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CALIFORNIA'S ARTISAN CHEESE FESTIVAL
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CALIFORNIA'S 6TH ANNUAL ARTISAN CHEESE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES EVENT LINEUP FOR MARCH 23-25, 2012

Weekend showcases cheesemakers with local farm tours, grand tasting events, beer & wine pairings and cooking demonstrations with world-renowned chefs

PETALUMA, CA—January 3, 2012— The United States' premier cheese and wine event, [California's Artisan Cheese Festival](http://www.artisancheesefestival.com), today announces its first event schedule for March 23-25, 2012. Celebrating its 6th anniversary at the Sheraton Sonoma County in Petaluma, the event brings together artisan cheesemakers, brewers, wineries and guests for three days of tasting and appreciation of all things cheese. The Festival features a lively weekend lineup of top artisan cheese experts, authors, chefs and winemakers conducting seminars, pairings, tastings and cheese-filled demonstrations. Guests have the opportunity to experience limited-production, rare artisan cheeses and learn about the art of making cheese, while supporting local and sustainable farmers and cheesemakers in California.

"We want to showcase the incredible array of talented artisan cheese producers we have in California, and offer fun, delicious and interactive ways for attendees to experience the food they love," said Festival Director Judy Groverman Walker. "This event really has something for everyone, be it an opportunity to try amazing cheese, meet one of our talented guest chefs, tour a farm where cheese is made, or learn about the process of how it gets from farm to table."

New elements this year include a Lagunitas Brewery Tour and Cheese Pairing Dinner on Friday, a VIP Brunch and an expanded Artisan Cheese Tasting & Marketplace on Sunday.

Tickets are now on sale at www.artisancheesefestival.com. Additional details on specific events will be added in the coming weeks, so check back often for more information.

The 2012 schedule includes the following events:

Behind-the-Scenes Cheese Country Farm Tours (Friday, March 23: 8 a.m.-3 p.m.)

One of the most popular and coveted of events, the intimate Farm Tours are held at various local farms and creameries, giving visitors a glimpse into the important role of the farmer and where cheese gets its start. Guests can taste the differences between cow's, sheep's and goat's milk cheeses, tour area farms, watch cheese being made and learn about how an animal's diet affects a cheese's flavor. New this year is **Ramini Mozzarella**, which makes Buffalo milk mozzarella. Lunch and bus ride to and from the Sheraton included. These tours sell out quickly at \$75 per person. The tours are as follows:

- ***Sheep, Cows & Water Buffalo*** – The first stop on this tour is **Bellwether Farms** where the Callahan family produces sheep and cow's milk cheese. In 1986, Cindy Callahan bought a few sheep to mow the pastures on their farm and the rest is artisan cheese history. Further down the road, participants will stop at the Bianchi-Moreda ranch and **Valley Ford Cheese Company**. Karen Bianchi-Moreda is the fourth generation of her family to farm the ranch where 400 Jersey cows are milked daily. Bianchi-Moreda has been making cheese since 2009 and has recently been joined by her son, Joe Moreda, Jr., representing the fifth generation. Next guests will head to Craig Ramini's dairy farm and **Ramini Mozzarella**. Ramini is raising a herd of water buffalo and guests will meet him and his herd and be among the very first to taste his fresh, farmstead, handmade buffalo mozzarella.
- ***California's Cheesemaking Counties: Sonoma to Marin*** – Guests will travel to the Chileno Valley in Petaluma to visit the Pacheco Family Dairy and **Achadinha Cheese Company** (named after a Portuguese parish). Donna and Jim Pacheco have close to 1,600 goats and produce handmade farmstead cheeses. Next on the agenda is **Nicasio Valley Cheese Company**—the Lafranchi family's organic, farmstead dairy and creamery. Established in 1919, descendants of the Lafranchi family are milking 400 cows and creating the cheeses of their Italian-Swiss ancestors on over 1,000 organic acres. The last stop will be at **Barinaga Ranch** in Marshall. Marcia Barinaga is continuing the sheepherding and cheesemaking traditions of her Basque ancestors on over 100 acres overlooking beautiful Tomales Bay where she makes farmstead sheep's milk cheese.
- ***Petaluma Dairy Farms: Sheep, Cow and Goat*** - While Carleen and Joel Weirauch have been building their flock of sheep over the last few years at **Weirauch Farm**, they've been making cow's milk cheese from a small organic dairy nearby. Their dream will finally become a reality in the spring when they begin to make farmstead sheep's milk cheese. In 1997, Sue Conley and Peggy Smith opened **Cowgirl Creamery** in Point Reyes Station. The next stop will be their Petaluma Creamery where guests will watch them create the organic, artisan cheese for which they are renowned. The last stop will be **DeBernardi Dairy** for Two Rock Valley Goat Cheese and to the home of Don

and Bonnie DeBernardi. While Mr. DeBernardi still manages a herd of 800 Jersey cows, he and his family have made the leap to goat-dairying and cheesemaking with great results. Guests will get to mingle with their new kids and taste their cheese on this tour.

- ***Farm to Creamery: Two Sebastopol Dairies*** – One of Sonoma County’s newest dairy farms, **Bleating Heart**, was started in 2009 by Seana Doughty who bought 10 pregnant ewes from a sheep dairy in Wisconsin and drove them to California herself in a truck. Her mission was to produce handcrafted sheep cheese, and just two years later, she is doing just that. Bleating Heart ranch is where Doughty’s flock resides and guests will get to taste her “American Original Cheese.” Next stop is one of the country’s most venerable goat dairies and creameries, **Redwood Hill Farm**, which has been in operation for over 40 years. Owner Jennifer Bice has always been committed to developing a genetics program of excellence and Redwood Hill Farm was the first certified humane goat dairy in the U.S. Not only does each of the 300 goats at Redwood Hill have a name, but the cheeses are also consistent award-winners throughout the country.

From Dirt to Dinner Farm Tour and Feast (Friday, March 23: 1 p.m.-8 p.m.)

In this intimate Farm Tour and Dinner, guests will have first-hand access to **Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company** Cheesemaker Kuba Hemmerling as well as renowned Wine Country **Chef Cindy Pawlcyn** (Brassica, Cindy’s Backstreet Kitchen, Mustards Grill). After a tour of the pastoral Giacomini Family Dairy, overlooking Tomales Bay, guests will join Hemmerling at The Fork, a state of the art event space at the farm. After a focused cheese tasting, guests will join Chef Pawlcyn, one of the first female chefs to champion local, seasonal food in the Bay Area, for a three-course interactive dinner with cooking demonstrations in between each course and local wine pairings. The evening ends with a grand finale cheese course and conversation between Pawlcyn and Hemmerling. Transportation to and from the Sheraton and gratuity included; \$150 per person.

Lagunitas Brewery Tour & Dinner (Friday, March 23: 3:30 p.m. -8 p.m.)

This five-hour beer and cheese extravaganza features a six-course dinner prepared by **Chef Danny Mai** (Tolay Restaurant at The Sheraton Sonoma County) and paired with beers from local Petaluma brewery, Lagunitas. Start out with an appetizer and a drink on the way to the brewery and enjoy beers straight from the source during this interactive and informative tour. Afterwards, a private dinner will be served at the Sheraton, where Chef Mai and the Lagunitas Brewmaster have created a menu that revolves around local cheeses that were made to be enjoyed alongside a frosty Lagunitas brew. Transportation to and from the Sheraton and gratuity included; \$135 per person.

Cheese Demos and Seminars (Saturday, March 24)

Join local industry experts, chefs and cheesemakers for a variety of interactive seminars and demos throughout the day at the Sheraton Sonoma County. The seminars will include lunch catered by Petaluma Market. Tickets are \$65 per person, per seminar. The seminar schedule is as follows:

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.:

- **Laura Werlin** – “Grilled Cheese, Please!”
- **Janet Fletcher** – “Notable ‘Newbies’ from the Left Coast”
- **Mary Karlin** – “Cheese Making Workshop: Simple, Fresh Same-Day Cheeses”
- **Jill Silverman Hough** – “Great Cheese Go-Withs”
- **Peg Smith & Sue Conley** – “The Cheesemaker and The Chef: Milk’s Mysteries Explored from the Creamery and into the Kitchen”

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.:

- **Mary Karlin** – “Cheese Making Workshop: Fresh Cultured Cheeses ”
- **Laura Werlin** and **Tim Gaiser** – “Cheese Essentials, Wine Essentials”
- **Janet Fletcher** and **Adam Dulye** – “California Craft Brews and the Cheeses That Love Them”
- **The Beverage People** – “Cheesemaking: Two Italian-Style Cheeses – Mozzarella and Ricotta”
- **Clark Wolf’s moderated panel** – “Northern California – Growing a Cheese Region for the Future”
- **Michael D. Landis** – “The Hows and Whys of Fermented Foods”

Grand Tasting & Best in Cheese Competition (Saturday, March 24: 6 p.m.-10 p.m.)

This popular roaming feast showcases top Bay Area chefs using artisan cheeses in a variety of dishes from sweet to savory. More than 20 top restaurants, wineries and breweries and will vie for your affection and vote at this lighthearted competition of all things cheese. From soufflés to sandwiches, guests can expect to experience cheese in ways they’ve never had before at this gastronomic showdown. \$75 per person.

Bacon, Bubbles and Brunch + More Great Cheese with Duskie Estes (Sunday, March 25: 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.)

Start the morning off right by enjoying some enticing cheese-centric breakfast dishes paired with Iron Horse bubbly while watching a cooking demonstration with **Chef Duskie Estes** (Zazu, Bovolo, The Black Pig Meat Co.), which will feature Black Pig Bacon along with the Chef’s favorite California artisan cheeses. Brunch attendees also gain VIP access to the Artisan Cheese Tasting & Marketplace an hour before it opens to the public. \$100 per person.

Artisan Cheese Tasting & Marketplace (Sunday, March 25, 12-4:30 p.m.)

In this exposition for the senses, the Artisan Marketplace brings together more than 65 artisan producers, winemakers, brewers and chefs who will sample their local hand-crafted cheeses, delectable cheese-based dishes, boutique wines and artisan-brewed beers. Discover the next wave of interesting cheese products, books and recipes. Cooking demonstrations with top Wine Country chefs will also take place throughout the event and every guest brings home a coveted ACF insulated cheese tote bag as well as a festive wine glass. \$45 per person.

A full schedule of events, participants, and ticketing information can be viewed here: <http://www.artisancheesefestival.com/schedule.html>.

Those interested can also follow updates by “liking” the Artisan Cheese Festival on [Facebook](#) and following the event on [Twitter](#). All events are priced separately and the [Sheraton Sonoma County – Petaluma](#) is offering special discounted rates on rooms for festival goers.

Generous sponsors of the Artisan Cheese Festival include Bellwether Farms, Cowgirl Creamery, Cypress Grove, Laura Chenel’s Chevre, Marin French Cheese, Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co., Sheraton Sonoma County-Petaluma, The Don and Maureen Green Foundation, Basin Street Properties, Pure Luxury Transportation, Clover-Stornetta Farms, Pisenti & Brinker, The Beverage People and All-American Printing.

About California’s Artisan Cheese Festival

A 501 (c3) non-profit organization, California’s Artisan Cheese Festival strives to increase cheese appreciation, educate consumers about artisan cheeses, support the cheesemaking community and its sustainability and celebrate the creations of California’s many farmers and cheesemakers. The festival began in March 2007 as the first-ever weekend-long celebration and exploration of handcrafted cheeses, foods, wines and beers from California and beyond. In keeping with its dedication to the community, the Artisan Cheese Festival will donate 10% of all ticket proceeds to Sonoma Land Trust, Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Petaluma Future Farmers of America, California Artisan Cheese Guild and Redwood Empire Food Bank. To date the Artisan Cheese Festival has contributed more than \$35,000 to these non-profit organizations that work to support the artisan cheesemaking community and its infrastructure in California. For more information, visit www.artisancheesefestival.com.

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ATTN EDITORS: Photos available upon request