



## Official Cheese Curds of the MN State Fair

If you attend the Minnesota State Fair, please be sure to patronize the cheese curd vendors there!

As in the past, the Minnesota State Fair expects nothing but the best and we gladly step in to supply the majority of the curds to the 12-day festival.

The event runs August 22 through Labor Day, September 2, 2019. When you visit, patronize and thank these vendors for proudly serving up our product:

The Mouth Trap  
The Big Cheese  
Miller Concessions  
Kropp Enterprise  
Duke's Putine

And when you're enjoying your corn on the cob from **The Corn Roast**, it's going to taste even better knowing it's Ellsworth Creamery Butter slathered on it!

**See You at the Fair!**

**Follow us on Facebook!**



**/EllsworthCheese**



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## Did You Know?

During the Great Minnesota Get-Together attendees enjoy some pretty fine fair-food, including deep fried cheese curds. This year, amaze your friends with these Minnesota State Fair cheese curd facts...

- Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery has been supplying cheese curds to the Minnesota State Fair for 33 years, proving a quality product never goes out of style!
- 55 tons of our all natural cheddar cheese curds head to the fair each year. Picture this... that would fill 110,000 of our 1-lb bags! How long would that many cheese curds last at your house?
- Vendors pick up their cheese curd orders daily during the nearly 2-week long event and serve them up to customers that day. Now that's fresh!
- Each year there's a fear among fair-goers that the cheese curds will run out. But, there's no need to worry. The fair's cheese curd vendors have a long track-record for accurately predicting their cheese curd needs. However, should the unexpected happen, we're on standby and are ready to supply more, if needed.
- Last year's event was an attendance record-breaker with 2,046,533 people attending. Will they break a record again in 2019?

Regardless of whether your family heads to the Minnesota State Fair, there's a part of you at the event. Thanks to your hard work and dedication to quality, over 2 million attendees get to enjoy the most prized and delicious of all fair foods!



**August 2019**

## Ellsworth Cheese Curds Debut on QVC

We're thrilled to be able to bring you an update on a story we first shared in our November 2018 newsletter. After more than a year of negotiations and hard work, Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery's newest cheese curd product-line made its debut on the QVC Network in June.

QVC first became interested in our product at the 2018 Winter Fancy Food Show. That's where Allen Hendricks, Director of Foodservice, and Mark Anderson, Regional Sales Manager, had a chance meeting with representatives of QVC. They were intrigued by a new product we were featuring at the show—our new line of frozen breaded and battered cheese curds.

Bringing the curds to air was a lengthy and involved

process. However, QVC was a great partner. Once the decision was made to bring our products to air, the process was well defined—from guest training to the systems in place to keep live shows organized and on-air 24 hours a day!

The first airing of our product took place on June 16 during the popular segment 'Cooking with David' program. Allen represented us well and sales were brisk. After the QVC buying team reviewed the first showing and results they scheduled another airtime for during the 'Holiday Gourmet' segment with Alberti on July 10. At the conclusion of the two airings, 6,600 lbs. of frozen cheese curds had been sold!

QVC is more than a sales opportunity for us. QVC broadcasts live in the United States 24/7, 364 days a year to more than 100 million households—that offers us an amazing national brand awareness opportunity and promotional network for future new products. In addition, the challenges of shipping a frozen item such as this led to an amazing partnership with Neesvig's, Inc. It's Neesvig's who handles the shipping and fulfillment for these special orders. And, with a reliable process now in place, we're able to sell our frozen curd products through our own website, as well. In addition, Neesvig's has national foodservice clients who have expressed an interest in partnering with us on the sale of special gourmet food collections (think holiday meat and cheese).

Our hope is that you'll be seeing Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery cheese curds on QVC again this fall and winter as they begin formatting programming for the upcoming football and holiday entertaining seasons! Also in discussions, a mixed package of curds featuring our famous Natural cheddar cheese curds, along with our most popular flavored curds. Keep your fingers crossed that our 'Whole Herd' will soon be making the big-time!



Allen Hendricks and Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery's frozen breaded and battered cheese curds on the set at QVC.

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**dairy proud for over 100 years.**

## Join us for Apple Fest!

Saturday, Sept. 14, 2019  
10am-4pm  
Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, Ellsworth, WI

The fall season makes us think of apples, and there's no better compliment to all your favorite apple delicacies than Wisconsin cheese. That's the inspiration behind a new tasting event: Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery's Apple Fest! Guest vendors will offer food samplings featuring apples as the main ingredient. You'll find hard apple cider, apple cinnamon pancakes, apple bacon cheese curd brats, caramel apple ice cream sundaes, and more! And yes, there will be cheese! Activities for the kids, too. We invite you to bring the entire family for a day of fall fun and food!



## ECC Featured in Growing Wisconsin Magazine

Thumb through the latest issue of Growing Wisconsin magazine and you'll see some familiar faces. Our creamery was featured in an article celebrating the strides being made in international Wisconsin dairy exports! Our state ranks second nationally in the export of whey and cheese and Ellsworth was referenced as a major exporter with a bright and growing future in the international market.

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## Looking Back, Looking Ahead

By Paul Bauer, CEO, Manager  
paulb@ellsworthcreamery.net

September 1, 2019, marks the start of my twelfth year at Ellsworth. Let's take a look back to see where we were and where we may be in our future.

Back in 2007, the profit numbers came from these sources (in order of income): Interest income, Grade A milk sales, sweet whey powder, bulk curds, and just above breakeven on barrels. The store/retail curds were too small to list.

Flash forward to today, we have been through a lot of changes. In 2019 the approximate main drivers in profit are (listed in order of income): Curds (including retail, food service, and bulk), Processed Cheese, milk sales for manufacturing, retail cuts of cheese, and we minimize our losses on bulk cheese and commodity products.

Just like in the past decade, Ellsworth needs to be prepared to change and do so quickly. Milk sales are a prime example of that. A year ago milk was plentiful and premiums were a negative to Class III. Today we are getting long term premiums to Class III, but we need to be prepared to take the milk back should the premiums go away. Our co-products of cream, condensed whey, WPC and sweet whey, and small curd product could all change should the market conditions move. Again, we need to be prepared for that.

Our curd products are facing more competition as we continue to have success. We are aware of at least three companies trying to sell curds as a major part of their business. To combat this and remain ahead of the competition, we will continue to expand our offerings to customers to meet their needs in size, flavor, function, and packaging. A prime

example is our frozen breaded cheese curds, which is a brand extension.

On the sales side, Ellsworth will need to push hard into cut cheese. We need to offer more varieties and sizes demanded by new trends. This may take a lot or little capital depending on the project.

We have some pieces of equipment that have been in place for 27 to 50 years that will need to be addressed. These units are a major part of the cheese process so they cannot be shut down and swapped out; rather we need to build space to accommodate them. This will take years to implement but the planning will take place over the next few months and years.

To meet the new needs of the Creamery we will be putting new human and financial capital in place. The projects will be bigger and more complex. However, our long-term success depends on moving forward and not stopping.

The Creamery and farmer will face more pressure from outside influences. The world is looking to have product produced with an ever-decreasing carbon footprint or produced on a farm/plant that is environmentally sound. The social activists are pressuring to have audits of plant and pay and benefit practices on the farm. There is even a small trend to pay farmers a fair price as they do for some coffee! Will Fair-Trade Milk be the next label change?

I expect in the next 10 years the changes will be faster, more expensive, and more restrictive. We handled the past 109 years of changes we can handle the next 10 with a little planning and a good attitude.

## Lehmann: Quick Pitch Winner



Please join us in congratulating Emily Lehmann, Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery Quality Assurance Supervisor. Her presentation on the effects of secondary listeria contamination in cheese won first place at the WiSys Quick Pitch State Final on July 22.

The WiSys Quick Pitch competition allows students to hone their communication skills and increase exposure for their research and ideas. The com-

petitors race the clock to expertly explain their project in three minutes or less to a panel of judges.

"Listeria monocytogenes is a dangerous pathogen that causes the serious, and even deadly illness, Listeriosis. Contamination of ready to eat food such as cheddar cheese is a huge concern in the spread of this pathogen," according to Lehmann's presentation abstract.

"Emily's knowledge and passion stood out during the presentation on stage," said WiSys President Arjun Sanga.

"Explaining the value of your research and doing it succinctly is difficult under normal conditions, but Emily was completely composed in front of a crowd of more than 200 UW System faculty, staff, and students."

We're very proud of Emily and her project. Food safety is very important to us all and this research can help us better understand what makes a great safe cheese product.

## LPC Bacteria Data Study

Over the next 3 months, the Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery will be gathering data on LPC bacteria from all patron farms. This information will be used to determine what, if any, issues we have in lab pasteurized counts and whether sufficient cooling and/or farm conditions impact counts.

As a general rule, counts greater than 200,000 (listed on your weekly quality card as 200) are a caution. Counts greater than 500,000 (listed on your weekly quality card as 500) are an issue that should be addressed with your field staff representative.



The Curd Wagon, our twist on the popular food truck concept, is drawing crowds to our parking lot in Ellsworth again this summer. A new addition, the old silo platform has been transformed into a patio for seating and eating. Contemporary wind sails give shade and offer a welcoming space for guests. Plans for the future include updates to tables and chairs and greenery. Kudos to our staff members who planned and implemented this transformation! Check it out on your next visit!

## Cheese Curd Festival 2019!

The 18th Annual Cheese Curd Festival, held this past June, was a great success! Once again this year, approximately 30,000 cheese curd fans made the pilgrimage to the Cheese Curd Capital to celebrate our product.

The festival committee, hundreds of volunteers, and many of our own staff rallied to make the 1 1/2 day festival a great experience for all. A larger festival layout allowed the festival to expand for the growing crowds and keep the festival in the downtown and near our facility and retail store.

A new tasting invent was introduced this year—The Great Wisconsin Cheese Block Party gave participants the opportunity to taste and offer feedback on a variety of cheese curds flavors not yet available for mass retail sale. In addition, 25 other Wisconsin-made cheeses, including our own from our Blaser's and Antonella lines, were tasted. It's rare to have a collection of unique cheeses, each with their own 'claim to fame', available for sampling all in one place! Needless to say, this special event was a hit!

Of course the darlings of the festival are the deep fried kind served up at the Cheese Curd Central booth. In addition to the Natural flavor, and our exclusive Cinnamon Sugar dessert curds, Jalapeno Bacon debuted as the specialty flavor for 2019. As you can imagine, the crowds went wild!

This event is a major way we promote our signature product and generated exposure for our retail store, too! 85% of event attendees were from our target metro Twin Cities market!

www.CheeseCurdFestival.com

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