



For:

CALIFORNIA ARTISAN CHEESE FESTIVAL

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**THE CALIFORNIA ARTISAN CHEESE FESTIVAL
CELEBRATES ITS 11TH ANNIVERSARY
AT LOCAL FARMS, CREAMERIES AND
TASTING ROOMS AROUND NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

*Tickets now on sale for the weekend's wide range of cheese-centric events,
March 24-26, 2017, featuring intimate Artisan Producer Tours,
Educational Seminars, and Friday night's Ultimate Best Bite competition*

PETALUMA, Calif.—January 3, 2017—Tickets are now on sale for California's premier cheese event, the 11th annual [California Artisan Cheese Festival](http://www.artisancheesefestival.com), March 24-26, 2017. This year's weekend-long Festival will take place in and around the Sheraton Sonoma County in Petaluma, as well as various local farms, restaurants, creameries and tasting rooms of local artisan producers. The Festival brings together artisan cheesemakers, farmers, educators, authors, chefs, brewers, and winemakers from all over California for three days of cheese tasting, education and celebration.

Many new cheese-centric elements are being introduced this year, from Friday night's Ultimate Best Bite competition featuring local cheesemongers, chefs and cheesemakers; to a new crop of educational hands-on Saturday Seminars featuring topics such as *Cheese & Chocolate* and *Mighty Morphing Milk*; to Saturday night's Wine and Dine Cheesemaker Dinners and a Cheese & Cocktail Celebration. Details about some of Friday and Saturday's new elements are as follows:

Artisan Producer Tours & Lunch

Back by popular demand are two full days of intimate artisan tours taking place on Friday and Saturday around Northern California, where guests get to explore various local farms, creameries and artisan purveyors. During the guided walking tours, the guests learn how cheese, ciders, and other products are made, meet the producers, farmers, and cheesemakers behind their favorite local products and, of course, taste the fruits of their labor. This year's tours will feature educational components, such as a cooking demonstration or tasting, led by industry experts who provide insights and further exploration on a variety of topics. There will also be one tour ([Friday's Tour G](#)) that goes beyond the Bay Area to California's North Sacramento Valley, where guests will visit family farms who have taken the next step as cheesemakers and other artisan producers such as Pedrozo Dairy, Orland Farmstead Creamery, and lunch at The Coffee House at Salvagno's with

Rumiano Cheese and Chico Honey Company. As always, these popular tours allow guests to observe behind-the-scenes aspects of the farms and interact with the cows, sheep, or goats in their natural environment. Each tour includes round-trip transportation as well as cheese tastings and lunch. Cheese is also available for purchase at many of the farm stops. See www.artisancheesefestival.com for specific details about each Artisan Producer Tour and to purchase tickets; \$135; Friday, March 24 and Saturday, March 25; 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

The Ultimate Best Bite

Guests will kick off the weekend's festivities on Friday Night with local cheesemongers, chefs and cheesemakers battling it out in a light-hearted yet energetic competition to see who can create the best bite using California artisan cheese. Each cheesemonger will be provided with a block, wedge, or bowl of artisan cheese from one of the participating local cheesemakers and will be tasked with creating their Best Bite. Several popular local restaurants and caterers will also be competing, and will be paired up with a cheesemaker to create their own delectable Best Bite. The cheesemakers themselves will also be on hand, sampling their favorite cheeses, mingling with guests, and enjoying the festivities. Attendees are encouraged to participate by voting for their favorite Bite while enjoying plenty of artisan wine, cider and beer. *Tickets \$75; The Big Top at The Sheraton Sonoma County; 6 – 9 p.m.*

Seminars and Pairing Demonstrations

Bringing attendees face-to-face with the experts who work with and create some of America's best artisan cheeses, the Saturday seminars and pairing demonstrations tend to sell out early every year. Taking place at both at the Sheraton Sonoma County and at Cowgirl Creamery's new warehouse in Petaluma which is just a short walk from the Sheraton, industry experts will engage and enlighten guests on a variety of topics, such as:

- *"Cheese & Chocolate 201,"* an interactive exploration into why cheese and chocolate pair so beautifully with author and cheese expert **Laura Werlin** and education director, consultant, and ACS Certified Cheese Professional **Vanessa Chang**;
- *"Introduction to California Cheese: Past, Present, and Future,"* an informative tasting session with owner of The Cheese School of San Francisco, **Kiri Fisher**, about what makes the Golden State such an exceptional place for artisan cheese;
- *"Mighty Morphing Milk,"* an appetizing lesson about the cultures, techniques and decisions that create the delicious metamorphoses that go into transforming milk, with **Janet Fletcher**, *Planet Cheese* publisher, and acclaimed California cheesemakers **Jennifer Bice** of Redwood Hill Farm & Creamery and **Liam Callahan** of Bellwether Farms;
- *"California Cheese and Beer: Incorporating Local Flavors in Curds and Brews,"* a flavorful lesson in the parallels between California farmstead cheesemaking and heritage small batch local beers by Certified Cicerone **Chris Munsey**;
- *"Cheese & Charcuterie,"* a tasty education about the art of preservation, the similarities between cheese and charcuterie, and what makes them a perfect pairing by local author and educator, **Laura Werlin**, and education director, consultant, and ACS Certified Cheese Professional **Vanessa Chang**; and
- and *"Cream of the Crop,"* a surprising and unique lesson about cheese's indispensable place in the agricultural landscape of Marin and Sonoma counties with **Sue Conley** and **Peggy Smith**, co-founders of Cowgirl Creamery, and sisters **Jill Giacomini Basch** and **Lynn Giacomini Stray** of Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese;

During the lunch break and after the afternoon seminars, several local cheese authors will be available for book signings in the lobby of the Sheraton Sonoma County and books will be available for purchase by Copperfield's Books.

Seminars and Pairing Demonstrations to take place at the Sheraton Sonoma County and near by Cowgirl Creamery Warehouse; 10 – 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 – 3 p.m.; Tickets \$75; More seminar details may be found at www.artisancheesefestival.com.

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 American AgCredit, Beehive Cheese Company, Bellwether Farms, Central Coast Creamery, Chevo, Cowgirl Creamery, Creminelli Fine Meats, *Culture Magazine*, Cypress Grove Chevre, Donald and Maureen Green Foundation, Exchange Bank, Edible Marin and Wine Country, Ferndale Farmstead, Fiscalini Cheese Company, Formaticum, John Boos/Boos Boards, Lagunitas Brewing Company, Laura Chenel’s Chevre, Marin French Cheese Company, Mike Hudson Distributing, Nicasio Valley Cheese Co., Nugget Market, Oliver’s Markets, Pennyroyal Farm, Pisenti & Brinker LLP, Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company, Pure Luxury Transportation, Real California Milk, Rustic Bakery, Sheraton Sonoma County, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Valley Fig Growers and Willapa Hills Cheese.

About California Artisan Cheese Festival

A 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, California 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 donates 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 \$90,000 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