

CHEESE PARINGS

Volume 2, Issue 1

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE CHEESE GUILD

January 2004

MAINE



CHEESE GUILD

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From the President's Desk:

As I look back on our first full year as the Maine Cheese Guild, I can safely say that we accomplished all the goals we set out.

Thanks to a grant from the Maine Department of Agriculture and the untiring efforts of a dedicated collection of cheese folk, we have a look, a web site, a newsletter, and a state-wide presence. Our first annual Cheese Festival was successful beyond our dreams, and the Maine Cheese Guild's Holiday Cheese Sampler was a sell-out. Thanks to all these, a lot of good press, and one of the best products Maine has to offer, the awareness of Maine's artisan cheese has been elevated substantially in the public consciousness.

As we look ahead to the new year, I hope we can encourage more cheesemakers to make the leap into commercial production, and share our knowledge with new cheesemakers. It's going to be a fun year.

See you round the cheese vat,

Caitlin Hunter

Maine Cheese Guild Meeting Schedule 2004

Jan. 13 Lincoln/Oxford Rm, Agricultural Trade Show, Civic Center, Augusta

Times: 10 am -11am Board Meeting

11 am -12 noon Open Meeting with Panel Discussion with Glen Meheuren from the State Department of Agriculture – Getting Licensed For Cheesemaking In Maine

Jan. 19 or 26 (date TBA), State of Maine Cheese Co., Rockport Fromagex to give us a presentation on the moulds, cheese packaging, draining mats, and other cheese supplies they sell. Should be fantastic!!

Feb. 23, Hahn's End, Phippsburg. The theme will be "packaging". Bring your favorites and not-favorites and supplier sources.

April 5, Appleton Creamery, Appleton. See the kids!

May 17, Smiling Hill Farm, Westbrook

June 28, Town House Farm, Whitefield

August 9, 1797 Farm, Auburn

Sept 27, Sunset Acres Farm, Brooksville

Oct. ?, Second Annual Cheese Festival, date and location TBA

Nov, 8, State of Maine Cheese Co., Rockport, ANNUAL MEETING

Dec. 13, Christmas party, location TBA

All times 10 am – 2 pm unless otherwise noted.

Member Maine Cheese Guild Labels Ready

We had 10,000 “member Maine Cheese Guild” stickers printed (paid for with our grant from the Maine Department of Agriculture). The stickers are free to cheesemaker-members on a first-come first-served basis at the Trade Show, and we can have subsequent labels printed for a small fee.

Advanced Cheesemaking Workshop a Blast!

More than ten cheesemakers attended the Advanced Cheesemaking Workshop with Peter Dixon held at State of Maine Cheese Co. November 4-6. During this three day course the class made Fresh Mozzarella, Asiago, Blue De Gex, Roquefort/Stilton, Meunster and Toma. These cheeses were made from cow, goat or sheep milk or some combination of the above. It was interesting to see the way in which the different milks behaved. In addition to covering the crafting of these cheeses, Peter addressed a myriad of topics including working with late lactation milk, relative acidities of various cheese families, renneting time (how-to calculate), cheese aging, packaging and marketing. As anyone who has taken a class with Peter knows, he is an absolute wealth of knowledge, knowing not just what happens, but the scientific principles behind it. It was an inspiring three days. The information we took away from it both as individual cheesemakers and as a guild was invaluable. A big thank you to Peter Dixon for instructing the workshop and to the State of Maine Cheese Co. for graciously hosting the workshop in their facility.

Beginner Cheesemaking Workshops

Have you been waiting for a class targeted to folks just starting cheesemaking? Have you been quietly nurturing a love for artisanal cheeses and thinking of trying to make your own? If so, we’ve got a class coming up in February just for beginners. Mark your calendars! Sign-up now for the class listed below to learn the how-to’s of cheesemaking from experienced Maine Cheese Guild Member, Deb Hahn of Hahn’s End. Space is limited, so please sign up early.

Another beginner workshop, Beginner Cheesemaking (goat) 101 with Anne Bossi of Sunset Acres is slated for March, date TBA. Keep an eye on the website, www.mainecheeseguild.org.



Deb Hahn displaying her cheeses at the
Maine Cheese Festival.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip: _____ Ph: _____
Email: _____

I would like to register for :

Beginner Cheesemaking (cow) 102 with Deb Hahn - \$50
Hahn’s End, Phippsburg
Feb. 20 9:30 am - 4:00 pm

Please mail with payment to:

Maine Cheese Guild
C/o Scott Gardner, Treasurer
1797 Farm
337 Fickett Road
Auburn, ME 04210

***please remember to bring a bag lunch

The Training Center for Farmstead Milk Processing at Westminster Dairy at Livewater Farm Presents

A series of two-day workshops in making cheese and other dairy products on the farm, taught by Peter Dixon and special guests. Through making cheese and other dairy products and receiving classroom instruction at Westminster Dairy, a licensed Vermont farmstead milk processor, participants will learn the fundamentals of milk processing and how to set up and improve their own farmstead cheese businesses. During the two days, we will make butter, yogurt, starter cultures, other fresh cultured dairy products and at least four varieties of cheese. A simple raw milk tomme-style cheese will be made in all the workshops. Lunches and course materials, including many tried and true recipes, will be provided. Cost is \$250, payable on arrival. Contact Peter Dixon at Westminster Dairy, 1289 Westminster West Rd., Westminster West, VT 05346. Tel. 802-387-5110 or Email <pdixon@sover.net> for further details and to sign up.

Schedule as follows:

January 24-25 Alpine cheeses: Asiago, Tomme (artisanal), Swiss, Butter and Sour cream.

February 7-8 Italian cheeses: Romano, Toma, Provolone, Fresh Mozzarella, and Ricotta.

March 6-7 Soft-ripened cheeses: Brie, Camembert, Aged Goat cheeses, French Tomme, Butter and Creme Fraiche.

April 17-18 Four Blue cheeses from sheep, cow and goat milk, including Bleu de Gex (tomme-style).

May 1-2 British cheeses: Caerphilly, Colwick, Cheddar (cloth-bound), and Cheshire.

In other News...

Guild Member Perry Ells of Ells Farm poured the foundation for her milking parlour in December (see photo of her sheep below). Congratulations Perry! We all look forward to your sheep's milk!



Appleton Creamery will be featured in an upcoming segment of the new Maine PBS series "What's For Suppah?" sometime in January, with host Tim Sample.

9th Annual Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium in Quebec City

The 9th Annual Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium, presented by the Dairy Sheep Association of North America was held in Quebec City on November 6-8, 2003. The focus of this year's symposium was on cheese and was well represented by Maine Cheese Guild members – Perry Ells, Claire Mikolayunas and Scott Gardner attended. Scott's report follows:

The second day and a half of the symposium consisted of several talks by North American and European presenters on a variety of topics related to milk production and cheesemaking. Of particular interest to cheesemakers was a presentation by Cornell University researchers on the control of *Listeria*, specifically *L. monocytogenes*, the strain capable of causing severe illness, abortion and death in humans. The presenters outlined many disturbing facts about *Listeria*. *Listeria* is a hardy bacterium – it can survive and even grow at 0 degrees centigrade and in a 10% salt environment, and does not have to be in a host of food product to survive. It is also ubiquitous – *Listeria* has been found in up to 30% of environmental samples from farms and in 7% of samples from urban environments. Also, where dairy animals have been exposed to *Listeria*, most animals show no disease symptoms but do shed *Listeria* in their feces.

According to the presenters, there are about 2500 cases of *Listeria* infection in the USA each year and from 20% to 30% are fatal. Almost all human cases (99%) are food borne. The presenters discussed the dairy related *Listeria* incidents occurring in the last 10 years – there apparently have been only four. In 1983 there were 43 cases of *Listeria* in Massachusetts traced to pasteurized milk, in 1985 there were 142 cases traced to Hispanic style fresh cheeses made from improperly pasteurized milk in California, and in 1994 there were 45 cases in Wisconsin traced to improper storage of pasteurized chocolate milk. The most recent incident occurred in Quebec in 2002 where there were 17 cases of *Listeria* infection traced to heat treated aged and fresh cheeses produced in a brand new cheese plant. The source of the contamination was at first a mystery -- all environmental samples from the plant were negative for *Listeria*. (continued on page 4)

9th Annual Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium in Quebec City

(continued from page 3)

It was later determined, however, that cheese production commenced at the plant before construction was complete and that workers were tracking soil into the plant. Cleaning up after the workers resulted in spray water contaminating the cheesemaking equipment or the milk.

The presenters made a few recommendations to limit the possibility of *Listeria* contamination (aside from standard animal husbandry, cleaning and sanitation practices). They recommended against ever feeding spoiled silage or silage that is greater than pH 5.0. *Listeria* has been found at concentrations of 100 million bacteria per gram of bad silage. Also, spoiled silage should be removed from the farm so that it will not be tracked into stables, milk rooms, etc. A second recommendation was to pasteurize all milk (although it should be noted that all of the *Listeria* outbreaks they discussed were traced to pasteurized or heat treated products). Finally, they recommended a thorough cleaning of all animal housing concurrent with treatment of the animals if there is a *Listeria* outbreak on the farm.

Although the facts presented were quite alarming, it is good to remember that there are billions of pounds of cheese produced in the USA each year with only two outbreaks of *Listeria* related to cheese in the last ten years -- and both of those were caused by improper milk handling or sanitation.

Another interesting presentation was given by researchers from the Roquefort region of France on mastitis prevention. Although not entirely on the subject, the single most attention-grabbing thing revealed was that milk producers in Roquefort do not clean or sanitize teats or udders prior to milking. This type of sanitation (required by law in North America) was found to be too time consuming. Instead, Roquefort sheep dairies practice the following in order to reduce the incidences of mastitis and contaminated or high SCC milk:

- No “wet” milkings. There should be no milk seen at the teat end after milking. This is prevented by the use of high capacity claws or clawless milkers, allowing air entry into the milker, and positioning the claw sufficiently below the level of the udder. The key being to allow milk to drain away quickly without backup.
- Milk each animal for less than three minutes.
- Select for ewes without two milk let-down phases.
- Ewes that are difficult to milk are milked last and are culled at the end of the season.
- Cut the vacuum to the milker before attempting to remove it from the animal.
- Reduce the opportunity for scarring of the teats, often due to lamb bites.
- Dry off gradually at the end of the season over five milkings spaced at 32, 40, 54, 60 and then 72 hours.
- Avoid animal housing at greater than 10 degrees centigrade or with poor air circulation, do not provide ice water in a relatively warm barn, and remove manure from barns every three to four weeks (apparently it is the practice in Roquefort to keep ewes in confinement housing during the milking season).

Milk is tested each week to determine whether the bacterial and SCC are not unacceptably high.

Finally, a few points from a study done in Quebec that may help you in your cheese marketing:

- Consumers think of cheese in two ways – as either a “daily cheese” or a “weekend cheese.” A daily cheese is available year round, is easy to use and could be eaten at almost any time of the day. A weekend cheese is for special occasions and provides a superior taste or novel experience. Price and nutritional value are important with a daily cheese but not with a weekend cheese.
- The most important cheese characteristics to consumers are taste and after-taste.
- Consumers are more likely to remember cheese by type or characteristics but not by specific name. However, they are better able to remember a specific cheese by its wrapping.
- Consumers are frustrated by the availability of artisan cheese and want more information on local or regional cheeses

Farm Profile - Townhouse Farm

Rick and Sherry Chattick own and operate Townhouse Farm in Whitefield, Maine. They have been making cheese for five years for family and friends and became licensed for cheesemaking this year. They make gouda, cheddar, flavored spread cheeses and dry curd cheese as well as old fashioned ice creams.

The Chatticks had always used raw milk for their family and had practiced making different varieties of cheese for home use. The family began asking for more cheese than they were making and they decided it was time to get licensed and get their product out there.

Their herd currently consists of three registered Brown Swiss with two more on the way. The Brown Swiss breed is native to the mountains of Bavaria and Switzerland. It is one of the oldest dairy breeds still existing today and known to be the ultimate cheese cow because of the richness of their milk.

Rather than pasteurizing, Rick and Sherry heat treat their milk. This entails raising the milk to the same temperature as for batch pasteurization but is done much more slowly and the milk is gently stirred by hand. By heat treating there is less damage to the milk proteins critical for quality cheesemaking.

As with most farmers one of the biggest challenges is the enormous commitment required. As Sherry puts it “Starting with a job which is seven days a week 365 days a year... it has to be a lifestyle that you are willing to commit yourself to and it is not for everyone. Everyday you make cheese it’s just a little different than the day before and that is probably the biggest challenge, and making new varieties starts you all over again with the learning process.” It is clear that the Chatticks enjoy that learning process and have really taken the time to develop their craft. Their products are available at the following locations and in the near future from their website (www.geocities.com/townhousefarm).

Uncas Farm Natural Foods – Townhouse Road,
Whitefield

Harvesttime Natural Foods – Shaws Plaza in Augusta
Belfast Co-op

K. Horton Specialty Foods – Portland Public Market
Five Islands Farm- Georgetown (seasonally)



The First Annual Maine Cheese Festival – October 2003

The first ever Maine Cheese Festival, cosponsored by MOFGA and the Maine Cheese Guild in October, was a tremendous success! More than 400 turophiles attended the event at MOFGA's Education Center in Unity, and more than seven cheesemakers there to sample and sell their cheeses and connect with folks interested in learning about artisanal Maine cheeses. There was a wonderful display on the history of cheesemaking in Maine with antique cheesemaking implements on exhibit, and books for perusal.

The workshops and lectures were well attended...Beginning Cheesemaking with Deb Hahn, Queso Blanco with Cathe Morrill, Cheese Pairings with Kris Horton, and Mozzarella Stretching with Eric Healy, just to name a few. A particularly energetic seminar was held with Glen Meheuren of the Maine State Department of Agriculture. This panel discussion addressed the regulations and state and federal requirements involved in starting a cheesemaking operation. A lot of folks were interested in getting into cheesemaking and we hope that seeing all the artisanal cheeses being made in Maine increased their excitement and determination to get into the cheesemaking business. In fact, the panel discussion with Glen was such a hit we're going to do it again at the Agricultural Trade Show in January (see pg. 8).

Tremendous thanks to MOFGA for approaching us and cosponsoring the festival. The Cheese Festival was so successful that we plan to do it again next year. We've decided to hold a second annual Maine Cheese Festival in October 2004. Date and location TBA so stay tuned...you won't want to miss it!



Scott of 1797 Farm showing his wares



Clare Mikolayunus pours milk for tasting



Appleton Creamery's table



The crowd of cheese lovers at 10:30 a.m.

Become a Member

The Guild welcomes any individual who is a friend of the Maine cheese trade including all farmstead and artisanal cheesemakers, small dairy producers, sellers, suppliers, chefs, consumers and researchers with an interest in cheesemaking, dairying and cultured milk products.

Membership Levels

Principal Members: Any individual, organization or other entity that is producing cheese or milk products in Maine, milking dairy animals in Maine, or involved with getting Maine made cheese, milk, or milk products to the consumer.

Associate Members: Any other individual, organization or other entity with an active interest in the Maine cheesemaking, dairy or agricultural communities.

Membership dues have been set for \$25 for our startup year. This includes newsletters, reduced workshop fees, Guild product stickers, listing and links on the website, inclusion in promotional materials about Maine cheeses (if a cheese producer).

To become a member please make check payable to:
The Maine Cheese Guild and mail to:

Maine Cheese Guild
C/o Scott Gardner, Treasurer
1797 Farm
337 Fickett Road
Auburn, ME 04210

Members Only Area of Website Ready

The members only section of our website (www.mainecheeseguild.org) is up and running. This section of the website includes archived meeting minutes and will develop to include recipes, resources and other insider tips...just another benefit of being a member of the guild!

Slow Foods Speaker in Boston

Here's notice of a talk being given in Boston by Jeff Roberts, leader of Slow Food Vermont, who's intimately involved with the Vermont Fresh Network (www.vermontfresh.net) He's got a lot to share about these unusual and delicious cheeses. The Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe has lots of interesting programing. Even if you can not attend this talk, you might want to learn more about this resource.

The Library's website: www.radcliffe.edu/schles/

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7th, 2004

7:00-9:00 PM Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Boston
Jeff Roberts of the Slow Food Movement will speak about "Discovering Terroir: New England's Landscape of Artisan Cheese." Seating is very limited. If you plan to attend, please phone Beth Riely at 617-964-4979.

<<http://www.slowfood.com/>>

From the desk of Caitlin Hunter...

This is a poem written by my grandmother, Louise Guyol Owen, sometime in the 30s. She wrote poetry all her life, raised 6 kids on a farm in New Hampshire. She was a Yale Younger Poet, and was published in the 20s. My father and I published a second volume of her work, *Song Without Words*, just before she died in 1997, from which this poem comes. Must be where my cheese gene comes from....

Ballade of Benevolent Bacteria

*I used to sing about larks and roses,
Flowerlit gardens, moonlit skies;
All the treasure a heart discloses;
All the beauty that love espies.
Now I am grown-though less loving-wise.
These are the things that appeal to me:
Camembert that lies down and cries;
Port du Salut, Gruyère, and Brie.*

*For better women the nobler passion,
For better poets the grander themes.
Mine the praising of elegant rations,
The dreaming of gastronomic dreams.
Now the April oyster seems
A fitting subject for poetry;
Now I could write uncounted reams
On Port du Salut, Gruyère, and Brie.*

*I like the Ports, the Rhines, and the Sherries;
The gins, the rums, and the whiskeys please-
Drinks that are brewed from flowers and berries,
From roots and branches, from carrots and peas.
But still more fragrant, more strong than these,
Gorgonzola and Roquefort be;
Limburger, Swiss, and Edam ... cheese!
Port du Salut, Gruyère, and Brie!*

L'Envoi

*Prince, I will drink your Muscatel,
Burgundy, stout, Champagne, Chablis ...
If you don't forget the Paese Bel,
The Port du Salut, Gruyère, and Brie!*

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