



**For:**

**CALIFORNIA ARTISAN CHEESE FESTIVAL**

745 Baywood Drive  
Petaluma, CA 94954  
707-837-1928

[www.artisancheesefestival.com](http://www.artisancheesefestival.com)

**PR Contact:**

Caitlin Sandberg  
530-400-9207  
caitlin@caitlinsandberg.com

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**THE CALIFORNIA ARTISAN CHEESE FESTIVAL  
CELEBRATES 11 YEARS OF CHEESE EDUCATION AND APPRECIATION  
MARCH 24-26, 2017**

*Tickets on sale January 1<sup>st</sup> for weekend's events, featuring many new offerings including a Cheese & Cocktail Celebration, two Cheesemaker Dinners, and intimate artisan tours which now include educational seminars*

**PETALUMA, Calif.**—December 14, 2016—California's premier cheese event, the [California Artisan Cheese Festival](http://www.artisancheesefestival.com), is celebrating its 11<sup>th</sup> year, March 24-26, 2017, in and around the Sheraton Sonoma County in Petaluma. Celebrating 11 years of cheese education and appreciation, this year's Festival brings together artisan cheesemakers, farmers, educators, authors, chefs, brewers, winemakers and enthusiastic guests for three days of cheese tasting, education and celebration. Many new festival elements are being introduced this year, from educational sessions and tastings which will be included with every Friday tour; to a Friday night Ultimate Best Bite featuring local cheesemongers, chefs and cheesemakers; to a swanky Saturday night Cheese & Cocktail party; and two high-end Cheesemaker Dinners in Sonoma.

"We are very proud of California's artisan cheesemaking community which has grown exponentially over the last 11 years," said Festival Founder and President Tom Birdsall. "We love supporting and showcasing the incredible array of talented artisan cheese producers we have in California, and offering fun, delicious and interactive ways for attendees to experience the food they love."

Throughout the weekend, guests will have the opportunity to experience new, limited-production and rare artisan cheeses while supporting California farmers and cheesemakers in their ongoing effort to advance sustainability. Tickets go on sale on January 1, 2017 and will be available at [www.artisancheesefestival.com](http://www.artisancheesefestival.com).

The 2017 schedule includes the following events:

**Friday, March 24**

**Educational Artisan Tours & Lunch**

Back by popular demand are Friday's intimate tours where guests get to explore various local farms, creameries and artisan purveyors. During the guided tours, the guests get to

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. New this year, the tours will feature an educational seminar component, such as a cooking demonstration or tasting, led by industry experts. There will also be one tour that goes beyond Sonoma and Marin Counties to the Central Valley so guests may experience cheesemakers and other producers farther outside of the Bay Area. The tours will also allow guests to observe behind-the-scenes aspects of the farms and interact with the cows, sheep, buffalo, 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](http://www.artisancheesefestival.com) for specific details about each Farm Tour and to purchase tickets; \$135; 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

### **The Ultimate Best Bite**

Friday night under the Big Top is where local cheesemongers, chefs and cheesemakers will take center stage in a light-hearted yet energetic competition to see who can create the best bite using California artisan cheese. Each cheesemaker will be paired with a local cheesemonger and chef who will be creating delectable bites featuring their cheesemaker's cheeses, and guests are encouraged to vote 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.*

### **Saturday, March 25**

#### **Seminars + Tasting and Pairing Demonstrations**

In addition to the educational components that are included on every Friday tour, there are also a handful of seminars being offered a la carte on Saturday at the Sheraton Sonoma County and at Cowgirl Creamery in Petaluma. Led by industry experts on a variety of topics, the seminars will range from pairing cheese with beer to the similarities between cheese and chocolate. Confirmed instructors include Peggy Smith and Sue Conley of Cowgirl Creamery; Jill Giacomini Basch and Lynn Giacomini Stray of Point Reyes Farmstead Creamery; certified cicerone Chris Munsey; author and educator Janet Fletcher; author and cheese expert Laura Werlin; ACS Certified Cheese Professional Vanessa Chang, and owner of The Cheese School of San Francisco Kiri Fisher. During the lunch break and after the afternoon seminars authors will be available for book signings. Books will be available for purchase by Copperfield's Books. *Tickets \$75; Sheraton Sonoma County and Cowgirl Creamery Warehouse; 10 – 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 – 3 p.m.*

#### **Cheese & Cocktail Celebration**

In honor of the Bay Area's blossoming local distillery scene and the cheesemakers who love them, this year marks the California Artisan Cheese Festival's first ever Cheese & Cocktail Celebration! Guests will sip and savor cheese-friendly cocktails while mingling with the local distillers who hand-craft the spirits, and sampling cheeses from some of the Bay Area's best cheesemakers. Each cheesemaker will be featuring their favorite cheese for attendees to enjoy, and many icons of California's artisan cheese industry will be in attendance. Live music will round out the evening's festive atmosphere. *Tickets \$40; The Sheraton Sonoma County; 5-7 p.m.*

#### **Sonoma Cheesemaker Dinners**

New this year are two high-end Cheesemaker Dinners taking place Saturday night of the California Artisan Cheese Festival at picturesque venues in Sonoma. Guests are invited to join these once-in-a-lifetime, multi-course feasts, each crafted by one of the region's best

chefs, and featuring local cheesemakers who will be in attendance to discuss their cheeses. Each three-hour dinner will take place in a quintessential Wine Country location, and each cheese-centric course will also be paired with a different local beer, wine or cider. Locations, chefs, participating cheesemakers, and other details TBD. *Tickets \$150 per person, including beverage pairing, tax and gratuity; 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.*

### **Sunday, March 26**

#### **Sunday Bubbles and Brunch with Charlie and Michael Kalish, the Cheese Twins**

Charlie and Michael Kalish, aka the Cheese Twins, are two cheese industry professionals who also happen to be twin brothers and recent television stars! After winning Season 7 of “The Great Food Truck Race” on Food Network, the brothers were given their own show, aptly called “Big Cheese” which is now airing also on Food Network. For Sunday Brunch at the California Artisan Cheese Festival, the Cheese Twins will be dishing up cheesy favorites paired with local sparkling wine. Throughout the meal, the Kalish brothers will share their story about how they got into cheese, their escapades training as cheesemakers and cheese agers in Europe, and what they have in store for the future. They will also be fielding questions and performing a live cooking demonstration while guests enjoy their brunch to create an interactive and fun experience. *Tickets include coveted early entry into the Artisan Cheese Tasting & Marketplace at 11 a.m., before it opens to the public at 12 p.m. Tickets \$115, Sheraton Sonoma County Ballroom; 9:30 – 11 a.m.*

#### **Artisan Cheese Tasting & Marketplace**

The grand finale of the Festival, the Marketplace brings together more than 90 artisan cheesemakers, winemakers, brewers, chefs and producers to sample and sell their products directly to attendees in this feast for the senses. Guests can discover the next wave of local, hand-crafted cheeses, boutique wines and artisan-brewed beers as well as interesting cheese products, books and recipes. Each ticket includes entry to the Marketplace, an insulated cheese tote bag and a signature wine glass. *Tickets \$45 for adults; \$20 for children 12 and under; The Big Top at the Sheraton Sonoma County; 12 – 4 p.m.*

#### **Complimentary Cooking and Entertaining Demonstrations**

In between tasting and buying cheeses at the Marketplace, guests are invited to watch live cooking and entertaining demonstrations conducted by local chefs and cheese experts, including a butter making demo by local food expert and journalist, Michele Anna Jordan. *Free with a Marketplace ticket; Sheraton Sonoma County Ballroom; 12 – 4 p.m.*

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, Cypress Grove Chevre, Donald and Maureen Green Foundation, Exchange Bank, 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., 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](http://www.artisancheesefestival.com).

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ATTN EDITORS: Photos available upon request