

Specialty Cheese Production up 7 Percent

Production of specialty cheeses by Wisconsin cheese manufacturers continued to expand in 2008. Specialty cheese production in Wisconsin rose by 7 percent from 2007 to 2008, and totaled 429 million pounds, accounting for 17 percent of the state's total cheese production.

Of Wisconsin's 127 cheese plants, 88 manufactured at least one type of specialty cheese during 2008, up 4 plants from the previous year. Feta continued to be the state's most popular cheese, with a 3 percent increase in production. Asiago, Blue, Hispanic types, Parmesan Wheel, and specialty Provolone cheeses were other popular varieties.

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, 2007 and 2008

Type	No. of plants	2007 Production	No. of plants	2008 Production
		1,000 lbs.		1,000 lbs.
Asiago	9	23,447	10	23,280
Cheddar 1/	29	17,941	28	18,353
Farmers	12	2,123	14	2,752
Feta	8	63,731	8	65,533
Italian Fontina	10	3,617	9	4,885
Hispanic	18	49,906	18	50,412
Limburger	1	744	1	645
Parmesan Wheel	7	40,221	8	45,629
Provolone 2/	5	46,064	5	35,131
Romano Wheel	8	9,338	9	10,503
All Other 3/	50	142,278	58	171,807
Total 4/	84	399,410	88	428,930

1/Includes only specialty types of this variety. 2/Includes Provolone aged > 60 days and other specialty Provolone. 3/Combined to avoid disclosure of individual plant data. Includes: American Grana, Auribella, Bel Pease, Blue, Brie, Butterkase, Camembert, specialty Colby, Edam, Fior di Latte, Fontiago, Fontinella, Gorgonzola, Gouda, Gruyere, Havarti, Italico, Juustoleipa, Kreme Kaese, Les Freres, Mascarpone, Middle Eastern cheeses, specialty Monterey Jack, Morning Sun, specialty Mozzarella, other specialty Parmesan, Pepato, Peperon, Raclette, other specialty Romano, St. Otho, Semi-soft, Swedish style Fontina, specialty Swiss, and Yogurt cheese. 4/Total cheese plants producing one or more specialty cheeses. Source: USDA, NASS WIFO