



The Making of a Master

In Wisconsin, passion for cheesemaking doesn't end with certification — a basic cheesemaking certification is only the beginning. Wisconsin's most ambitious cheesemakers have the option of pursuing their Master certification through a one-of-a-kind program offered by the Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research in cooperation with the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board.

The Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker® Program is the most formal, advanced training program in the country and the only Master program of its kind in the United States. Becoming a Master is the highest professional honor achieved by a cheesemaker. The title is granted after a cheesemaker completes a three-year course of classroom study, practical application, apprenticeship and comprehensive testing demonstrating that he or she has reached a required level of technical expertise and craftsmanship for specific cheese varieties.

The Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker Program was developed to help build the state's heritage of innovation, artistry and high standards of cheesemaking, as well as provide a way for veteran cheesemakers to receive doctorate-level training in the art and science of cheesemaking.

Rich in Tradition

Wisconsin is the only place outside of Europe to offer Master's certification to its cheesemakers. The Master Cheesemaker certification has been a European tradition for centuries, but wasn't formally introduced in the United States until Wisconsin launched its program in 1994. Wisconsin currently has 44 practicing Wisconsin Master Cheesemakers representing 31 cheese varieties.

Program Requirements

The Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker Program is not for beginners. Participants must be active licensed Wisconsin cheesemakers with at least 10 years experience in a plant that participates in the Master Cheesemaker Quality Assurance program. The Quality Assurance program requires that plants employing potential and practicing Masters are audited by the Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research to guarantee proper food safety, sanitation, product quality and recordkeeping.

Potential Masters must also complete five required courses and three elective courses offered through the Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research. The required courses include cheese technology, artisanship, grading and quality assurance. Elective options range from whey utilization and applied dairy chemistry to marketing.

An apprenticeship is also required for each cheese variety a participant studies. Throughout the program, participating cheesemakers must submit samples of their products for evaluation. The samples are checked for flavor, texture, technical quality and consistency.

While the skills learned during the program elevate the graduates' overall cheesemaking expertise, participants only earn Master's certification for a specific cheese variety. They are also limited to certifications for two varieties each time they enter the program; however they may return for certification in additional varieties.

For more information about the Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker Program, or to locate a cheese made by a Master, visit www.wisdairy.com.

