



WISCONSIN - SPECIALTY CHEESE

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Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Production Continues to Grow

With 26 percent of the nation’s production, Wisconsin maintained its ranking as the nation’s top cheese producing state in 2012. At 611 million pounds, specialty cheese accounted for 22 percent of Wisconsin’s total cheese production. This was an increase of 36.3 million pounds over 2011.

Of the state’s 126 cheese plants, 92 manufactured at least one type of specialty cheese during 2012, the same number of plants as last year. Feta accounted for the largest share of specialty cheese production, with 13 percent of the total. Blue, Hispanic types, specialty Mozzarella, Parmesan Wheel, and specialty Provolone remain other popular varieties. The largest increases in specialty production were Gouda, up 47 percent, and specialty Cheddar, up 16 percent.

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, 2011 and 2012

Type	2011	2011	2012	2012	Change from 2011
	No. of producers	Revised Production 1,000 lbs.	No. of producers	Production 1,000 lbs.	
Asiago	11	28,831	9	31,142	+8
Cheddar 1/	34	27,098	33	31,330	+16
Colby 1/	10	6,825	10	7,488	+10
Farmers	17	2,262	14	2,119	-6
Feta	7	75,950	8	77,582	+2
Gorgonzola	10	17,080	10	16,777	-2
Gouda	17	7,716	16	11,366	+47
Italian Fontina	12	6,408	12	6,906	+8
Hispanic	15	59,117	13	65,580	+11
Limburger	1	482	1	439	-9
Parmesan Wheel	8	51,172	8	52,523	+3
Provolone 2/	5	38,945	6	39,702	+2
Romano Wheel	9	8,685	8	9,265	+7
All Other 3/	56	244,318	56	258,943	+6
Total 4/	92	574,889	92	611,162	+6

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, Edam, Fior di Latte, Fontiago, Fontinella, Gruyere, Havarti, other specialty Italian, Italic, Juustoleipa, Kefalograviera Sagana, Kremer Kaese, Les Freres, Mascarpone, Middle Eastern cheeses, other specialty Monterey Jack, Morning Sun, specialty Mozzarella, other specialty Parmesan, Pepato, Peperon, Raclette, other specialty Romano, Semi-soft, Swedish style Fontina, specialty Swiss, Tvarog Polish, and Yogurt cheese. 4/ Total cheese plants producing one or more specialty cheeses. Source: USDA, NASS