

# The global journey of U.S. specialty cheeses

U.S. cheese has a rich past and a vibrant future.



By Angélique Hollister

**C**heesemaking in the United States is an inspired story of artisanship and excellence that dates back hundreds of years, representing the vast multicultural experiences brought to the country by immigrants. Today, talented and creative cheesemakers from large-scale establishments to small family-based ventures push traditional limits toward new and elegant cheese offerings.

The growing global recognition of the outstanding quality and variety of U.S. cheeses is leading to increased utilization in Western-style cuisine, as well as in recipes that reflect the culture and taste preferences of consumers around the world. The creativity and innovative spirit of U.S. cheesemakers are two reasons U.S. cheese is increasingly featured as a high-quality craft food item harboring a nearly endless spectrum of flavors and ingredients.

## Craftsmanship

Telling the U.S. cheese story spans thousands of miles — from the rolling hills of New England, to the vast open prairies of the Plains states, to the unique and dramatic beauty of the West Coast. With such a broad geography from which to pull, it is no wonder that the outstanding craftsmanship of U.S. cheesemakers results in tremendous cheese variety and versatility.

Across all 50 states, U.S. farmers are dedicated to a sustainably produced milk supply, so highly touted, award-winning cheeses come from cheesemakers across

the country. While states such as Wisconsin and California are traditionally recognized for their cheeses available around the world, other states such as Vermont, Oregon, Minnesota, Idaho and New York also contribute to the innovative, flavorful varieties increasingly being enjoyed outside of U.S. borders.

## Innovation

U.S. cheesemakers are consistently winning top honors in internationally recognized cheese competitions. In 2018 alone, the United States won 89 medals at the World Cheese Awards and 266 at the World Championship Cheese Contest.

But even with this growing success, ongoing efforts are in place toward further creativity and expansion. Investments in research and additional innovation by U.S. farmers and cheesemakers, combined with the long, rich heritage of skilled craftsmanship, continue to drive us forward.

## Variety and versatility

U.S. cheesemakers produce more than 600 cheese types, ranging from soft fresh options to hard aged varieties, and U.S. specialty cheeses offer original flavors that range from herbal and garlic to smoky and spicy. This virtually endless variety provides selections that can complement diverse local recipes calling for everything from creamy cheese sauces to bold-flavored cheeses that can be included in more elegant and complex dishes. As a result, chefs and formulators

in markets around the world are including U.S. cheeses in their cooking and product development to creatively meet diverse consumer tastes and trends.

The large number of cheese varieties produced in the United States also creates unparalleled value stemming from versatility in meal preparation and presentation. U.S. cheeses can be enjoyed alone, be paired with wine or beer, or excel as ingredients in innovative cuisines that can satisfy even the most discerning palates. While cheese is primarily added to food for flavor, advanced technologies have enabled U.S. cheese manufacturers to tailor-make cheese with specific functional properties such as controlled browning, restricted melt and sharper flavor profiles.

As cheese continues to increase in popularity, the innovation of award-winning U.S. cheesemakers extends to techniques and processes that allow us to supply the rising demand around the globe. With the capacity to provide an increasing supply and a vast array of products, the U.S. dairy industry is in a unique position to meet continuing demand from customers around the world.

Visit [ThinkUSAdairy.org](http://ThinkUSAdairy.org) for more information about U.S. specialty cheeses. ■

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Angélique Hollister is vice president, cheese marketing for the U.S. Dairy Export Council. A French native, she inherently loves cheese and truly enjoys demonstrating to the world the heritage and high quality of the many cheeses “made in the USA.”