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American Cheese Society Brings the Specialty Cheese World to Richmond for its 36th Annual Conference and Competition, July 31- August 3

'Virginia is for Cheese Lovers' pairs industry experts and cheese connoisseurs at national event.



Denver, CO (May 16, 2019) – With 86 percent of cheesemakers in agreement that sharing knowledge and resources benefits their businesses¹, over 1,300 cheese and specialty food professionals will come together at the industry's leading educational event, the [American Cheese Society's](#) (ACS) 36th Annual Conference & Competition. The conference, 'Virginia is for Cheese Lovers' will be held at the [Greater Richmond Convention Center](#) at 403 N. 3rd Street in Richmond, Va. from July 31-Aug. 3, 2019. Nearly 2,000 different cheese products will be judged in the world-renowned ACS Judging & Competition, with the top cheeses named 'Best of Show'. The public can sample and purchase competition cheeses at the Festival of Cheese and Cheese Sale on Saturday, Aug. 3, from 6:30 – 9:00 p.m. Proceeds from the Cheese Sale benefit the nonprofit American Cheese Education Foundation.

The ACS Annual Conference & Competition is acknowledged as the foremost educational gathering for the cheese industry in North America. In addition to the country's top cheeses and cheesemakers, the event draws producers and purveyors of related specialty foods – from charcuterie and crackers to sweets and preserves. "Many events in the food world revolve around a traditional trade show model," said Nora Weiser, executive director of ACS. "Attendees value our event because it focuses on education, creating a learning space for those in the cheese and related specialty food industries. We recognize that the quality of U.S. artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheese improves as producers share knowledge and resources with each other, and this event really helps them work together collaboratively in an increasingly competitive marketplace," she added.

Growing from just 89 entries 36 years ago, in 2018 the ACS Judging & Competition welcomed 1,954 entries of cheeses and cultured dairy products from 259 companies representing 35 U.S. states, 5 Canadian provinces, Mexico, Columbia and Brazil. ACS awarded a total of 364 medals including 103 gold medals, 124 silver medals, and 137 bronze medals. The event will take place over two days, during which a panel of internationally renowned judges will evaluate the entries for their aesthetic and technical merits. Winners will be announced at the Awards Ceremony on Friday, Aug. 2, from 5:00-7:00 p.m. In 2018, 'Harbison' from [Cellars at Jasper Hill](#) in Vermont was named 'Best of Show'. Second place 'Best of Show' went to 'Calderwood', also from Cellars at Jasper Hill. Third place 'Best of Show' was awarded to 'Avonlea Clothbound Cheddar' from [COWS Creamery](#) in Prince Edward Island, Canada.

2019 winners will be highlighted at the "Festival of Cheese Showcase" on Aug. 3, where conference attendees and the general public can taste winning competition cheeses while sampling other specialty foods from artisan producers around the country. The Festival includes a Cheese Sale to benefit the American Cheese Education Foundation featuring more than a thousand artisan, specialty and farmstead cheeses for purchase at 50-75 percent off retail prices.

Education plays a central role at the ACS Conference, including:

- CHEESE³ Talks: New for 2019, these short Cheese (cubed) presentations feature: Cheese, Creativity and Community with focused insights from cheese industry thinkers who will share, teach, and inspire the cheese community.
- Open Networking Sessions: Opportunities to connect and network with industry colleagues with facilitated discussions organized by theme.
- Meet the Cheesemaker - producers of cheese and cultured dairy products meet with and sample products to hundreds of key industry distributors, retailers, buyers, and food writers.
- 40+ educational sessions geared toward cheesemakers, retailers and distributors including: Virginia Terroir: Made in Virginia Cheese & Wine: Five paired tasting of Virginia made cheeses and wine; Dairy Milk vs. Non-Dairy: A Look At Consumer Trends, Nutrition Research, and Sustainability Findings; You Be The Judge – A session designed to recreate the experience of what it's like to judge for the American Cheese Society; Dairy Farming, Climate Change Mitigation and the Marketplace – A scientist and four cheesemakers discuss their understanding of and approaches to this issue and how their efforts translate to the marketplace.
- ACS Certified Cheese Professional® Exam
- ACS T.A.S.T.E. Test® (Technical, Aesthetic, Sensory)

Registration for Virginia is for Cheese Lovers is available at <https://www.cheesesociety.org/acs-conference-registration/>. Press passes are available to qualified individuals upon request.

1.From a poll of 209 cheesemakers in the 2018 State of the U.S. Artisan/Specialty Cheese Industry Survey commissioned by The American Cheese Society.

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About the American Cheese Society (ACS)

ACS is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas. At 2,400 members strong, ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for cheesemakers, retailers, enthusiasts, and extended industry. ACS strives to continually raise the quality and availability of cheese in the Americas. ACS's certification programs, including the ACS CCP® Exam and the ACS T.A.S.T.E. Test™, encourage improved standards of comprehensive cheese knowledge and service in the cheese industry. Learn more: www.cheesesociety.org.