



Wisconsin Ag News – Specialty Cheese

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Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Production Tops 800 Million Pounds

With 26 percent of the nation’s total cheese production, Wisconsin maintained its ranking as the nation’s top cheese producing state in 2018. At 803 million pounds, specialty cheese accounted for 23 percent of Wisconsin’s total cheese production. This was an increase of 4.02 million pounds over 2017.

Ninety-nine of the State’s 118 cheese plants manufactured at least one type of specialty cheese during 2018. Blue, Feta, Havarti, Hispanic types, specialty Mozzarella, and Parmesan Wheel remain the most popular varieties. Farmer’s cheese production rose 10 percent over the previous year, while Parmesan Wheel production was up 6 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: 2017 and 2018

Type	2017 number of producers	2017 revised production (1,000 pounds)	2018 number of producers	2018 production (1,000 pounds)	Change in production from 2017 (percent)
Asiago.....	13	31,941	14	28,882	-10
Cheddar ¹	40	29,036	44	28,624	-1
Colby ¹	10	7,792	(D)	(D)	(NA)
Farmers.....	12	1,342	13	1,475	10
Feta.....	8	97,990	9	102,505	5
Gorgonzola.....	10	18,102	9	18,007	-1
Gouda.....	26	18,684	29	14,188	-24
Italian Fontina.....	12	12,198	12	11,447	-6
Havarti.....	12	42,685	12	40,455	-5
Hispanic.....	12	91,407	15	93,394	2
Limburger.....	1	447	1	464	4
Monterey Jack ¹	(D)	(D)	15	9,392	(NA)
Parmesan Wheel.....	6	67,116	6	70,948	6
Romano Wheel.....	6	10,655	8	9,516	-11
All Other ²	59	369,255	54	373,375	1
Total ³	99	798,650	99	802,672	1

(D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations

(NA) Not available.

¹ Includes only specialty types of this variety.

² Combined to avoid disclosure of individual plant data. Includes: Alpine, American Grana, Auribella, Bel Paese, Blue, Brie and Camembert, Butterkase, Caerphilly, specialty Colby, Edam, Fior di Latte, Fontinella, Gruyere, other specialty Italian, Italic, Juustoleipa, Kefalograviera Sagana, Kasseri, Mascarpone, Middle Eastern cheeses, Morning Sun, specialty Mozzarella, other specialty Parmesan, Pepato, Peperon, specialty Provolone, Raclette, other specialty Romano, Soft-ripened, specialty Swiss, Tvarog Polish, and Yogurt cheese.

³ Total cheese plants producing one or more specialty cheeses.