



# WISCONSIN CHEESE



**To know Wisconsin is to know its cheese. As the nation's top cheese producer, Wisconsin is home to classics such as Cheddar and Colby, and also is America's leader in specialty and artisan cheesemaking. In fact, Wisconsin boasts the first and only advanced training certification for cheesemakers – the Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker – and we put that expertise to use making the best artisanal cheese in the nation, reaping more awards than any other state.**

## MORE CHEESE, PLEASE

As one might expect for a state known for originality, there is no shortage of creativity among Wisconsin's cheesemakers. Some 60 cheesemakers are currently producing more than 600 different types of cheese, including hundreds of complex, one-of-a-kind artisanal, farmstead and organic varieties made by hand in small batches. But lest you get overwhelmed keeping track of all of this glorious cheese, they all fall into a handful of delicious categories:

- Blue cheese has characteristic blue or green streaks of flavor-producing (and harmless) mold throughout the interior. This veining typically gives blue cheese an assertive and piquant flavor.
- Hard cheeses are well-aged, easily grated and primarily used in cooking. Examples include Parmesan, Romano and Asiago.
- Pasta Filata cheeses have curds that are heated and stretched or kneaded before being molded into shape. The cheese stretches when melted – think of mozzarella, provolone and string.
- Processed cheeses are a blend of fresh and aged natural cheeses that have been shredded, mixed and heated with an addition of an emulsifier salt, after which no further ripening occurs.
- Semi-hard cheese is just what it sounds like. Examples include classic cheeses like Cheddar, Colby, Edam and Gouda.
- Semi-soft cheeses are made with whole milk and melt well when cooked. These grilled-cheese ready cheeses include brick, Muenster, fontina and havarti.
- Soft and fresh cheeses have a high moisture content and lactic acid cultures. This category includes cheeses like cottage cheese, cream cheese, feta, mascarpone, ricotta and queso blanco.
- Soft ripened cheeses are named for their soft body and include Brie and Camembert.
- Cheese Curds. Yellow or white, fried or fresh, seasoned or plain, but always a tasty treat. Wisconsin cheese curds are usually made from fresh cheddar, mozzarella, or Colby, and yes, they really do squeak when you eat them! We like cheese-curds so much, Ellsworth even has a fun and food-filled weekend to celebrate them, every year in June the town celebrates Ellsworth Cheese Curd Festival.

cheesemakers are passionate about their goods and share them proudly. Wherever you find yourself in Wisconsin, chances are you are within a short drive of one of these tours:

- Emmi Roth Käse USA, Monroe – Self-guided tours are available, and a viewing hall allows you to observe the cheesemaking process. Best times to catch some action in the viewing hall are weekdays from 9 am – 1 pm.
- Carr Valley Cheese Factory, La Valle – The La Valle factory and retail store is open Monday – Saturday from 8 am to 4 pm, but the staff at Carr Valley recommends visitors come early for the best show.
- Widmer's Cheese Cellars, Theresa – Open during the week, Widmer's Cheese Cellars features a guided tour Monday – Friday starting at 9:30 am. Please call in advance to make a reservation.
- Union Star Cheese Factory, Fremont – Union Star Cheese Factory offers tours of its facility every morning except Sundays. The tour includes pit stops at pivotal steps in the cheesemaking process, and a cheese tasting at the end.

## FARM & FACTORY TOURS

Just as the oenophile heads to Napa Valley for their grand wine tour, the compass for the artisan cheese enthusiast points directly to Wisconsin where its long list of master







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## WISCONSIN CHEESE TRAIL

Take Wisconsin's abundance of gourmet cheese, and couple it with farmers' markets, restaurants featuring regional ingredients, farm-fresh breakfasts at the local B&B and tours of breweries and wineries producing cheese's most complementary beverages – and you have an epicurean's dream getaway. We call it the Wisconsin Cheese Trail.

To make your trip even easier, we've done all the hard work of pinpointing the best sights, stops, tastes and tours for this culinary journey. Choose from one of two carefully mapped out itineraries – one that winds through southwest Wisconsin, and one in eastern Wisconsin – to begin your taster's tour across the state

### Southwestern Wisconsin Cheese Trail

Day One: Begin in Madison where you'll stroll through the Dane County Farmers' Market – the largest producers-only farmers' market in the country – then stop for lunch at The Old Fashioned. Stock up on cheese at Fromagination before a gourmet dinner at L'Etoile. Catch some Zs at the Speckled Hen Inn or HotelRED.

Day Two: Wake up early for a tour of Emmi Roth Käse USA in Monroe, then head over to Baumgartner's Cheese Store & Tavern to try a local sandwich before taking a self-guided tour of New Glarus Brewery. End your night with a meal at The Dining Room in Monticello before hitting the hay at the Chalet Landhaus Inn & Restaurant back in New Glarus.

Day Three: Begin the day with a trip to Carr Valley Cheese in Sauk City, one of the most heralded artisan cheesemakers in the nation. Then head to Wollersheim Winery in Prairie du Sac for a tour and tasting. The next

stop is Cedar Grove Cheese in Plain, one of Wisconsin's most environmentally conscious producers of local and organic cheese. Crash for the evening at Hill Street B&B.

### Eastern Wisconsin Cheese Trail

Day One: Start your day at the Milwaukee Public Market, home to 18 vendors that offer the best gourmet, organic and specialty produce from independent purveyors. Stop at the Wisconsin Cheese Mart and pick up one of the more than 150 varieties of cheese offered. Next, catch a tour at a local brewery – try Sprecher Brewing Company or Lakefront Brewery – before dining at the upscale, yet homey Sanford Restaurant. Get some sleep at the Pfister Hotel or Hotel Metro.

Day Two: Head north to Widmer's Cheese Cellars in Theresa for a guided tour of the factory (reservations required). Follow up the factory tour with a two-hour hands-on cheesemaking course with Steve Shapson (aka The Cheesemaker) in Mequon. Finish up the day with a guided tour of Cedar Creek Winery in Cedarburg before retiring to the Washington House Inn for the evening.

Day Three: Explore the foodie part of Wisconsin's Kettle Moraine Area with a visit to Beechwood Cheese in Adell where you can watch the cheese being made from an observation window. Stop for lunch at Craverie in Kohler, before heading to Elkhart Lake for a culinary lesson at L'Ecole de la Maison. Sleep soundly at the nationally recognized Osthoff Resort.

Day Four: Drive north to Little Chute where you'll find Trega Foods/Simon's Specialty Cheese to sample squeaky cheese curds. Make a stop at Lamers Dairy in Appleton before getting lunch at the Stone Cellar Brewpub.

Spend the afternoon getting a guided tour of Union Star Cheese Factory where you'll learn about the cheesemaking process. Dine at one of several Appleton-area supper clubs, including Lox Club, Simpson's Red Ox Club or Darboy Club. Spend the night at CopperLeaf Boutique Hotel & Spa.

## FUN FACTS

- In Wisconsin, agriculture is a \$59.16 billion industry. Dairy's \$26.5 billion comprises nearly half of that total agriculture contribution.
- Wisconsin leads the nation in number of cheese plants.
- Wisconsin is the No. 1 cheese-producing state in the country, with over 25% of the total annual U.S. cheese production.
- A one-ounce slice of Wisconsin Cheese contains about the same amount of protein as an 8-ounce glass of milk.
- As much as 90% of Wisconsin's milk is made into cheese and 90% of that famous Wisconsin Cheese is sold outside of the state's borders.
- In 1885, Colby cheese was invented in Colby, Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin Cheese wins more awards than any other state or nation.
- Wisconsin cheesemakers have claimed the Best of Show award at the annual American Cheese Society Judging and Competition seven times since 1998.
- Wisconsin dairy farms produce over 27 billion pounds of milk every year. That's about 13.7% of the country's total milk supply.

