



Wisconsin Ag News – Specialty Cheese

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Cooperating with Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

May 4, 2017

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Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Production up 7 Percent

With 27 percent of the nation’s total cheese production, Wisconsin maintained its ranking as the nation’s top cheese producing state in 2016. At 774 million pounds, specialty cheese accounted for 24 percent of Wisconsin’s total cheese production. This was an increase of 51.8 million pounds over 2015.

Of the state’s 128 cheese plants, 93 manufactured at least one type of specialty cheese during 2016. Blue, Feta, Havarti, Hispanic types, specialty Mozzarella, and Parmesan Wheel remain the most popular varieties. Hispanic cheese production rose 11 percent over the previous year, while Romano wheel and specialty Cheddar production were both 10 percent higher.

According to the Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute, Wisconsin is known for both the quality and diversity of its cheeses. A specialty cheese is a value-added product which commands a premium price. 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.

Specialty Cheese Production – Wisconsin: 2015 and 2016

Type	2015 number of producers	2015 revised production	2016 number of producers	2016 production	Change in production from 2015
		1,000 pounds		1,000 pounds	Percent
Asiago	13	31,873	12	29,269	-8
Cheddar ¹	35	27,582	36	30,424	10
Colby ¹	10	7,994	10	7,891	-1
Farmers	11	1,482	11	1,008	-32
Feta	10	86,581	9	91,271	5
Gorgonzola	10	19,200	10	18,385	-4
Gouda	21	11,819	20	12,930	9
Italian Fontina	9	9,249	10	9,306	1
Havarti	13	39,112	12	37,883	-3
Hispanic	13	77,197	13	85,400	11
Limburger	1	481	1	491	2
Parmesan Wheel	6	57,504	6	61,358	7
Romano Wheel	6	9,854	6	10,794	10
All Other ²	52	341,975	57	377,312	10
Total ³	93	721,903	93	773,722	7

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 Camembart, Butterkase, Edam, Fior di Latte, Fontiago, Fontinella, Gruyere, other specialty Italian, Italicco, 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, Soft-ripened, Swedish style Fontina, specialty Swiss, Tvarog Polish, and Yogurt cheese.

³ Total cheese plants producing one or more specialty cheeses.