



UNITED STATES CHAMPIONSHIP
CHEESE CONTEST



2025 EXPERT JUDGES

2025 EXPERT JUDGES



JILL ALLEN
Tillamook
Tillamook, Oregon

Jill has been evaluating dairy products for nearly 25 years for Tillamook. She is responsible for the management of the Cheddar Cheese aging program, new product development, sensory programs, and speciality cheese development.



VALERIE ARECHIGA
Glanbia Nutritionals
Twin Falls, Idaho

Valerie works as the Research Manager for the Cheese R&D team at Glanbia Nutritionals. Valerie has 13 years of experience in the dairy industry ranging from quality to farmstead cheesemaker to new product development.



MARC BATES
Bates Consulting
Cannon Beach, Oregon

Marc Bates, Bates Consulting LLC, is retired after a 55+ year career in the cheese, dairy and food industries. He managed the Washington State University Creamery for 27 years and has offered numerous short courses.



LARRY BELL
L Bell Consulting
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Larry has worked in the dairy and cheese industry for 40+ years in quality control, research and development, and food safety.



TED BROWN
Cabot Creamery
West Glover, Vermont

Ted has been grading a variety of cheese on a regular basis for 30 years, allowing him to continually expand his knowledge of what makes the best cheese, ensuring consistent quality and customer satisfaction.



KJ BURRINGTON
ADPI
Madison, Wisconsin

KJ has spent over 27 years in the dairy industry and over 20 years judging dairy ingredients and yogurt. Most of her career has been spent doing product development and training people about the use of dairy ingredients.

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DR. STEPHANIE CLARK
American Dairy Products Institute
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Dr. Clark was a professor at Washington State and Iowa State Universities; she now works with the American Dairy Products Institute and consults. She has been an ACS Judging & Competition judge, committee chair and technical advisor.



BENEDICTE COUDE
Ingredion
Bridgewater, New Jersey

Bénédicte Coudé is a scientist with Ingredion working on the development of dairy and dairy alt. applications. Prior to joining Ingredion, she worked for 10 years in the cheese industry performing R&D and technical support roles.



MIRJANA CURIC-BAWDEN, PH.D.
Novonesis
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Mirjana Curic-Bawden is a Senior Principal Scientist at Novonesis. She has more than 35 years of experience in the development and application of thermophilic, mesophilic cultures, and probiotics in fermented dairy products.



DOMINIQUE DELUGEAU
Saputo Cheese USA
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dominique has close to 40 years of experience in the Specialty Cheese Industry with 25+ years of experience in contest judging around the world. He has been a past Chairman of the ACS, CIAA, and IDDBA.



DR. MARYANNE DRAKE
NC State University
Raleigh, North Carolina

MaryAnne is the Director of the Southeast Dairy Foods Research Center. She has conducted research and worked with the industry on cheese and dried ingredient flavors for more than 20 years.



MIKE DUDAS
Schuman Cheese
Fairfield, New Jersey

Mike Dudas is the Senior Director of Procurement for Schuman Cheese. Since 2002, Mike has been responsible for all aspects of domestic sourcing, including grading and evaluation, risk management and government compliance.

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CHAD GALER
Dairy Management Inc.
Rosemont, Illinois

Chad works at Dairy Management Inc. with responsibilities of supporting research programs at major universities to drive dairy innovation and sales for U.S. dairy products and ingredients on behalf of U.S. dairy farmers.



ANDY JOHNSON
Dairy Connection
Madison, Wisconsin

With over 15 years experience in the cheese industry, Andy has worked as a cheesemaker and dairy researcher. Currently for Dairy Connection, he works to apply his knowledge to support customers with their technical needs.



AILEEN KACVINSKY
Schuman Cheese, Inc.
Madison, Wisconsin

Aileen has many years of experience in production and quality of all cheese and Grade A varieties. She has most recently been working for Schuman Cheese in technical service. Aileen has over 10 years of experience grading cheese and managing technical services.



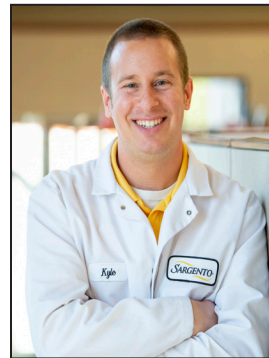
DR. KERRY KAYLEGIAN
BeSpoke Dairy Training LLC
State College, Pennsylvania

Dr. Kerry E. Kaylegian is an Emeritus Associate Research Professor from the Pennsylvania State University, Department of Food Science, and President of BeSpoke Dairy Training LLC.



GREGORY KINATE
TC Jacoby
Little Suamico, Wisconsin

Gregory has over 40 years of experience in all aspects of industry cheese knowledge. He has also participated on most levels of cheese judging during that time.



KYLE KOLL
Sargento
Plymouth, Wisconsin

Kyle is a Senior Supplier Quality Manager-Corporate Cheese Grader. He holds Wisconsin Grading Licenses in American and Swiss Cheese while also being apart of the Sargento Family grading cheese for over 14 years.

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LAURA LAEHN
Masters Gallery Foods
Plymouth, Wisconsin

Laura has over 15 years of experience in the Cheese Industry. She carries all three Wisconsin Cheese Licenses. Her expertise in grading has led her to judge many World, U.S., and State cheese contests over the years.



DR. SUSAN LARSON
Center for Dairy Research -
Retired
Middleton, Wisconsin

Susan has worked in the area of dairy ingredients for 16 years at the Center for Dairy Research. She was introduced to dairy product judging while in college and has done so for over 18 years.



DR. CARMEN LICON
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
San Luis Obispo, California

Carmen is the Director of the Dairy Products Technology Center and a Certified Cheese Professional. Her award-winning research and leadership in the Pacific Coast Coalition highlight her commitment to advancing dairy and artisanal cheese.



SARAH MASONI
OSU Food Innovation Center
Portland, Oregon

Sarah has been judging ACS competitions for 12+ years since 2005. She has also judged the American Dairy Goat competition for 2 years, and judged the Specialty Food SOFI Awards and the Good Food Awards. She earned the #3 Judge All Around award in the Oregon State University Dairy Products Judging Team 1986 Collegiate Competition.



ERIC MEREDITH
Jimbo's
San Diego, California

Eric is a passionate, lifelong learner with a deep commitment to the dairy industry. He has been fortunate to spend nearly a decade working alongside Herve Mons and Neal's Yard Dairy, gaining invaluable knowledge from generations of skilled makers in both France and England.



LLOYD METZGER
Valley Queen
Bruce, South Dakota

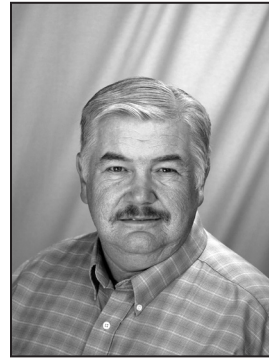
Lloyd is the VP of Quality and Technical Services at Valley Queen and leads the QA, product development, and process technology teams. He also has 20 years of experience in academia and was a Professor at SDSU and U of MN.

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GINA MODE
Center for Dairy Research
Madison, Wisconsin

Gina works closely with cheese brokers, ingredient suppliers, and manufacturers. She is involved with everything from cheese and butter pilot plant trials and troubleshooting to short course instruction and outreach efforts.



MICHAEL PEDERSON
WDATCP - Retired
Argyle, Wisconsin

Michael worked for WDATCP as a cheese grader for 32 years before retiring. He has judged several United States and World Cheese Contests. He is currently the Chief Grader for the Master Cheesemaker Program.



ROB RICHTER
Great Lakes Cheese
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Rob is a WI Master Cheese Maker with 25+ years of Cheese, Whey, and Affinage experience.



DAVID SATTERNESS
Novonesis - Retired
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

David has over 40 years of cheese grading experience. He began with his Wisconsin Cheese Grader's License in the early 1980s. He has been a contest judge at IMPA since 1996, and the US and World Championship Cheese Contests since 2011.



STEVE SCHENKOSKE
Tosca - Retired
Lena, Wisconsin

Steve has 49 years of experience in the dairy industry, working as a cheesemaker, and in packaging, procurement and sales. Cheesemakers today need to be commended for their quality, creativity, and innovation.



BEN SMITH
Hilmar
Modesto, California

Ben is the Cheese Product Manager for Hilmar, helping customers find the perfect cheese for their needs. He has been working in the cheese industry for over 10 years, holding roles in Operations, R&D, and Technical Services.

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DEAN SOMMER
Center for Dairy Research
Madison, Wisconsin

Dean worked at Alto Dairy for 18 years in a series of technical positions including grading and evaluating cheese. Following that he has worked at the Center for Dairy Research for over 21 years as a cheese technologist.



GIDEON ST. AUBIN
DFA
Colfax, Wisconsin

Gideon has 17 years of dairy manufacturing experience and has been grading cheese professionally for the last 8 years.



CATHY STRANGE
Whole Foods Market
Austin, Texas

Since 1990, Cathy has been instrumental in Whole Foods Market's success as a world-renowned cheese and specialty food expert. She has been recognized by the French Order of Agricultural Merit honored with "Coltellino d'oro".



SURESH SUTARIYA
IFF
Kansas City, Kansas

Suresh is an Application Manager for Dairy Cultures and Enzymes at IFF, specializing in Cheese and Fresh Fermented Dairy products. He has also served as a judge at the World Championship Cheese Contest.



DON TRIBBY
IFF
Springfield, Missouri

Don is currently an Account Manager for International Flavor & Fragrance. He has over 40 years of experience in the dairy and food science industries. Don has served as a National Collegiate Dairy Products Evaluation lead judge at both the Regional and National levels.



ERIC VORPAHL
Masters Gallery Foods
Plymouth, Wisconsin

Eric, a veteran of several US and World Championship Cheese Contests, is thrilled to be participating in this year's event. He manages the bulk cheese procurement team and handles the risk management for Masters Gallery Foods.

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JULIE WINANS
Novonesis
Ogden, Utah

Julie has worked as an Account Manager for Novonesis, supporting the dairy industry for 18 years. She has also been serving as the Committee Chair for the Idaho Milk Processor's regional dairy contest for 16 years.



MATT ZIMBRIC
Foremost Farms USA
Middleton, Wisconsin

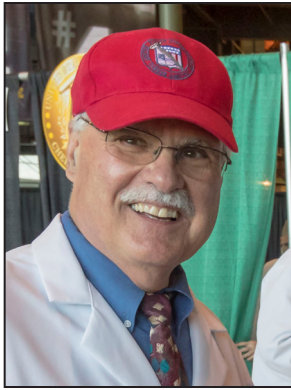
Matt has 27 years of experience and is a Wisconsin-licensed cheese grader. He has developed a deep passion for the craft of cheesemaking and a strong commitment to quality. He is a part of the Product Development and R&D team at Foremost Farms.



LUCY JETER
Student Judge
Clemson, South Carolina

Lucy was a participant in the undergraduate dairy evaluation team at Clemson University where she competed at the 2024 Collegiate Dairy Products Evaluation Contest, winning the cheddar cheese category.

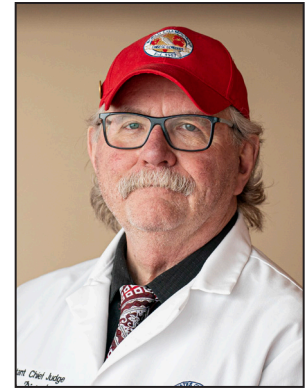
CONTEST LEADERSHIP



Chief Judge
JIM MUELLER



Assistant Chief Judge
TIM CZMOWSKI



Assistant Chief Judge
STAN DIETSCHÉ



Assistant Chief Judge
JOSEF HUBATSCHEK



Assistant Chief Judge
JOHN JAEGGI



Assistant Chief Judge
**MARIANA
MARQUES DE ALMEIDA**



Assistant Chief Judge
SANDY TONEY



Director of Logistics
RANDY SWENSEN