



Wisconsin Ag News – Specialty Cheese

Upper Midwest Region - Wisconsin Field Office · 2811 Agriculture Drive · Madison WI 53718 · (608) 224-4848
fax (855) 271-9802 · www.nass.usda.gov

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Media Contact: Greg Bussler

Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Production up 8 Percent

With 26 percent of the nation’s total cheese production, Wisconsin maintained its ranking as the nation’s top cheese producing state in 2015. At 722 million pounds, specialty cheese accounted for 24 percent of Wisconsin’s total cheese production. This was an increase of 56.1 million pounds over 2014.

Of the state’s 127 cheese plants, 93 manufactured at least one type of specialty cheese during 2015, two more plants than last year. Blue, Feta, Havarti, Hispanic types, specialty Mozzarella, Parmesan Wheel, and specialty Provolone remain the most popular varieties. Hispanic cheese production rose 8 percent over the previous year, while Feta production was 6 percent higher.

Wisconsin cheese makers are known for offering a wide variety of high quality specialty cheeses. A specialty cheese is a value-added product which commands a premium price. According to the Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute, the nature of specialty cheese is derived from one or more unique qualities, such as exotic origin, particular processing or design, limited supply, unusual application or use, and extraordinary packaging or channel of sale. The common denominator is its very high quality.

Specialty Cheese Production – Wisconsin: 2014 and 2015

Type	2014 number of plants	2014 Production 1,000 Lbs.	2015 number of plants	2015 Production 1,000 Lbs.	Change in production from 2014 Percent
Asiago	11	30,921	13	31,872	3
Cheddar ¹	32	28,829	36	27,574	-4
Colby ¹	14	8,026	10	8,052	0
Farmers	13	1,470	11	1,482	1
Feta	9	81,885	10	86,751	6
Gorgonzola	10	18,547	10	19,200	4
Gouda	22	11,421	21	11,770	3
Italian Fontina	10	9,157	9	9,249	1
Hispanic	13	71,790	13	77,197	8
Limburger	1	542	1	481	-11
Parmesan Wheel	6	56,920	6	57,504	1
Romano Wheel	6	10,625	6	9,854	-7
All Other ²	61	335,918	59	381,115	13
Total ³	91	666,051	93	722,101	8

¹ Includes only specialty types of this variety.

² Combined to avoid disclosure of individual plant data. Includes: Alpine, American Grana, Auribella, Blue, Brie and Camambert, Butterkase, Edam, Fior di Latte, Fontiago, Fontinella, Gruyere, Havarti, other specialty Italian, Italic, Juustoleipa, Kefalograviera Sagana, Kasseri, Kreme Kaese, Mascarpone, Middle Eastern cheeses, specialty Monterey Jack, Morning Sun, specialty Mozzarella, other specialty Parmesan, Pepato, Peperon, specialty Provolone, Raclette, other specialty Romano, Swedish style Fontina, specialty Swiss, Tvarog Polish, and Yogurt cheese.

³ Total cheese plants producing one or more specialty cheeses.