

WEBSITE
WWW.USCHAMPIONCHEESE.ORG



NEWS RELEASE

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Return to Tiletown: Championship Cheese Contest Begins March 17

Madison, WI -- A Championship returns to Green Bay as Lambeau Field prepares to host the 2009 United States Championship Cheese Contest March 17-19.

This premiere dairy competition is free and open to the public: a chance to see and sample cheeses from across the United States.

“Cheesemaking is experiencing a renaissance in the United States, spurred by a new generation of artisans and farmstead producers that have reawakened America’s interest in great cheese,” said John Umhoefer, executive director, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association.

The contest – the Superbowl of the dairy industry – will gather a record 1,336 cheeses and butters from 32 states. Expert judges examine, taste and sniff each cheese, ranging from giant 200-pound Swiss wheels and blocks to tiny farmstead creations from cow’s milk, goat’s milk or sheep’s milk.

The Madison, Wisconsin-based Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association has hosted a cheese contest since the 1800s and ignited a national competition in 1981 with the formation of the United States Championship Cheese Contest. The contest returns to Green Bay after a decade on the road.

The contest runs three days, March 17, 18 and 19 in the Atrium at Lambeau Field. Green Bay Packer Nick Barnett will be on hand for the Championship Round of judging on Thursday morning March 19.

Cheesemakers and buttermakers from Rhode Island to Oregon send products to the competition, vying for gold medals in 64 cheese and butter classes. “Dairy states such as Wisconsin, New York, California and Vermont enter heavily,” said Umhoefer, “but we have received soft goat’s milk cheese from Louisiana, farmhouse cheddar from Kansas and scamorza from Connecticut.” The three-day contest will be the largest collection of American cheeses ever assembled.

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The competition is a technical evaluation of products, according to Robert Aschebrock, chief judge for the event. “These judges can detect subtle notes in flavor, odor and texture, and deduct points for each slight imperfection in these cheeses and butters,” Aschebrock said. Judges pair off to evaluate a class such as blue-veined cheeses. These teams work silently and independently, with each judge’s score averaged with their partner to determine a final score for each entry.

The public is welcome to watch the panel of 24 judges from 12 states evaluate cheeses and butters. The judging is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday March 17 and Wednesday March 18 in the Atrium at Lambeau Field. Samples of cheeses from the competition will be available for tasting .

Thursday morning, March 19, the entire expert panel gathers to evaluate the gold medal cheeses a second time and declare a single United States Champion Cheese. The morning begins at 9:00 a.m. with a welcome from Green Bay Packer linebacker Nick Barnett and a real-time sculpture by professional cheese carver Troy Landwehr. Mr. Barnett will remain on-site to enjoy cheese and sign autographs for cheeseheads and Packer fans. The Championship Round of judging, to pick the nation’s Champion Cheese, begins at 10:00 a.m. Cheese lovers can visit the Atrium or follow the contest with results and images at www.uschampioncheese.org. The Champion Round will be broadcast via live streaming video on the website.

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