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FROM
THE
EDITOR

CHEESE, *please!*

I COULD START WITH A SLEW OF PUNS — “SAY CHEESE,” “YOU CHEDDAR BELIEVE IT,” “HAVE A GOUDA DAY” — ok, my jokes are cheesy. But as Wisconsinites, we take our cheese seriously. It’s not only wedged into our diets; it’s proudly infused in our history, economy, and culture.

There’s so much to learn about the big cheese, and in **TASTE**, Jenni explores everything from the masterful art of cheesemaking to local cheeses, shops, and festivals. Steve shares wine pairing suggestions, and Jason introduces us to Kaffeost — coffee with cheese.

In **VOICE**, Tim highlights two community leaders making a difference for youth: Appleton Principal Jack Knaack and Hazelmade Art Studio founder Karen Ebben. Casey shares must-reads for 2026, and Jim brings us the sounds of Celtic rock band Reilly, in **TODAY**.

Dr. Seth explains how to identify and manage hip dysplasia in dogs, and you’ll find more adorable adoptables from The Fox Valley Humane Association in **MORE**. Plus, we’ve packed in St. Paddy’s Day, March Madness, “cheesy” decor, and spring seed starting.

Whether you like it sliced, shredded, grilled, or fried, grab a snack and join us for an issue you won’t want to miss.

Tastefully yours,

Sarah Peterson
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Jenni Eickelberg is a married working mom with two teenagers. She’s an Appleton native passionate about food blogging on her “Food for Thought Fox Valley” Facebook group page. In her spare time she loves to read, spend time with her family, volunteer, and travel.



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Jack Knaack

Principal

**Richmond Elementary
School in Appleton**

By TIM FROBERG



LEADING WITH HUMOR AND HEART

KNAACK HAS A KNACK FOR CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS

By TIM FROBERG



LEARNING AND LAUGHING ARE A WONDERFUL COMBINATION.

Just ask Jack Knaack.

Knaack has been the principal at Richmond Elementary School in Appleton for the past 14 years and has a leadership style that promotes both. He does everything in his power to create and cultivate a culture that puts a high priority on education but makes learning fun for the students and teaching enjoyable for the instructors.

Knaack — pronounced ‘Ka-nock’ — isn’t the type of administrator who barricades himself in an office. He’s all about engagement and interaction with Richmond’s students and staff. And if that means looking silly through his apparel, words, or actions, that’s just fine with Knaack, provided it benefits the students educationally.

UP ON A ROOF

This is the same man who has twice slept overnight on the school roof to support a school reading program. He has also dyed his hair different colors and dressed as a world globe, an atlas, Mr. Potato Head, and a six-foot leprechaun — all to promote various school learning initiatives or reward the students for their efforts and accomplishments.

“My boss has banned me from that (sleeping on the roof),” said Knaack with a laugh. “Part of this is who I am. I don’t take myself too seriously. If everyone can have a good laugh at my expense while we’re celebrating something the students did, that’s great.”

“On one occasion, I wore a crazy costume and dyed my hair red to celebrate us hitting a really high goal to benefit our library. We raised almost \$40,000 for our library. That’s a huge amount for a school of 250 kids. So I’m happy to do whatever will help our school.”

Knaack has also been known to sing *Happy Birthday* to students during lunch, produce snow day music videos, take a pie in the face, and lead everyone in the Chicken Dance to celebrate a school accomplishment.





“My job allows me to be who I am,” Knaack said. “I like people, and I like kids. I enjoy connecting with them. Being around these young kids and seeing the energy they bring, it just changes how you see things.”

Knaack is such an effective leader that he has been nominated and is a finalist for the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Principal Leadership Award.

“Jack is a highly engaged principal,” said Sarah Peterson, a parent and PTO member who has had four children attend Richmond. “If you visit his office, you may find it unoccupied — not due to his absence, but because he is out interacting with students and staff.

“Each morning and afternoon, he can be found on the playground, greeting students and conversing with parents. Throughout the day, he is frequently present in the hallways, lunchroom, and classrooms.



“What truly sets him apart is his dynamic personality. Once you get to know him, you’ll quickly realize that he is one of the most enjoyable principals you will ever encounter. His creativity and sense of humor have become beloved by students and parents at Richmond. Jack exemplifies the values he teaches while engaging with parents, staff, and students, extending kindness and respect to everyone in the school community.”

CONNECTING WITH TODAY'S YOUTH

Knaack enjoys the enthusiasm and personalities of his young students. He’s full of stories involving quirky conversations with his students.

“There was this one little kindergarten kid, and he was sitting in his area one day,” Knaack said. “He looks up at me and says, ‘You know, Mr. Knaack. You and me are a lot alike.

“Whatever little bit I can do (to help a school program), I will do,” said Knaack. “I have a closet full of silly hats and costumes. I like to laugh. I like to have fun. I like to engage with the kids.

“All of that helps you build a foundation. I believe you have to have a culture that lets you feel safe, comfortable, and ready to go to work. We have a great staff here at Richmond, and that’s a huge part of it. I got lucky because it was a veteran staff when I started, and we’ve been able to get the right people to fit our culture.

“We’ve created the type of culture — at least I hope we have — where people feel good about coming to work here. They want to work here because they know it’s a good place to work.”

NOMINATED FOR A TOP AWARD

Knaack is far more than just a cutup. He’s a smart, creative leader who maintains a well-structured and supportive learning environment. He sets specific boundaries and has come up with several school programs that promote academic growth and student safety. Through programs like “Character Counts,” he’s able to instill values such as caring, kindness, respect, and responsibility.

“All Family Read,” “Math Bingo,” “Art Night,” and “Read-A-Thon” are additional enrichment programs he has introduced with the help of his staff and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). These programs promote problem-solving, the joy of learning, and collaboration among students and families.

He’s launched a Winter Olympics program — staff versus students — a Kindergarten Book Character Parade (in which he’s always dressed in costume), and a Gingerbread Chase. He adds a personal touch with pretty much everything he does on the job, including his weekly video announcements that keep the Richmond school community connected.



You're funny. I'm funny. You're chubby. I'm chubby. And we both like milk."

"We decided to call ourselves 'The Funny Brothers' and that no one else could get into our group unless we thought they were funny enough."

STARTING OUT ON THE TEACHING TRAIL

Knaack loves to teach — which should come as no surprise considering that he launched his professional career in 1998 and worked for five years as a high school teacher at New London High School.

Knaack grew up and attended school in the Menasha Joint School District. The 1992 Menasha High School graduate received his bachelor's degree in secondary education and teaching from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 1997 and eventually obtained his master's in educational leadership and administration from Marion University.

"I started out wanting to be a dentist, but I think I was just chasing the money," said Knaack with a chuckle. "Then things just happened. I always loved school. Back in high school, I was a music guy. I played the trumpet and was in school musicals. But I also played football and did some track and baseball. I really liked being part of a school, so yeah, that was a big part of me going into teaching."

After five years of teaching, Knaack entered school administration, working three years as an associate principal at Kaukauna High School and four years as an associate principal in the Appleton Area School District.

"My years teaching in New London were really important and helped prepare me for my current job," said Knaack. "I was teaching world history to high school kids, and I

would ask myself, 'Now how can I make this interesting to a 14-year-old?'

"My methods those first couple years were probably a little questionable. But I was learning how to teach. Fortunately, I had help. Sometimes, a new teacher comes into a school and gets the classes that no other teachers want. But my mentor teacher there (Andy Kolosso) helped me out a great deal by setting me up classes that really helped me."

When he started his principal's job at Richmond, Knaack experienced some incredible irony. The principal he replaced, Bobbie Schmidt, was his former second-grade teacher in the Menasha school district.

"Bobbie had everything in place when I took over," Knaack said. "She was very supportive, and they already had such a great staff. That made it so much easier for me."

Knaack says that he has always followed three core concepts at Richmond: responsibility, respect, and caring.

"We've been saying those words for 14 years," said Knaack. "We've also said, 'Let's make them who we are.' We've been able to build a culture here, and the kids have bought into the culture."

FOSTERING A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE

One of Knaack's favorite days of the year is when Richmond Elementary alumni visit the school on their high school graduation day and reminisce about their experiences at the school.

"They come back, walk the hallways, and we just celebrate," Knaack said. "They will smile, give me a hug, share their words of wisdom, and let me know that Richmond was a special place for them. There is something really special about those moments."

Knaack feels the school offers a family-type atmosphere, and it's reflected in the teachers and students. When he started at the school in 2011, Cathy Schwanke was one of Knaack's teachers on the staff. She has since retired, but her daughter, Maggie, now teaches at Richmond. To complete a third-generation scenario, Maggie's daughter, Nora, is a Richmond kindergarten student.

"THAT'S THE DEFINITION OF FAMILY AND WHAT WE'VE CREATED HERE,"

Knaack said. "It's important that people want to come here. They want to teach here and have their children attend school here."

Knaack is a family man outside the office who enjoys reading, traveling, and supporting Wisconsin's sports teams. He and his wife, Natalie, who is also a Menasha High graduate, have two children: Riley, 25, a teacher in the Kaukauna Area School District, and Carter, 21, who is training to become an electrician.

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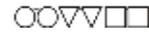
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The first recorded St. Patrick's Day parade in America occurred in St. Augustine, Fla., on **March 17, 1601**, and featured music and cannon fire to honor the saint.



The world record for the largest clover (most leaves on a single stem) is a 63-leaf clover. This record-breaking specimen was grown by Japanese gardener Yoshiharu Watanabe.



The average Wisconsinite consumes more than **20 pounds of cheese per year.**

In Wisconsin, **March is known as Maple Month, the height of maple syrup season.** It is characterized by cold nights and warm days that cause sap to flow.



March 23rd is National Puppy Day in the United States, celebrating the joy of puppies and promoting adoption from local animal shelters. Share photos of your puppy using the hashtag **#NationalPuppyDay.**



March is recognized as National Umbrella Month, celebrating the practical, 4,000-year-old invention designed to protect against rain and sun.



The primary birth flower for March is the daffodil (Narcissus), which symbolizes the end of winter, new beginnings, rebirth, joy, prosperity, unmatched luck, and faithfulness.

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Spring?



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smiles into forever
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NAVIGATING NEW REGULATIONS: WHAT'S CHANGING FOR SMALL BUSINESS

By BRENT WALBRUN



New regulations can feel like one more thing on an already full plate, but staying ahead is one of the easiest ways to protect your business, avoid disruptions, and plan confidently for the year ahead. As lawmakers respond to economic shifts, cybersecurity risks, and a changing workforce, several updates are on the horizon for small businesses in 2026.

Why These Changes Matter

Regulations don't exist in isolation. They often affect costs, staffing, data security, and how you work with vendors or customers. Understanding what's changing, and why, can help you adjust early rather than having to scramble later.

1. Strengthened Cybersecurity Standards and Banking Compliance

With fraud and data breaches rising nationwide, expect tighter rules around how businesses store customer data, authenticate logins, and manage digital payments. In addition, banks are refreshing Know Your Customer (KYC) and beneficial ownership requirements,

which means your business may need to update client records and verify ownership details more frequently. These compliance steps help protect both your business and your clients.

What to do now:

- Update software regularly
- Implement multifactor authentication
- Train employees to recognize phishing attempts
- Review KYC documentation and ensure beneficial ownership records are current

2. New Payroll and Reporting Requirements

Several states, including Wisconsin, are updating wage-reporting thresholds, contractor classifications, and overtime eligibility.

Your action steps:

- Review your employee classifications
- Check for new minimum-wage or overtime rules
- Ask your accountant whether reporting timelines or formats will change

3. Simple Internal Controls and Audit Readiness

Staying audit-ready year-round doesn't have to be complicated. Simple internal controls, like regular reconciliations, dual-approval for payments, and secure document storage, can help you catch errors early and demonstrate compliance if audited. Building a compliance calendar and assigning accountability for key deadlines (tax filings,

license renewals, KYC refreshes) ensures nothing slips through the cracks.

4. Lending and Insurance Requirements

If you're planning to borrow or refinance in 2026, be prepared for updated insurance documentation and risk-review processes. These changes aim to make borrowing more predictable and secure for both lenders and business owners.

How to prepare:

- Review your property, liability, and interruption coverage
- Update outdated appraisals or equipment records
- Connect with your banker early in your planning process

5. When to Call the Banker, CPA, or Attorney

Not sure who to call? Reach out to your banker for questions about lending, compliance calendars, or KYC updates. Your CPA is the go-to for payroll, tax, and reporting changes. For legal questions, especially those involving contracts or ownership, consult your attorney. Building a trusted team ensures you're covered from every angle.

Stay Ahead with Local Support

Regulation changes can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to navigate them alone. A strong banking relationship, one rooted in understanding your goals, industry, and community, can help you interpret updates and pivot with confidence. If you'd like a second look at your plans for 2026, community banks can help you stay compliant, competitive, and prepared.

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The Proper Human Diet: A DEEPER LOOK

By ANGELA HALDERSON

As interest in the Proper Human Diet grows, some people choose to go beyond reducing processed foods and carbohydrates and begin questioning the role of fruits and vegetables altogether. This approach is based on the fact that many plant foods contain compounds that can interfere with digestion, nutrient absorption, and gut comfort.

Plants produce defense compounds to protect themselves from being eaten. These include substances such as phytic acid (phytates), oxalates, lectins, tannins, and salicylates. While these compounds are generally tolerated by many people, they can pose challenges for others. Phytic acid, found in grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds, is well known for binding to minerals like iron, zinc, calcium, and magnesium, reducing how much the body can absorb from both plant and animal foods eaten at the same meal. Oxalates, common in leafy greens and some fruits, can also bind minerals and may contribute to discomfort or kidney stone risk in susceptible individuals.

Supporters of a more animal-based Proper Human Diet argue that eliminating fruits and vegetables removes these compounds entirely, potentially improving mineral absorption and reducing digestive stress. Animal foods provide nutrients such as iron, zinc, vitamin B12, and protein in highly bioavailable forms, meaning the body can absorb and use them efficiently without interference from plant chemicals.

Another major consideration is dietary fiber. Fiber is often promoted as essential for gut health, but not everyone responds positively to it. Certain types of fiber — especially insoluble or highly fermentable fibers — can irritate the gastrointestinal tract in some people. For individuals with conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), inflammatory bowel issues, or unexplained bloating and pain, fiber can increase gas production, gut pressure, and inflammation. In these cases, removing high-fiber plant foods may lead to calmer digestion and symptom relief. If you follow a FODMAP diet, this is you! Your body has trouble with all these different types of carbohydrates and fibers.

It's important to note that this perspective is not universally accepted. Many people digest fruits and vegetables without any issues and benefit from them as part of a varied diet. However, advocates of the Proper Human Diet emphasize that individual response matters more than dietary dogma. If certain foods consistently cause discomfort, inflammation, or nutrient deficiencies, removing them — at least

temporarily — may be a useful experiment under appropriate guidance.

The Proper Human Diet may sound like an extreme change. This is, after all, a more "extreme" elimination diet. But if anyone is suffering from diarrhea, constipation, brain fog, insomnia, joint pain, gas, bloating, or heartburn, it is time to look deeper into your diet. Adopting a strict elimination diet for a period of time can calm inflammation, help repair the GI tract, and fuel the body toward change.

Animal foods provide nutrients such as iron, zinc, vitamin B12, and protein in highly bioavailable forms, meaning the body can absorb and use them efficiently without interference from plant chemicals.



Angela Halderson is the owner of Strong Meridian, a natural healthcare practice focusing on the root cause of disease. She is a dietitian trained in functional medicine, energy medicine, homeopathy, and herbalism.



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The Hidden Cost of the "WHITE CRUNCH"

By NATASHA WINKLER

It's a sound every Fox Cities resident knows by heart: the rhythmic scrape-scrape-scrape of a shovel on a Tuesday morning, followed by that satisfying crunch of rock salt hitting the driveway. We see those white crystals as a safety net, a way to get the kids to school or get ourselves to work without a trip to the emergency room. But here's the thing: Once that ice melts, the salt doesn't just go away. It's starting a journey that's quietly hammering our local economy, our pipes, and the very water that makes Appleton, well, Appleton.

The "Forever" Problem

We just wrapped up 2026 Winter Salt Awareness Week, and the folks over at the Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance dropped a pretty sobering truth bomb. Salt is what they call a "forever" pollutant. Unlike a leaf pile or a piece of paper, salt doesn't break down. It doesn't filter out. Once it's in the water, it's there for good.

Think about this next time you're shaking the bag: just one teaspoon of salt is enough to permanently pollute five gallons of water. Multiply that by every driveway on your block, and you start to see the scale of the problem.

Wisconsin is now staring down "Freshwater Salinization Syndrome." It sounds like something out of a sci-fi movie, but it's real. Our rivers, including the Fox, are getting saltier by the year. Department of National Resources data shows chloride loads in our state rivers have surged from 600,000 tons in the early 2000s to nearly 800,000 tons today. For us in the Valley, that's not just an "environmental" issue; this is a direct hit to a \$25 million fishing industry. If the walleye and perch in the Winnebago and Green Bay systems can't handle the salt, our local bait shops and guides are the ones who pay the price, not to mention the fishing tourism dollars.

A Tax You Didn't Vote For

Then there's the bill we don't see until it's too late. Salt is a slow-motion wrecking ball for anything made of metal or concrete. That "cheap" \$7 bag of rock salt comes with a massive hidden surcharge. Nationally, salt corrosion eats up about \$5 billion a year in damage to bridges and cars.

Right here in Outagamie County, high salinity is literally eating our infrastructure from the inside out. It's a silent tax on the city of Appleton's budget, forcing us to repair bridges and water mains way sooner than we should have to. It even sneaks into our homes. Roughly 38% of community wells in Wisconsin have spiked

past recommended sodium levels. For neighbors on low-sodium diets, this isn't just about "the environment" — it's about what's coming out of the kitchen faucet.

Brine, Lines, and a New Way Forward

The good news? We're getting smarter. If you've seen those "lines on the road" before a big storm hits in Kaukauna or Appleton, you're looking at the solution: liquid brine. These treatments use about 70% less salt than the old-school rock salt trucks, and they actually stay put on the road instead of bouncing into the ditch.

But the biggest change happens in our own driveways. We can flip the script by doing three simple things:

- **Shovel early.** The less snow there is, the less salt you need.
- **Scatter, don't dump.** One coffee mug of salt is enough to cover 10 sidewalk squares. Seriously.
- **Switch to sand.** When it's colder than 15 degrees, salt stops melting ice anyway. Sand gives you the grip without the chemical baggage.

The next time you hear that crunch under your boots, remember that the salt we scatter today is the water we'll be drinking and fishing in tomorrow. Let's make sure the "ripple effect" we leave behind is one we can actually live with.



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UP FRONT

KAREN EBBEN

HAZELMADE ART STUDIO
FOUNDER AND TEACHER

Teaching and sharing her love of art is Karen Ebben's passion.

That's why she founded Hazelmade Art Studio.

Hazelmade — located at 3003 N. Richmond St. — offers youth the opportunity to explore the world of art through classes, camps, clubs, and parties.

Hazelmade is a nonprofit organization supported by community donations, fees, and partnerships.

A Xavier High School graduate, Ebben received her bachelor's degree in art education and a master's degree in education from the University of Wisconsin. She worked for 27 years as a school art teacher, including 24 in the Appleton Area School District before opening Hazelmade in the early 2020s.

Ebben and her husband, Chris, have three grown children: Grace, Mary Hazel, and Lily. They recently became grandparents with the arrival of twins, Soleya and Kaylani. Two more important members of their household are their chihuahua mixes, Levi and Willa.

By Tim Froberg
Photo by Ashley Schmit
Debbie Daanen Photography



HOW DID HAZELMADE GET LAUNCHED?

"I was teaching in the schools and looking for a summer gig. I let some of my students know I was going to start a summer art camp, and so did my husband, who was still teaching. It started in the living room of our house with maybe six to eight students. Then COVID hit. I had parents reaching out to me, telling me how much their children looked forward to it and how they needed something to do. So I put it outside in a big tent in our backyard. We all wore masks and were socially distanced. In 2023, we began renting a space in the City Center Plaza before moving to our current location.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT ART?"

"To be able to witness their brainstorming and creative growth, and see them grow in terms of confidence and decision-making, I can't imagine doing anything else."

WHEN DID YOU CATCH THE ART BUG?

"I was blessed with the ability to be creative and had parents (Don and Bev Feldkamp) who were willing to support my love of art. I remember getting a big box of crayons for my fourth birthday and being so excited about it. I always got art supplies for Christmas and birthdays and loved getting them. I took art classes all the way through school. As a kid, I was either doing art or soccer."

HOW DID HAZELMADE GET ITS NAME?

"It's named after Hazel Shepherd, a remarkable woman I met when I went on a mission trip for Xavier at the age of 16 to the Appalachian Mountains in Kentucky. She was living a life most of us cannot comprehend — through poverty and hardships. But she showed us how you can find joy in the little things and create your own happiness. She was just so loving and caring and joyful. She showed me what really matters in life."



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GOOD STUFF

By SARAH PETERSON



EAT HEALTHY

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Support long-term wellness with a stop at a new locally owned, plant-forward cafe that offers nourishing foods free from gluten, dairy, and seed oils. The menu features breakfast and lunch items made from seasonal ingredients, such as their Get Figgy with It breakfast, Smoky Hummus Bowl, and Beet Thai Wrap. Wholesome house-made cookies, protein balls, and other baked treats provide energy without the typical sugar or dairy crash. Specialty drinks include a variety of functional wellness shakes, such as Internal Peace and Body Guardian, organic teas such as Peace O' Mind, and mold-free coffee. Located at 4155 North Galaxy Drive in Grand Chute.

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lionstailbrewing.com



APPLETON BUNDT HOUSE

A cozy new downtown bakery, Appleton Bundt House, specializes in made-from-scratch bundt cakes, cake pops, and other sweet treats. Owned by Carla Manns, it features Southern-inspired bundt cakes, coffee, tea, and seasonal drinks. Perfect for special occasions or an anytime treat.

appletonbundthouse.com



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CRAFTY CREATORS

Drop in at the Appleton Public Library on Tuesdays between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. to try a new set of craft activities. There will be a new theme each week, such as sky adventures or ice creations. Kids of all ages and families are welcome.

apl.org/events-and-programs



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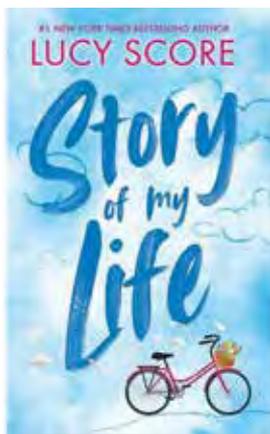
TODAY

MUSIC VIBES 30 | ASK TAMMI 38 | SMILE 40 | MARCH MADNESS 44

2025 Great Reads

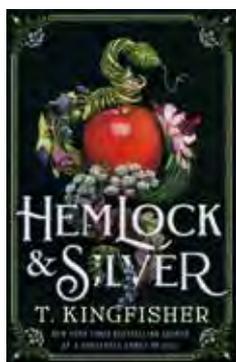


By CASEY MARION



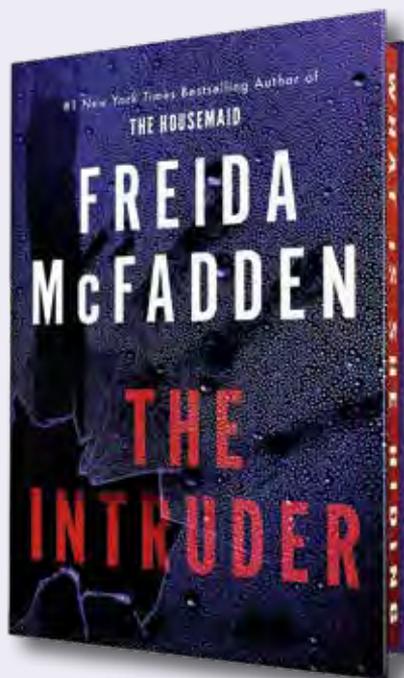
Lucy Score
Story of My Life

When washed-up romance novelist Hazel Hart receives a final warning from her publisher, she impulsively buys a house in rural Pennsylvania, hoping to reignite her creativity. The town's small-scale charm offers just enough inspiration to spark another book for her small but devoted readership. Hazel soon meets Cam, a grumpy, stubborn local who perfectly fits the mold for her newest fictional hero. As their paths continue to cross, Hazel finds both her writing and her heart slowly reopening. For readers who love cozy Hallmark movies, small-town romance, and guaranteed happily-ever-afters, *Story of My Life* is a comforting, charming, and satisfying escape that feels familiar and reassuring from start to finish.



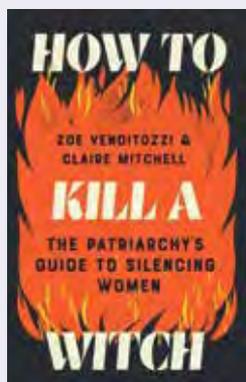
T. Kingfisher
Hemlock and Silver

Hemlock and Silver is a dark retelling of the classic children's tale: Snow White. When Anja, a healer with an affinity for unconventional magic, is tasked with saving her King's ailing daughter, Princess Snow, she discovers another realm inside a magic mirror.



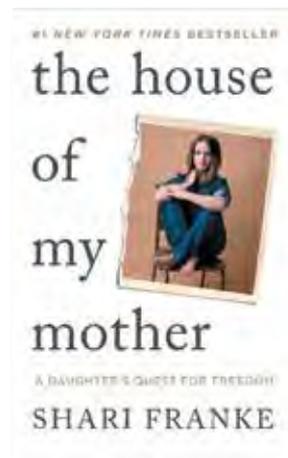
Freida McFadden
The Intruder

Freida McFadden's *The Intruder* was one of the most highly anticipated thrillers published in 2025. The novel follows Casey, a former teacher who has picked up and moved to the middle of nowhere to get away. When her roof threatens to cave in during a particularly powerful storm, Casey feels that for the first time, she might not want to be alone. Fortunately, she's not. A young girl appears in her garden shed, knife in hand and covered in blood. As Casey takes the girl in, she begins to realize the girl is hiding secrets worth killing for, and she may have made a fatal mistake in welcoming her.



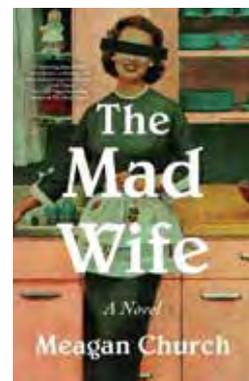
Zoe Venditozzi & Claire Mitchell
How to Kill a Witch

How to Kill a Witch recounts the history of witch trials and the codified violence against women. Through trial transcripts and witness accounts, this book walks readers through a time when superstition and ignorance influenced positions of power at the expense of women.



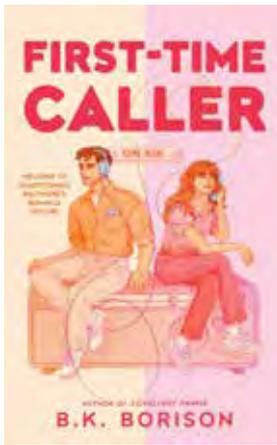
Sheri Franke
The House of My Mother

Sheri Franke has been fighting her entire life. From an early age, she lived in duality: subjected to strict moral codes behind closed doors while serving as a public face of her family's wildly popular YouTube channel, *8 Passengers*. Her mother was later arrested on multiple counts of child abuse alongside well-known relationship coach Jodie Hildebrandt. In this candid autobiography, Sheri recounts the pain, confusion, and resilience that shaped her childhood in the spotlight forever.



Meagan Church
The Mad Wife

This domestic drama unfolds in 1950s suburbia, where Lulu Mayfield is the perfect, devoted housewife, exceeding all expectations. When a mysterious new neighbor, Bitsy, moves in, Lulu becomes captivated by the darkness surrounding her and must unravel Bitsy's twisted web before it's far too late.



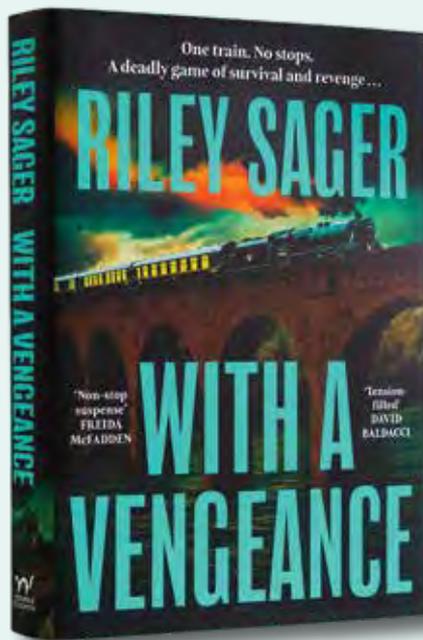
B.K. Borison
First-Time Caller

First-Time Caller is the bookish adaptation of *Sleepless in Seattle* that fans have been waiting for. Aiden Valentine, long-time radio host and romance expert, falls out of love with the very thing he's known for: Love. During one of his shows, a young girl calls in asking for dating advice for her mother, Lucie. Lucie intercepts the call, and soon the world can't stop talking about the chemistry between her and Aiden. With all of Baltimore weighing in on her love life, Lucie begins to wonder if maybe she needs more romance in her life. Readers will gush over the nostalgic 90s romantic comedy energy this novel brings with it.



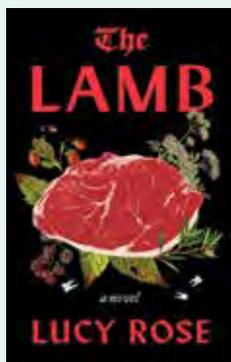
Noelle W. Ihli
Such Quiet Girls

When 12-year-old Sage's school bus is hijacked, she becomes trapped in an elaborate kidnapping. Forced to spend days underground with her classmates and an unhelpful bus driver, Sage faces terrifying uncertainty, wondering if they will survive long enough for their ransom to be paid.



Riley Sager
With A Vengeance

With A Vengeance is one of those books that stays with you long after you turn the last page. Inspired by the iconic stories of Agatha Christie, Sager does justice to the locked-door mystery with a glittering cast of characters and high-stakes thrills. Set in 1954, six people find themselves the sole passengers aboard the Philadelphia Phoenix, a train designed for luxury. They soon learn they'd been lured there by a woman named Anna Matheson, who claims each of them held blame in destroying her family. As the night wears on, Anna's plan derails when passengers start dropping like flies. Fans of the classic *Whodunnit?* Will adore Sager's new addition to the genre.



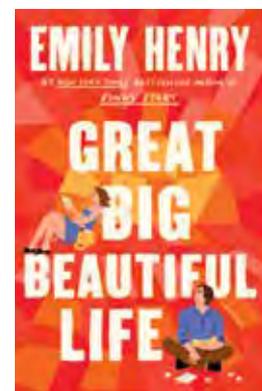
Lucy Rose
The Lamb

A horror unlike anything you've read before — *The Lamb* by Lucy Rose follows Margot, a young cottage-dwelling girl living with her mother. Taboo and unsettling, this claustrophobic coming-of-age story with hauntingly beautiful prose dives into the psyche of the mother-daughter relationship.



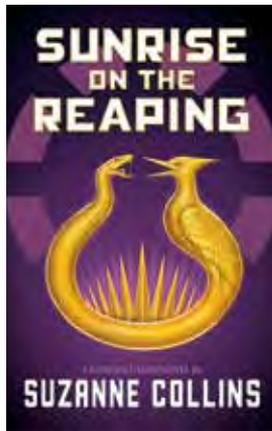
Omar El Akkad
One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This

As the title suggests, Omar El Akkad writes that there will come a day — long past the time of accountability — where everyone will have always been against this. This nonfiction novel recounts the deep division faced by minorities thrust into Western culture. Omar, an immigrant who was raised in the West, weaves his own anecdotes into this heartbreakingly profound novel about what it really means to grow up in a time dominated by Eurocentric countries.



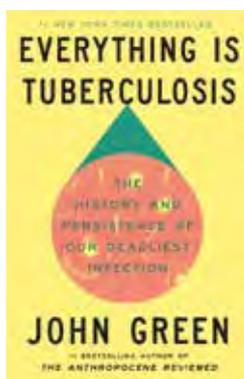
Emily Henry
Great Big Beautiful Life

Two writers compete to pen a biography of a missing heiress in this captivating novel. Alice and Scott both meet a mysterious woman claiming to be Margaret Ives, but she shares only fragmented pieces of her story, leaving them — and readers — questioning the truth.



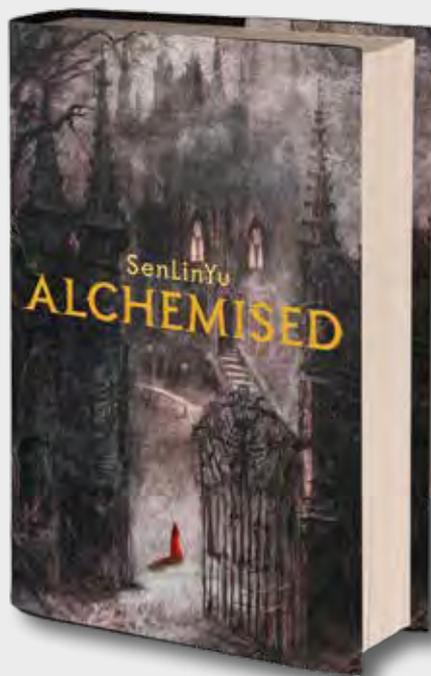
Suzanne Collins
Sunrise on the Reaping

The fifth book in *The Hunger Games* series captivated readers when it was released in March 2025. This prequel, set 25 years before Katniss and Peeta entered the arena, explores the origins of the brutal games. Haymitch Abernathy is reaped for the Quarter Quell, commemorating 50 years of Hunger Games history. This year, twice as many tributes are forced to compete, though only one will survive. Alongside Haymitch are his fellow District 12 tributes, navigating deadly alliances, high-stakes strategies, and the relentless horrors of the arena. The novel provides both fresh insight and a deeper understanding of the world fans have long admired.



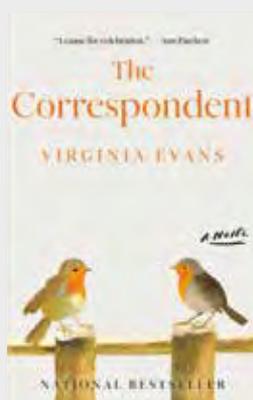
John Green
Everything is Tuberculosis

John Green tells the story of a young tuberculosis patient by the name of Henry Reider in this informative nonfiction novel. Green weaves in the science behind the disease and advocates for better awareness and accessible treatment of this oftentimes preventable disease.



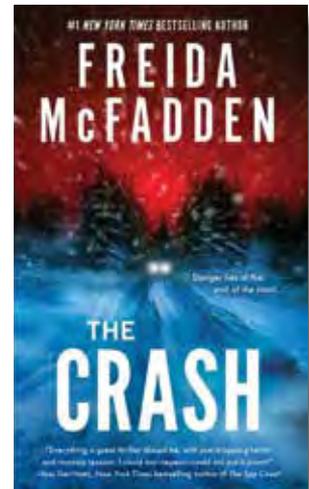
SenLinYu
Alchemised

This epic dark fantasy debut from SenLinYu isn't for the faint of heart. The war in Palada is finally over. Evil has won, and nearly all who were good have been executed. Left behind is the former talented alchemist, Helena, now a prisoner of war. Her memory has been wiped clean, leaving those in power questioning how important she truly was to the resistance. To recover the forgotten memories, Helena is sent to the High Reeve — one of the most powerful necromancers alive. Trapped in his mansion, Helena must navigate deadly intrigue and fight to uncover the secrets buried deep within her mind before her captors do.



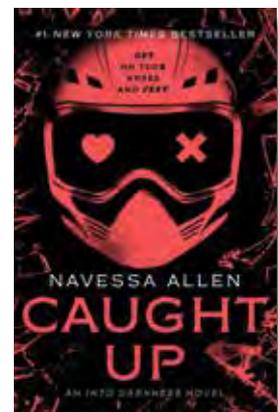
Virginia Evans
The Correspondent

Sybil sits down every morning to write letters that will be sent out all over. When a correspondence she receives forces her to look at a time in her life she'd rather forget, she realizes there's one unsent message that finally needs to be read.



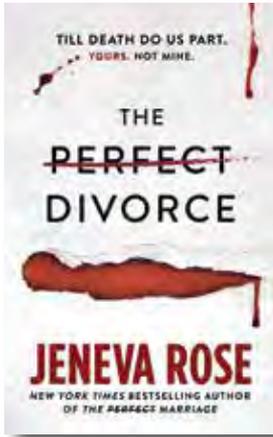
Freida McFadden
The Crash

Freida McFadden returns with *The Crash*, following expecting mother Teagan as she sets out to visit her brother after discovering a troubling secret about her baby's father. A blizzard forces her to stop, leaving her stranded in a cabin belonging to an elderly couple, but something feels off. As the storm rages, Teagan begins to realize she may be safer braving the snow than trusting her seemingly kind hosts.



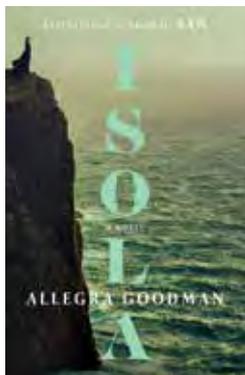
Navessa Allen
Caught Up

Caught Up is the sequel to Allen's smash hit *Lights Out*. Packed with just as much dark, brooding romance as the first installment, *Caught Up* follows Nico and Lauren — two sides of the same intense coin, whose resistance to each other only fuels their attraction.



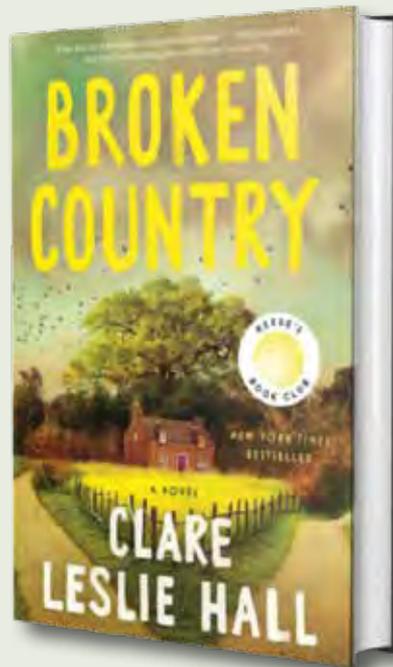
Jeneva Rose
The Perfect Divorce

From best-selling author and Fox Cities native Jeneva Rose comes the highly anticipated sequel to her global success, *The Perfect Marriage*. A decade after attorney Sarah Morgan defended her husband in the murder of his mistress, she's remarried to her new husband, Bob, and thriving. That is, until she discovers Bob in the throes of passion with another woman. Sarah dutifully files for divorce, but amidst their less-than-friendly separation, new evidence comes to light in her first husband's case, throwing Sarah right back into the limelight. When Bob's *other woman* goes missing, things turn from bad to worse, and soon everyone is left wondering: What really happened that night?



Allegra Goodman
Isola

Isola is a historical fiction based on a real-life heroine. Set in the 1540s, this novel features a young couple stranded on an island fighting for their survival. Former heiress Marguerite discovers love, faith, and determination alongside her lover.



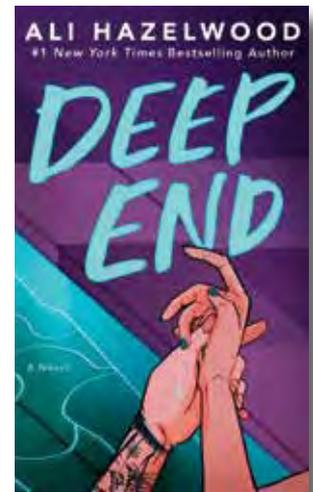
Clare Leslie Hall
Broken Country

Described as a romance with twists as sharp as any thriller on bestseller lists, *Broken Country* by Clare Leslie Hall delivers exactly what it promises. The story follows Beth, who enjoys a quiet, contented life in the countryside with her husband. Everything changes when her brother-in-law kills a dog that had been chasing their sheep, only to discover it belonged to Gabriel, a man tied to poignant memories from her past. As Beth and Gabriel reconnect, old wounds resurface, tensions escalate in the village, and a situation that began innocently spirals into danger, forcing Beth to confront both love and peril in unexpected ways.



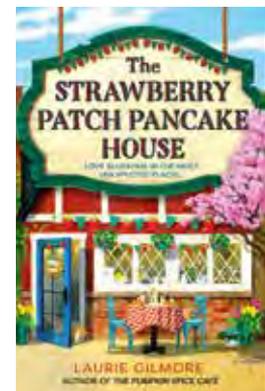
Kat Dunn
Hungerstone

This sapphic, gothic romance set during the Industrial Revolution is a classic retelling of *Carmilla*. When a carriage accident brings a mysterious woman into Lenore's stagnant life, everything changes. Something evil has started happening to the women near her home, and Lenore starts investigating.



Ali Hazelwood
Deep End

Ali Hazelwood's newest romance follows two college athletes — Scarlett and Lukas as they prepare for the Olympics. A swimmer and a diver who are both determined to keep their eyes on the prize soon find themselves wanting more than just a medal. On paper, they have little in common, but when a bombshell is revealed, everything changes. What started as an innocent fling with absolutely no strings attached slowly morphs into something... stronger.



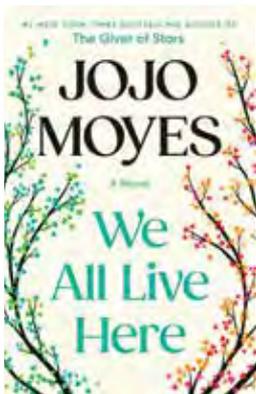
Laurie Gilmore
The Strawberry Patch Pancake House

The fourth installment of the Dream Harbor series features sexy, single-dad Archer looking for a live-in nanny. He hires Iris, a woman not exactly known for her ability to keep a job. Tensions rise, and soon, keeping everything professional at work becomes a lot harder.



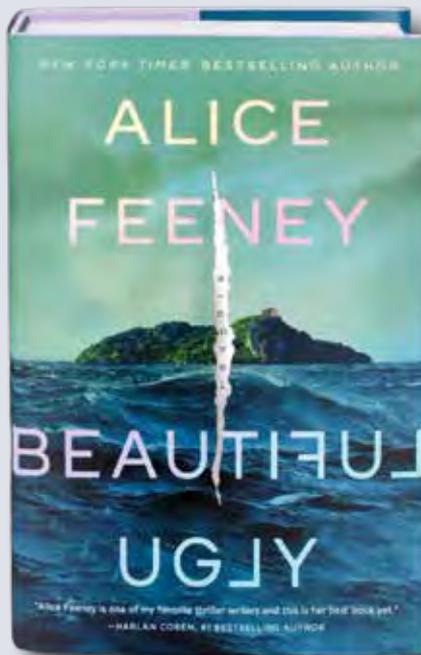
Rebecca Yarros
Onyx Storm

Rebecca Yarros' *Fourth Wing* took the internet by storm upon its release in 2023. Since then, Yarros has returned to the infamous war college, Basgiath, with *Iron Flame*. Now, *Onyx Storm* picks up where the previous story left off. Violet Sorrengail knows the time to fight is now. Evil has infiltrated Basgiath, surrounding the academy and rising through its ranks. To survive and put an end to evil once and for all, Violet must gather an army, master her magic, and forge alliances with neighboring lands. Yet, the dangerous secret she harbors may be the very thing that destroys her. Violet must challenge everything she believes about loyalty, power, and love.



Jojo Moyes
We All Live Here

Lila Kennedy's life is nothing like she imagined. A fractured family, a faltering career, and a troubled love life have worn her down. When her father suddenly reappears after 35 years, Lila is left questioning if she can handle the shock.



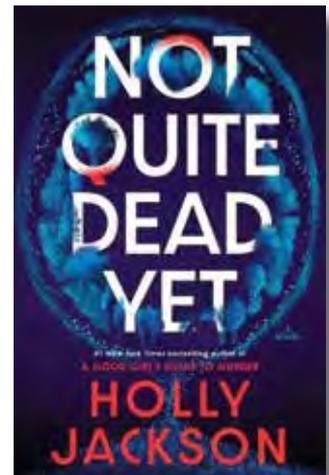
Alice Feeney
Beautiful Ugly

Alice Feeney returns with another domestic thriller chock-full of twists and turns. Grady Green makes a call to his wife, eager to share some good news, when, on the other end, he hears her car stop abruptly — the line goes silent. He discovers her car on the edge of a cliff, but she's nowhere to be found. A year later, Grady is still struggling to cope with his loss. He decides to visit a small island just off the coast of Scotland, where he can clear his head. It's there that he sees something that steals his breath away: a woman who is the spitting image of his missing wife.



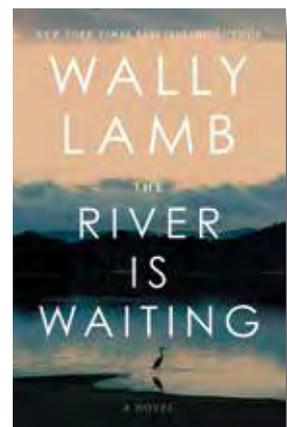
Sophie Stava
Count My Lies

Sloan Caray is a compulsive liar. A chance encounter with a young dad at the park turns a harmless lie into a job opportunity. Soon, she's the nanny for his seemingly perfect family — but she quickly discovers she's not the only one hiding secrets.



Holly Jackson
Not Quite Dead Yet

Holly Jackson delivers once again with this thriller that follows Jet Mason, the 27-year-old daughter of one of the wealthiest families in Vermont. After a Halloween party, Jet is viciously attacked and suffers a head injury, leaving her unconscious — mostly. As the clock ticks down on the time she has left, with the help of a childhood friend, Jet realizes that she is going to have to be the one who solves her own murder.



Wally Lamb
The River is Waiting

Recently incarcerated Corby Ledbetter experiences both crazed brutality and small acts of kindness behind bars. Finding solace in the prison librarian and a younger inmate, Corby begins feeling hopeful that he one day may make amends with family and those he hurt.

Casey Marion is an aspiring author and struggling college student. She works at the Kaukauna Public Library and can always be found with a book in hand.



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MILWAUKEE BASED REILLY BRINGS CELTIC ROCK SOUND TO NEW DUBLIN

By JIM COLLAR

St. Patrick's Day is a feast for the senses, and while many clamor for the food and drink, others are drawn by its signature sound.

New London — or shall we say New Dublin — has one of the region's biggest St. Paddy's Day parties, and this year, it will feature one of the top Celtic-infused rock bands in the Midwest.

Milwaukee-based Reilly will celebrate their 25th anniversary on St. Patrick's Day and will be the featured band at the 2026 New Dublin Irish Fest on March 21. The festival also coincides with the March release of their sixth album, *Milwonkee*.



"We really think it's going to be our best album," frontman Michael Tierney said. "The listener will have his opinion, but we know what we think."

America has long tinkered with immigrant traditions to create something all its own. Celtic music is a prime example. Artists figured out that Irish folk music melds seamlessly into punk, and it's become a popular genre through bands like Dropkick Murphys and Flogging Molly. It also works well with an acoustic, pop-oriented sound, as noted in bands like Gaelic Storm.

Reilly brings their own twist.

You'll hear satisfying harmonies and feel a hard rock edge, created from driving, gritty vocals rather than heavy guitar distortion.

"I think that's what sets us apart from some of the other Celtic bands that are out there," Tierney said.

It's earned them a following. Reilly are two-time winners of the Celtic/Folk Rock Band of the Year award from the Wisconsin Area Music Industry. While one might think that March would bring their highest demand, Reilly has kept a busy, year-round calendar with Irish heritage festivals, music festivals, and other engagements across a territory extending from the Dakotas to Ohio.

Tierney handles vocals and plays guitar, harmonica, octave mandolin, bouzouki, banjo, whistles, and bodhran. He's joined by bassist and vocalist Joe Neumann, drummer Lyle Brotkowski, and Peter Eisenhauer, who plays fiddle, accordion, keys, and also has lead and backing vocals.

NEW DUBLIN IRISH FEST

will run from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. in a heated tent in downtown New London. Sheamus Fitzpatrick and the McNally Boys will open the event, performing from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Reilly will perform from 1-6 p.m.

Reilly will also play at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 20, at Pup's Irish Pub in New London. Enjoy both engagements, knowing no two Reilly shows are the same.

Tierney estimates the veteran band can play more than 13 hours without repeating a song. While some favorites carry over from show to show, they read the room and try to get a sense of the right songs for the moment.

For long events like Irish Fest, it's particularly valuable.

"As the show goes on, the demographics might change, or the vibe might change," Tierney said. "You have to know how to go off course, and we're able to change the play at the line. Those guys also know that if we do have a setlist, it isn't going to stick."

Feel the Power and Passion of Flamenco at Your Fox Cities Performing Arts Center

What surrounds us? What connects us? And can these questions be answered without words?

Find out on May 1, when Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana brings *Quinto Elemento* to the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center stage as part of the Boldt Arts Alive! Series. This bold new work by internationally acclaimed choreographer Patricia Guerrero, set to an original live score by Francis Gómez, explores the invisible yet ever-present force of ether—the essence that envelops, unites, and guides us all.

Founded in 1983, Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana is among America's premier flamenco companies, and translates the three chief pillars of the traditional Spanish art form—*cante* (song), *baile* (dance) and *guitarra* (guitar)—through dynamic dancing, soulful singing, and complex musical compositions. And then, of course, there are the costumes.



"Flamenco is such a flowing, fluid style of dance," explains Amy Gosz, Chief Programming Officer for Fox Cities P.A.C. "And the costume elements complement the dance and music perfectly. In flamenco, they call it 'vuelo,' the way that the air catches the garments to make them an extension of the dancers themselves."

Taken together, these many facets make Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana a true feast for the senses, and one that has wowed audiences from coast to coast during the renowned dance company's latest tour. Enjoy the energy, passion, and soul of Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana for yourself at Fox Cities Performing Arts Center on May 1; to get tickets, visit foxcitiespac.com.



flamenco
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How Wisconsin Built and Defends ITS GLOBAL CHEESE REPUTATION

By NATASHA WINKLER

Let's be honest: If you live in Wisconsin, cheese isn't just a food group, it's a personality trait. We wear foam triangles on our heads, we judge out-of-state curds by their lack of "squeak," and we've all had at least one heated debate about which local creamery has the best sharp cheddar. But have you ever wondered how a random patch of the Midwest became the undisputed heavyweight champion of the dairy world?

It wasn't just luck or a clever marketing slogan on our license plates. Wisconsin's cheese empire was built on a mix of desperate 19th-century farmers, a "PhD" program for curd nerds, and some of the strictest laws you'll find outside of a courtroom.

The Great Pivot: From Wheat to Whey

To understand how we got here, we have to go back to a time when Wisconsin wasn't the "Dairyland" at all. In the mid-1800s, our fields were covered in gold, but it was wheat, not corn or cows. We were the "Wheat King" of the nation. But as any farmer will tell you, nature is fickle. By the 1860s, a nasty little pest called the chinch bug moved in and started eating the profits. The soil was exhausted from overplanting,

the bugs were hungry, and Wisconsin's economy was on the brink of collapse.

Enter the immigrants. Families from Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Scandinavia started showing up in the Fox River Valley and southern Wisconsin. They didn't just bring their suitcases; they brought their "secret sauce": centuries of Old World cheesemaking skills. They looked at the rolling hills and the lush, green grass and realized that while wheat was failing, dairy cows would think this place was a five-star resort.

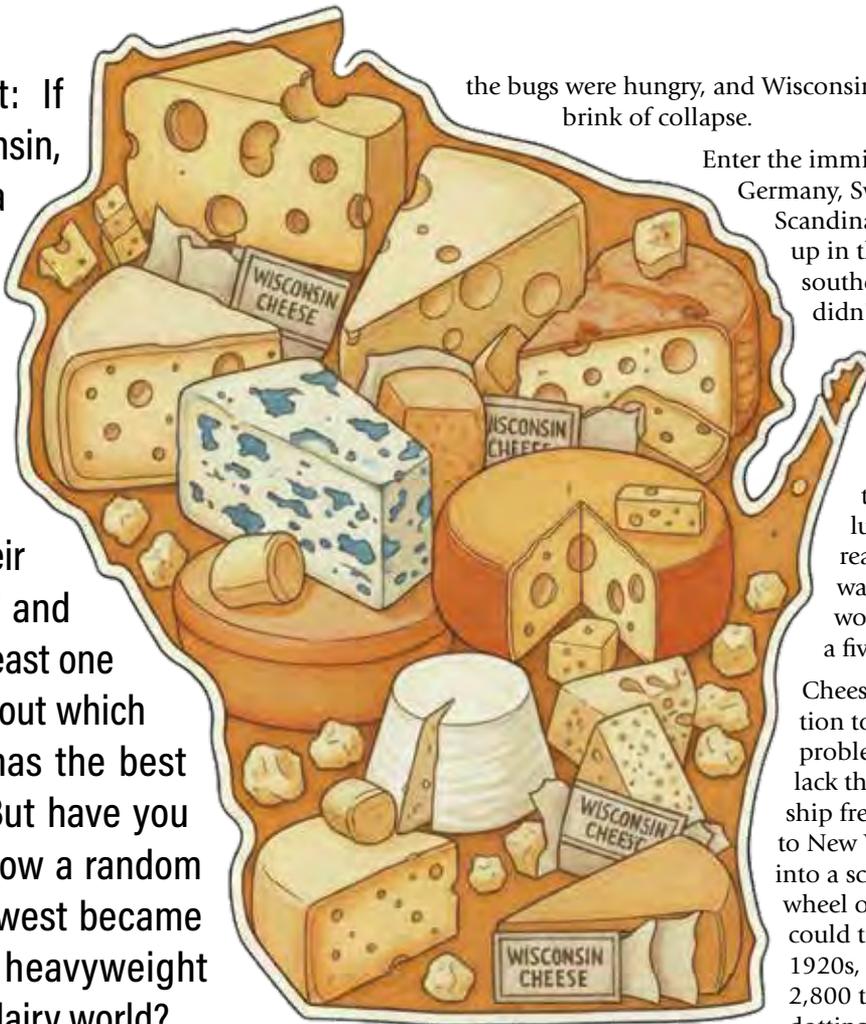
Cheese was the perfect solution to a major 19th-century problem: refrigeration (or the lack thereof). You couldn't ship fresh milk from Appleton to New York without it turning into a science project, but a wheel of aged cheddar? That could travel for months. By the 1920s, there were more than 2,800 tiny cheese factories dotting the state, basically one on every other corner. Every little

town had its own "vat," and the local cheesemaker was just as important as the mayor.

The 'PhD' of Cheese: Why Our Laws are Different

While other states make cheese, Wisconsin treats it like a high-stakes profession. Since 1915, Wisconsin has been the only state in the U.S. that requires a legal license to make cheese. You can't just buy a vat and start selling at a farmers market; you have to put in the hours, learn the microbiology of fermentation, and pass rigorous state exams.

But if you want to see the real "Avengers" of the dairy world, you have to look at the Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker® Program. Think of it as a PhD in cheese. To even apply, you



need to be a licensed cheesemaker for at least 10 years. Then, you spend three years in a grueling program through the Center for Dairy Research (CDR) at UW-Madison.

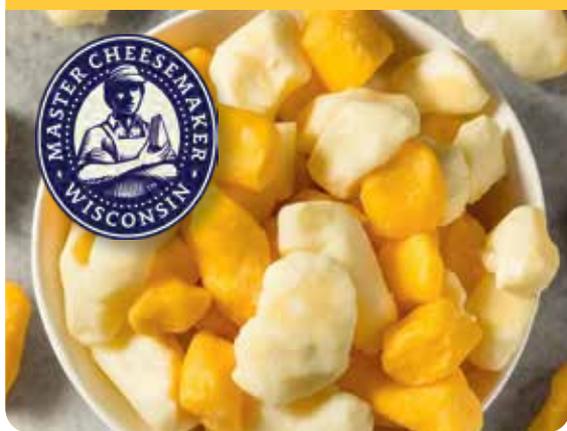
We're talking about a level of expertise that is unmatched globally. Masters like Sid Cook of Carr Valley or Chris Roelli of Roelli Cheese Haus don't just "make" cheese; they understand the molecular structure of milk. They spend years studying how salt migration affects texture and how different wash techniques can change the rind of a cheese from bitter to buttery. When you see that blue "Master's Mark" on a label, you're eating something overseen by someone who has dedicated more than 20,000 hours to their craft. In 2026, there are still fewer than 100 people who hold this title; it is an elite club of curd perfectionists.

HOW TO SPOT A "TRUE" WISCONSIN LEGEND

The Squeak Test: If you buy curds at the store and they don't squeak, microwave them for 5-10 seconds. It awakens the protein strands.

The Master's Mark: Look for the small blue seal on the packaging. It's the only way to know you're eating master-level craftsmanship.

The originals trio: If you want a true Wisconsin experience, try a flight of Colby, brick, and Limburger (if you're brave enough).



The Science of the Squeak (and Other Originals)

You can't write about Wisconsin cheese without talking about the "squeak." Fresh cheese curds are a Wisconsin rite of passage, but there's actual science behind that sound. The squeak comes from long strands of protein (casein) that haven't been broken down by aging yet. When you bite into a fresh curd, those protein strands rub against the enamel of your teeth, creating that rubbery "chirp." If it doesn't squeak, it's not fresh, end of story.

But Wisconsin's reputation isn't just built on curds. We are the birthplace of several "Wisconsin Originals", cheeses that don't exist anywhere else in the world:

Colby: Invented in 1885 by Joseph Steinwand in the town of Colby. It's similar to cheddar but uses a washed-curd process that makes it milder and moister.

Brick: Created in 1877 by John Jossi. It was named "brick" because the cheesemakers actually used bricks to press the moisture out of the cheese. It starts mild but gets "stinky" and delicious as it ages.

Cold pack: Unlike processed cheese (looking at you, plastic-wrapped singles), cold pack is made by blending fresh and aged natural cheeses without the use of heat. It's the stuff you find in those iconic tubs at every Wisconsin party.

Winning the "Cheese Olympics"

All that training and history pay off on the world stage. Every two years, the World Championship Cheese Contest happens, and Wisconsin usually clears the floor. It is essentially the "cheese Olympics," with thousands of entries from more than 30 countries.

In the most recent competitions in 2022 and 2024, Wisconsin makers took home more than 110 awards. To put that in perspective, that's more than the combined total of the next several highest-winning countries and states. We aren't just winning for "standard cheddar," either. We're beating the Europeans at their own game. We've got masters making Goudas that make the Dutch jealous and Alpine-style cheeses (like the legendary Pleasant Ridge Reserve) that regularly go toe-to-toe with anything from a Swiss mountainside.

The \$52.8 Billion Love Story

The economic side of this is staggering. The dairy industry pumps about \$52.8 billion into Wisconsin's economy every year. To put that in perspective, our cheese industry is bigger than the entire citrus industry in Florida or the potato industry in Idaho. It is the engine that keeps our rural towns alive and our urban centers like Appleton thriving.

However, the industry is changing. Even though we have fewer farms than we used to — we dropped to roughly 5,100 herds by the start of 2026 — we're actually producing more cheese than ever. Wisconsin now churns out more than 3.5 billion pounds of cheese a year. That's enough to give every single person on Earth a decent-sized snack.



The real secret to our modern success, though, is the shift toward specialty and artisanal cheese. About 28% of our cheese is now considered "specialty." We've moved away from just being a commodity state that makes huge blocks of industrial cheese and into the world of luxury flavors. We're talking about cheddars aged for 20 years, blues infused with truffles, and cheeses washed in local craft beers or brandies.



The Brain Trust at Babcock Hall

If you want to see the future of cheese, you have to go to Babcock Hall on the UW–Madison campus. This is home to the Center for Dairy Research (CDR), the world's most advanced dairy research facility.

The CDR acts as a doctor on call for the state's cheesemakers. If a local creamery in the Fox Cities is having trouble with its cheese not melting properly on a pizza, it calls the CDR. If an artisanal maker wants to create a new vegan-friendly (but still dairy) rind, the CDR scientists help formulate it. They even have "aging caves" that can mimic the exact climate of the French countryside to help Wisconsin makers develop perfect Bries and Camemberts.

In 2026, the CDR is also leading the charge on sustainability. They are finding ways to turn "whey," the liquid byproduct of

cheesemaking, into everything from high-protein drinks to sustainable biofuels. It's this marriage of 1800s tradition and 21st-century science that makes Wisconsin impossible to catch.

Defending the Title: The Challenges Ahead

Of course, maintaining a "global empire" isn't without its hurdles. The industry is facing a massive wave of consolidation. Smaller family farms are struggling to compete with large megadairies, and the cost of labor and equipment is at an all-time high. Furthermore, global "geographic indicator" (GI) laws in Europe are trying to ban Wisconsin makers from using names like "Parmesan," "Feta," or "Gorgonzola," claiming those names belong only to the regions in Europe where they originated.

Wisconsin isn't backing down, though. The Consortium for Common Food Names, based right here in the U.S., is pushing back, arguing that these names have become generic terms that Wisconsin masters have helped perfect over the last century.

A Legacy in the Vat

Wisconsin's cheese reputation is not a historical accident, nor is it a marketing trick. It is a carefully defended empire built on the ruins of a failed wheat crop, protected by the strictest laws in the country, and propelled by a relentless pursuit of scientific excellence.

Whether it's a multigenerational family plant in Little Chute, a large production facility in Hilbert, or a new artisanal startup in the southern hills, the people making your cheese actually care about the squeak. They care about the history of the land and the legacy of the master seal.

The next time you're building a charcuterie board or just grabbing a quick snack, take a second to look for that "Proudly Wisconsin" label. Behind that little wedge is 180 years of history, a decade of training, and a whole lot of state pride. In Wisconsin, we don't just make cheese — we make history, one vat at a time.



Where World-Class Cheese & Timeless Charm Live On

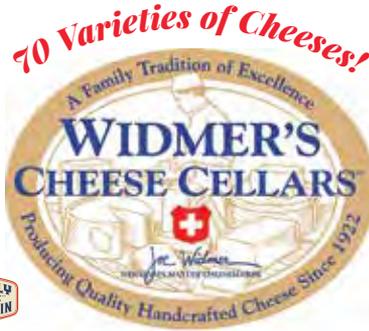


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THE SCENE

Top 10 reasons to fill up your calendar this month

By SARAH PETERSON

1. STORYBOOK WALK

Venture down the boardwalk and read a story at 1000 Islands Nature Center in Kaukauna. Stories will be geared toward young children, but all ages are welcome. Pick up an activity kit to continue the fun at home. No registration required. **March 6, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.**

kaukaunalibrary.org/event/#/events

3. MAPLE SYRUP SATURDAY

Celebrate maple syrup season at Bubolz Nature Preserve with a pancake breakfast, guided tour, and maple syrup ice cream sundae. Adopt a bucket to support the preserve. Tickets are required. **March 7, 8-11 a.m.**

bubolzpreserve.org/bubolz-events/maple-syrup-saturday

5. DADDY DAUGHTER DANCE

Enjoy an evening of dress-up, dancing, and special memories for dads (or positive male role models) and their daughters. Tickets include music, pizza, refreshments, and a photo area. **March 13, 5-7 p.m. in Kimberly.**

kimberly.recdesk.com/Community/Program

7. ST. PATRICK'S DAY BAR CRAWL

Strike gold on The Official Lucky's St. Patrick's Day Bar Crawl in Appleton with green drinks, festive tunes, and nonstop fun. Bring your friends and wear your green. Must be 21 or older. Tickets required. **March 14, 4 p.m. to midnight.**

crawlwith.us/appleton/stpattys

9. CABIN FEVER WOMEN'S RETREAT

Get out of the house and let your spirit roam free during this half-day women's retreat featuring indoor and outdoor activities such as a nature hike. \$25 per participant. Call 920-756-3591 to register. **March 28, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. at the Brillion Nature Center.**

brillionnaturecenter.net/your-visit-programs/calendar

2. SPRING VINTAGE SHOP HOP

Over 400 vintage shops, antique malls, barn sales, and boutiques throughout Wisconsin and Illinois are rolling out the red carpet for customers during the Vintage Shop Hop. Shop vintage, antiques, clothing, and decor while enjoying prizes, discounts, treats, and games. **March 6-7.**

vintageshophop.blogspot.com

4. CAFÉ WALK

Stroll through downtown Appleton's cozy cafés and shops while sampling rich coffee, refreshing teas, smoothies, boba, pastries, and more. Each stop offers a unique taste experience. **March 7, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.**

appletondowntown.org/events/cafe-walk

6. GIVENS FARM ART MARKET

Explore a thoughtfully curated gathering of local artists and makers at the inspiring Givens Farm Estate. Wander through hand-selected creatives showcasing unique perspectives and craftsmanship. **March 14, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. in Hortonville.**

givensfarm.com/classes/p/givens-art-market

8. THE HISTORY OF STURGEON SPEARING

Learn about sturgeon spearing on Lake Winnebago from Wisconsin DNR Sturgeon Habitat Biologist Michael O'Boyle. Free to the public. **March 19, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Neenah Public Library.**

neenahhistoricalsociety.com/programs-events

10. UKRAINIAN EGG WORKSHOP

Learn about the Ukrainian tradition of Pysanka while decorating your own eggs using wax and colorful dyes. Studio member Aliona will share about her Ukrainian heritage. Tickets required. **March 28, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at Mud & Prints in Appleton.**

mudandprints.com/event-details/ukrainian-egg-workshop



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ASK TAMMI

Got questions for Tammi?



The holidays are over, and it feels like all I did was run around frantically trying to meet the demands and deadlines of the season. Do you have any suggestions for making next Christmas — or any holiday — a little less chaotic and more meaningful? — *Jenna L.*

DEAR JENNA: I can relate, and I really felt it this year as well. Much of our holiday stress is self-imposed, so the solution starts with priorities. It helps to define what is most important well in advance of the holidays. Start new traditions that are more time-friendly to ease your load a bit. We don't have to do everything that we have always done. I also suggest asking family members or friends for help. Don't feel as if the entire holiday prep is on your shoulders. If you can re-prioritize, create new traditions, and seek help from family, your next holiday should be less stressful.



Send your questions to Tammi via email at tammi@appletonmonthly.com



My friends and I are planning our annual girls weekend trip this spring. Each year, I am the one pulling the plans together, and most of the time it takes multiple attempts to confirm everyone's commitment. Any ideas on how I can make this process go more smoothly? — *Tiffany B.*

DEAR TIFFANY: This can be frustrating. Your group should split up the planning and assign a point person for each key detail. One person can collect travel dates, another can work on lodging options, and another can look into dining choices. I recommend the group agree on a firm deadline for everyone to complete their research, then move forward once that deadline arrives. You will never make everyone in your group happy, but hopefully, most of them will be.



My wife and I travel to see her family a few times each year. Unfortunately, some family members don't get along, so we are forced to visit multiple locations. How can we simplify our visits? — *Dan S.*

DEAR DAN: You are not alone. I have many friends in a similar situation. My best advice is to split up your visits, and be clear about your intentions. You can visit part of the family on one trip, then return on your next visit to see the others. Put them on a rotation, so to speak. Be sure to communicate your plan in advance so there are no surprises for those who are used to seeing you each time.

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We ♥ seeing our readers having fun and making the most of our beautiful communities!

BY: SARAH PETERSON

Send your photo submissions to: editor@appletonmonthly.com



Erica and Lucy of Appleton have a fun night out at the **Broadway musical, *Hamilton*** at The Fox Cities Performing Arts Center.



Appleton East students Addi Baier, Aniyah Whitfield, Brady Koplitz, and Leah Kons **qualify for state competition during DECA Districts.**



Children celebrate at a creative birthday party at **Hazelmade Art Studio** in Appleton.



Quinn and Arthur get outside for a **day of sledding** at **Erb Park** in Appleton.



Jenni and Joren Eickelberg are ready to enjoy the **Fox Valley Symphony concert** at The Fox Cities Performing Arts Center.



Murissa, Marissa, Kristy, Jess, Noelle, and Heather **study together** at **The Plaza & Globe Coffee** in Neenah.



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GO GREEN APPLETON ST. PATRICK'S DAY IS ALWAYS **BIG** IN FOX (ITIES)

By TIM FROBERG

ST. PATRICK'S DAY is an eagerly awaited global event that is part shout-out to an important man and part shenanigans.

It's a not-so-wee day when religion and revelry intersect, honoring the patron saint of Ireland and celebrating Irish culture.

Get your green on, Appleton, because another St. Patrick's Day drops March 17: the day the fifth-century missionary and bishop died.

St. Patrick's Day is a religious holiday in Ireland, but it has morphed into an international celebration of all things Irish. St. Patrick's Day is especially big in the United States: a party day when Guinness is guzzled by the keg, and corned beef and cabbage are consumed in mass quantities.

There will be dining, drinking, and Irish music in restaurants and taverns from Dublin to Darboy.

Oh, and you better be wearing green, or those nasty leprechauns might pinch you.

Here's a look at this colorful holiday.

ST. PATRICK WASN'T REALLY A SNAKE SLAYER

Why do we honor St. Patrick? Because the holy man was among the first to bring Christianity to Ireland. What's interesting is that he wasn't of Irish descent, and his real name wasn't Patrick. It was Maewyn Succat, who was born in Great Britain, kidnapped by pirates at the age of 16, and taken as a slave to Ireland. He escaped after six years, returned to Great Britain, and eventually resurfaced in Ireland, where he began preaching Christianity and building churches. He eventually changed his name to Patricius after becoming a priest.

The most common story about St. Patrick is that he chased the snakes out of Ireland. It makes for an awesome tale, but modern science tells us that it's bogus. Ireland has always been far too cold for snakes to exist, and no fossil records of serpents have ever been found.

PINCHING PRANKSTERS

Leprechauns are also linked to St. Pat's Day, but the diminutive troublemakers are about as real as Irish snakes. Leprechauns were fairies in Irish folklore that originated from eighth-century stories and are often depicted as mischievous pranksters.

According to Irish tradition, wearing green on St. Pat's Day will prevent you from being pinched by leprechauns. Even though St. Patrick was depicted in medieval art wearing blue robes, green has long been considered Ireland's official color. That's due to the island's lush green landscape, the green stripe on the Irish flag, and Ireland's fascination with the shamrock: a three-leaf clover that serves as the symbol of Ireland.





HAVE SOME WHISKEY IN A JAR

Prepare to hear traditional Irish songs like *Danny Boy* or *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling* if you're hitting a bar with live music. You might even hear my favorite, *Whiskey in a Jar*. It's a traditional Irish folk song dating back to the 1600s that tells a timeless tale of robbery, betrayal, and incarceration. The song has been covered by numerous bands and singers throughout the years, but no one does it better, in my opinion, than rockers Metallica.

HAVE ONE FOR MATT

If you're hoisting a Guinness or a shot of Irish whiskey, raise your glass to Matt Miller, the former owner of McGuinness Irish Pub. Miller, who passed away unexpectedly two years ago, was the founder of Irish Fest of the Fox Cities and helped many folks in the Appleton area embrace and celebrate the Irish culture.



AND ONE FOR PAT

Another individual whom I'll always remember on St. Pat's Day is Pat O'Donahue, a former colleague of mine at the Green Bay News Chronicle, where I launched my journalism career. Pat was a character. He was a colorful old-school news reporter who smoked a pipe, wore garish suits that he often bought at rummage sales (and bragged about what great deals he received), and was the office know-it-all, offering unsolicited, off-the-wall information on practically every subject available. Whenever I asked him a question, his initial reply was always: "I didn't do it." But Pat was a wonderful man and a joy to interact with. He was immensely proud of his Irish heritage and always strolled into the office on St. Pat's Day wearing a bright lime green suit and full of stories of St. Patrick and the Irish culture.



WHERE TO GO

Most local bars and restaurants have celebrations on either St. Patrick's Day — which falls on a Tuesday — or the weekend before or after it.

Mark's East Side will continue its tradition of hosting its annual St. Patrick's Day party on March 17. The popular restaurant will cook up 2,000 pounds of corned beef and serve corned beef and cabbage on Saturday, March 15, and on St. Patrick's Day. Mark's will offer live music on St. Patrick's Day. The first band performs from 2-5 p.m., and Sheamus Fitzpatrick and the McNally Boys follow from 6-9 p.m. Doors open at 10:30 a.m.

"A lot of places like to do it on the weekend, but it's such a tradition here to have it right on St. Patrick's Day," said Mark's owner, Alex Shea. "Many of our regulars take the day off, and it's an all-day celebration."

Michiels Bar and Grill, Spat's, and Emmett's Bar and Grill are additional Appleton hot spots that do it up big on St. Pat's Day.

"We order about 1,000 pounds of corned beef, and it takes time and effort, but it's a tradition we enjoy keeping alive," said Spats co-owner Nick Kapheim.

Emmett's also serves corned beef and cabbage and offers various prizes and giveaways, including a trip to Las Vegas.

"We feel we make the best corned beef and cabbage for the best price in the area," said Emmett's owner, Sharon Reader. "Almost everyone who walks in wins a prize. It's nice to see everyone celebrating the day."

New London will continue its week-long Irish celebration. The biggest day will be March 21 with a 90-minute, 100-plus-unit parade starting at 1 p.m. Check out the **New Dublin Irish Fest** in the downtown area from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sheamus Fitzpatrick and the McNally Boys play from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., followed by Reilly from 1-6 p.m.



GET THOSE BRACKETS READY **MARCH MADNESS** TO INVADE SPORTS WORLD

By TIM FROBERG

March Madness is a time of buzzer-beaters, bracket-busters, bluebloods, and Cinderellas.

It's a thrilling three-week roller coaster ride through the unpredictable world of college basketball and is one of the best times of the year for sports fans.

It's also been called the Big Dance — a nickname created by Marquette University coaching legend Al McGuire — and this hoops-themed dance contest generates considerable interest.

What makes March Madness — the trademarked, federally registered term owned by the NCAA — so compelling and watchable is the way it allows the general public to engage with it through bracket contests and office pools that turn both experts and casual fans into pre-tourney prognosticators.

Americans wagered a stunning \$3.1 billion on the men's and women's NCAA tournaments in 2025, according to the American Gaming Association. Only global soccer and the Super Bowl generate more in terms of annual sports betting.

Get ready, Fox Cities, because the trip to another NCAA basketball tournament is fast approaching.

The field for both the men's and women's tournaments will be announced on March 15, commonly known as Selection Sunday. The men's tournament starts March 17-18 and concludes with the national championship game on April 6 in Indianapolis. The women's tourney begins March 18, and the title game will be played April 5 in Phoenix.

Here are a few things you will need to know before filling out your NCAA tournament bracket.

DEFENDING CHAMPS (MEN'S)

The Florida Gators are the defending men's champion, securing the 2025 national title with a narrow 65-63 win over the Houston Cougars. It was the third national title for the Gators. Houston was too good during the regular season to be considered an underdog, but surprised many observers with a 70-67 win in the semifinals over a talent-packed Duke team led by Cooper Flagg and Kon Knueppel, both of whom are experiencing great success in the NBA this year as rookies.

TEAMS TO BEAT (MEN'S)

The Arizona Wildcats have held the No. 1 spot in the Associated Press rankings throughout much of the 2025-26 season. Michigan, UConn, Duke, Illinois, Gonzaga, Iowa State, Nebraska, Kansas, and Michigan State have also been consistently ranked in the top 10.

Arizona (West), Michigan (Midwest), Duke (East), and UConn (South) are projected to get No. 1 seeds in the 68-team field.

Coach Tommy Lloyd's Arizona Wildcats boast a deep roster and are a balanced team powered by a pair of fabulous freshmen: forward Koa Peat and guard Brayden Burries. Arizona opened at No. 13 in the preseason AP poll but has enjoyed its best start in school history. The Wildcats play a fast-paced, physical style that has been described as "bully ball." Arizona's last NCAA title came way back in 1997 when they were coached by Lute Olson.

Michigan is extremely explosive and has averaged over 90 points per game for much of the season. The Wolverines have three major scoring threats in forwards Yaxel Lendeborg and Morez Johnson and guard Trey McKenney.

UConn is an NCAA blueblood (a team with countless tourney appearances and a perennial contender) with a balanced attack keyed by double-digit scorers Solomon Ball, Tarris Reed, and Alex Karaban.

TOP PLAYERS (MEN)

Duke freshman sensation Cameron Boozer is having an incredible first season, averaging over 20 ppg and leading the Blue Devils in multiple categories. Boozer is widely projected as a top-three pick in the 2026 NBA draft and will likely go No. 1 if he declares for the draft as expected.

Other elite players in the NCAA tourney are BYU freshman forward A.J. Dybantsa, one of the nation's top scorers with a 24.0 scoring average entering the stretch run; Kansas junior guard P.J. Haggerty, an explosive scorer who has averaged over 20 points for much of the season; Texas Tech junior forward J.T. Toppin, a scoring machine who was last year's Big 12 Player of the Year; Iowa State senior forward Joshua Jefferson; North Carolina freshman forward Caleb Wilson; Purdue senior point guard Braden Smith, the nation's leader in assists; Arkansas freshman Darius Acuff; Michigan State sophomore guard Jeremy Fears, an incredible passer and double-digit scorer; and Kansas freshman guard Darryn Patterson.

BADGER BALL

Bucky Badger usually gets invited to the Big Dance, but doesn't traditionally stick around long. The Badgers have made 28 NCAA appearances, including 22 in the past 24 years, but haven't reached the Final Four since 2015. That won't likely change this season. Wisconsin is a decent team that should land a spot once again in the tournament, but a deep ride isn't projected for coach Greg Gard's team. Guards Nick Boyd and John Blackwell are talented scorers who can drill the three-ball, while 7-foot junior forward Nolan Winter has been a productive all-around player who can score, rebound, and defend.

No other Division 1 team in Wisconsin looks capable of making much tournament noise. Both Marquette and UW-Milwaukee are having down years, and neither is expected to get a dance invitation. Keep an eye on Doug Gottlieb's vastly improved UW-Green Bay team, which has risen from the dead to play winning basketball.

DEFENDING CHAMPS (WOMEN)

The UConn Huskies won their 12th NCAA title last season with an 82-59 win over South Carolina. Legendary coach Geno Auriemma expertly guides the Huskies and is the winningest coach in college basketball history. Look for local product Allie Ziebell, a sophomore guard from Neenah, who plays in the Huskies' rotation and is a solid contributor.

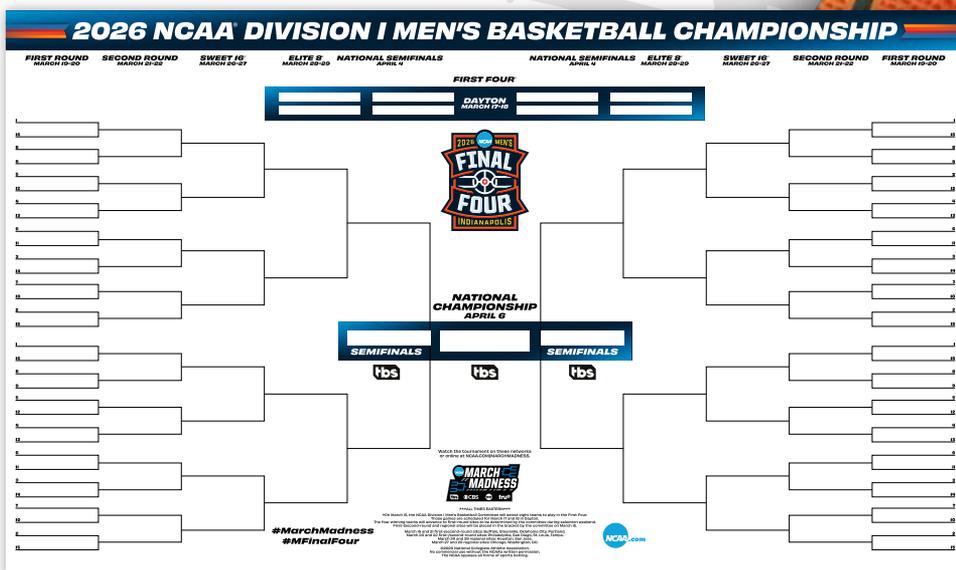
TEAMS TO BEAT (WOMEN)

UConn is having another outstanding season and has held the No. 1 spot in the AP poll from the beginning. The Huskies are once again loaded with talent and appear to be the team to beat. South Carolina, the 2024 national champs, UCLA, Texas, Vanderbilt, and LSU have also been consistently ranked in the top five.

TOP PLAYERS (WOMEN)

Sarah Strong, a sophomore forward, is UConn's leading scorer and rebounder and the leader of a superbly balanced Huskies team. Strong is an excellent shooter, defender, and rebounder, and entered the stretch run considered to be the best player in women's college basketball.

Additional elite players to watch are UConn senior guard Azzi Fudd, a deadly perimeter shooter; Notre Dame junior guard Hannah Hildalgo, a premier playmaker and dynamic scorer; UCLA senior center Lauren Betts, a 6-7 dominant presence inside the paint who is expected to go high in the WNBA draft; Texas junior forward Madison Booker; Florida State senior guard Ta'Niya Latson, an elite scorer who is excellent in the transition game; and LSU senior guard Flau'jae Johnson.



Download your official bracket at ncaa.com/march-madness.

PACK NEEDS TWEAKS, NOT TNT TO BECOME SUPER

By TIM FROBERG

Pound the rock and the quarterback.

The Seattle Seahawks proved the old-school formula still wins championships.

While there is no single blueprint to claim a world title, the team that hoisted the Lombardi Trophy played the Lombardi way in Super Bowl 60. Kenneth Walker (135 rushing yards) ran wild, while the Seahawks turned MVP runner-up Drake Maye into Clayton Tune with heavy pressure from their disruptive defensive front.

You could almost see Lombardi pounding his fist on a chalkboard while yelling, “We need a seal here and a seal here. And then we run the ball through the alley.”

The Seahawks also proved that it doesn’t take years of rebuilding to win it all. Seattle didn’t even crack the playoffs a year ago, and neither did New England. The Seahawks opened the preseason as a 60-to-1 shot to win the Super Bowl.

All of this should be very encouraging to a Green Bay Packers team that employs one of the planet’s best pass rushers, a top-tier running back, and an ascending player who looks like a franchise quarterback. The Packers resembled a Super Bowl contender entering December before getting torpedoed with the most devastating, path-changing injury of the NFL regular season: Micah Parsons’ ACL tear in Week 14 with a 9-3-1 Packers team holding a nine-point lead over a powerful Denver team.

We all witnessed the ensuing free fall: a colossal collapse that included hideous back-to-back meltdowns in season-wrecking losses to the hated Chicago Bears.

Injuries are not supposed to be an excuse for NFL failures, but they were clearly the iceberg that transformed Matt LaFleur’s smooth-sailing ship into the Titanic. In a game where players go down like Roman gladiators, every NFL team has multiple injuries. But the next-man-up philosophy

doesn’t work when you’re trying to replace elite players and team leaders like Parsons and Tucker Kraft.

Ed Policy recognized the extenuating circumstances, which is why Matt LaFleur and Brian Gutekunst will return to try and reboot this once humming Packers machine.

This is not a bad thing. There were valid reasons to dismiss LaFleur, who has come up small in big games and struggled to finish contests that should have been iced. But the man has won a ton of football games in Green Bay and has done a terrific job of developing Jordan Love. The view here is that Green Bay has a much better chance of winning a Super Bowl in the next 2 to 3 years with a Love-LaFleur-Gutekunst combo than it would with a new coach and fresh schemes.

I truly believe the Packers were close to being a championship-level team prior to Parsons’ injury. So why blow it all up? What available coach would have been an immediate upgrade over LaFleur?

I’m not saying the 2026-27 Packers will be a Super Bowl team. But I feel that Green Bay has a Super Bowl-caliber roster. With a few more draftable pieces on defense, better luck, and the healthy return of Parsons, Kraft, Devonte Wyatt, and Zach Tom, the Packers have a realistic shot at playing February football. Vegas feels that way, too, giving Green Bay the fifth-best odds to win Super Bowl 61.

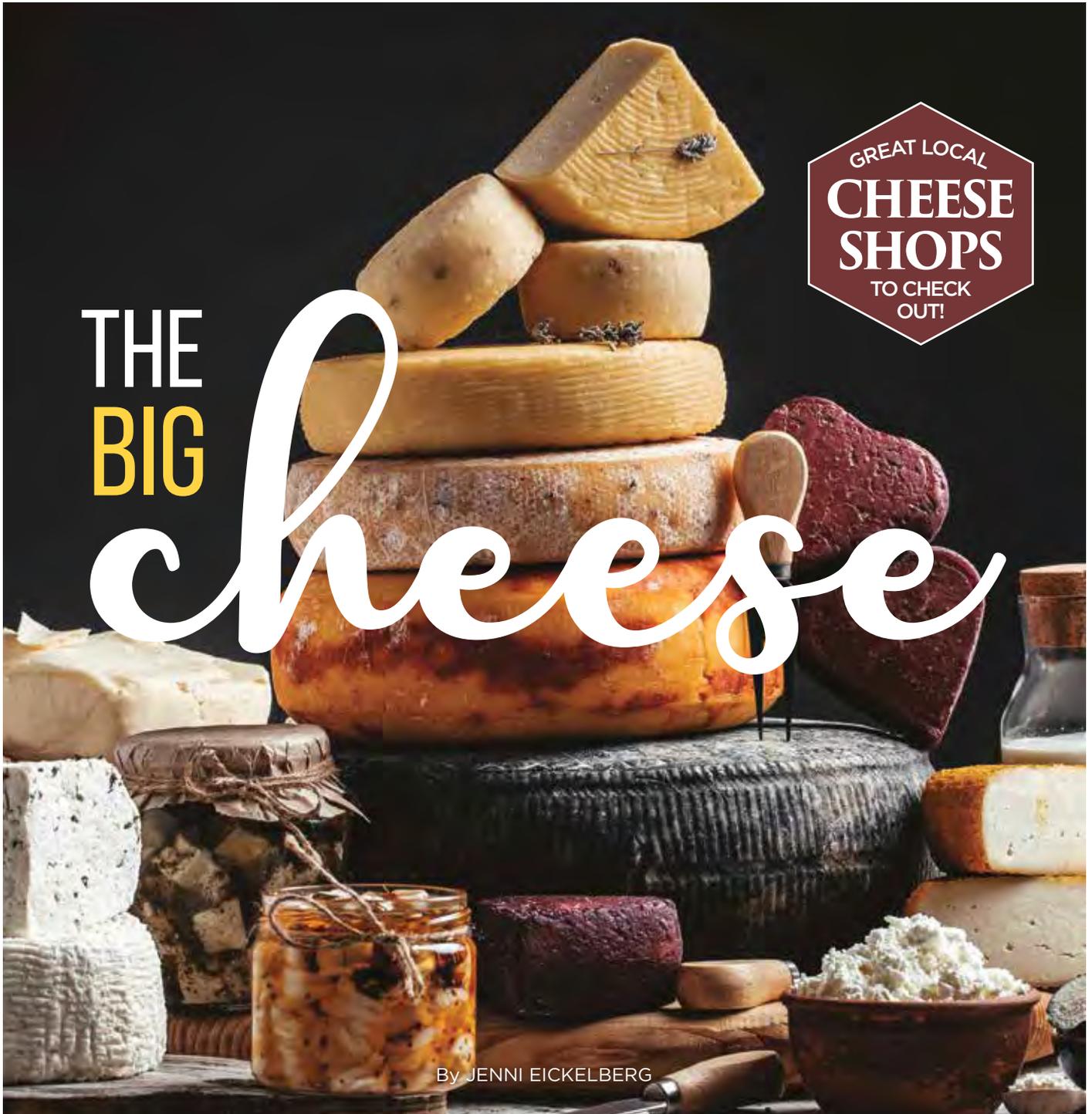
If that doesn’t happen, I’ll settle for a 4-13 season by Ben Johnson’s Chicago Bears.



Tim Froberg is a professional writer who covered the Packers Super Bowl appearances in New Orleans (1997) and San Diego (1998), and has written several feature stories for various Packers Yearbooks.

TASTE

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THE
BIG

cheese

GREAT LOCAL
CHEESE
SHOPS
TO CHECK
OUT!

By JENNI EICKELBERG



IN WISCONSIN,

our passion for cheese is unmatched. We produce over 600 varieties from traditional Swiss and cheddar to original innovations like Colby and Muenster. Our cheesemakers continually push boundaries, making every wedge a masterpiece. From gourmet dishes to classic comfort foods, Wisconsin cheese brings creativity and time-honored craftsmanship to every table.

THE
BIG

cheese

BY JENNI EICKELBERG



WISCONSIN: WHERE CHEESE IS MORE THAN FOOD — IT'S A WAY OF *life*

When you think of Wisconsin, an image instantly comes to mind: rolling green pastures dotted with dairy farms and the irresistible aroma of fresh cheese drifting from local creameries. Cheese isn't just something we make here — it's part of who we are, woven into the state's identity as deeply as its lakes and forests.

From the earliest settlers, who brought their cheesemaking traditions to the Midwest, to today's award-winning artisans crafting bold, new flavors, Wisconsin has truly earned its title as "America's Dairyland" through generations of dedication and innovation.

The story starts in the mid-1800s when European immigrants — many from Switzerland, Germany, and Scandinavia — arrived with a passion for dairy farming and a commitment to quality. They discovered Wisconsin's fertile soil and cool climate were perfect for raising cows, and soon, small family farms began producing milk in abundance. But milk is perishable, and farmers needed a way to preserve their livelihood. The solution? Cheese. By transforming milk into something that could last and travel, these pioneers built the foundation for an industry that would define our state.

Fast forward to today, and Wisconsin stands as the undisputed leader in U.S. cheesemaking. With more than 1,200 licensed cheesemakers and 600 varieties, styles, and flavors, we produce over 3 billion pounds of cheese every year — more than any other state in the nation! From world-famous cheddar to creamy brie, tangy blue, and adventurous blends infused with herbs or craft beer, Wisconsin cheese reflects both tradition and creativity. And it's not just quantity — our cheesemakers have earned more awards than any other state or country in global competitions.

Cheese here is so much more than numbers and accolades — it's pride. It's the farmers who rise before dawn to care for their herds. It's the artisans who age wheels for months, sometimes years, to achieve the perfect flavor. It's the joy of roadside cheese shops, farmers' markets, and festivals where communities gather to celebrate their shared heritage. In Wisconsin, cheese connects people — past and present — through hard work, ingenuity, and love for the land.

Join me in celebrating what makes Wisconsin unique — our love of everything cheese! In the pages ahead, you'll meet the makers behind your favorite cheeses, discover local spots to shop, and explore delicious pairings that go well with cheese. Here in America's Dairyland, every bite tells a story — and every story begins with Wisconsin cheese. It's no wonder we've earned the nickname "Cheesehead" — it couldn't be more fitting!

HANDCRAFTING *artisan* CHEESE SINCE 1961: THE RENARD'S CHEESE TRADITION

Renard's Cheese has been known for their handcrafted artisan cheese since 1961. Their authenticity comes from small-batch production, high-quality ingredients, and a commitment to the traditions the Renard family has upheld for more than 60 years.

The process begins with the milk, sourced exclusively from family farms in Door County on the Niagara Escarpment. The region's clean water, rich soil, and healthy crops contribute to exceptional milk quality. Renard's keeps its farms close, ensuring the milk arrives fresh and is turned into cheese the very same day. That freshness is one of the biggest reasons their cheese stands out.

Master cheesemaker Chris Renard oversees all of Renard's cheese-making, bringing expertise in both cheddar and mozzarella. His team works through the night and into the afternoon, preparing equipment, filling open vats, monitoring curds, and resetting the space for the next batch. The work is hands-on and deeply sensory. Cheesemakers rely on experience to read the cheese — watching how it reacts to temperature, moisture, and even the weather. As they like to say, "the cheese is alive," and it requires constant attention. (Learn more about Master Cheesemakers in the sidebar on page 59.)

Renard's Cheese blends tradition with innovation. Open vats and handcrafted methods remain at the center of their process, but they're always experimenting with new ideas. Trial batches, taste tests, and consumer feedback help shape their seasonal and specialty cheeses. Their Farmers with Guacamole cheese is a perfect example: The first attempt turned an unexpected shade of blue, but after several rounds of adjustments, it was changed back to a palatable color and became a customer favorite. They aim to introduce new cheeses each year while retiring varieties that lose momentum.

Their core lineup reflects both heritage and creativity. Old-Fashioned Hoop Cheddar, Cloverleaf Reserve, Butterkäse, Legacy Cheddar, Morel & Leek Spread, string cheese, whips, curds, and the Terrific Trio blend of aged cheddar, Parmesan, and Gouda round out the list. Door County Cherry Cheddar — featured in the holiday movie, *A Wisconsin Christmas Pie* — has become a standout, too. Fresh cheese curds, made in the middle of the night, are especially beloved for their signature squeak.

Renard's also pays close attention to how people enjoy their cheese. Its retail store includes a restaurant designed to showcase different ways their cheeses can be used, helping customers experience flavors beyond the package. They also partner with Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Economic Development to share their story with retailers and consumers across the country.

Through growth, rebranding, and national expansion, Renard's has stayed grounded in what matters most: crafting high-quality Wisconsin cheese with integrity, supporting local family farms, and honoring the generations who built the foundation they stand on today.



Renard's has stayed grounded in what matters most: crafting high-quality Wisconsin cheese with integrity, supporting local family farms, and honoring the generations who built the foundation they stand on today.





What stays constant is Jon's belief that cheese is alive — shaped by science, art, and intention. "Cheesemaking is microbiology in real life," he says. "It's a delicious way to connect the dots."



CRAFTING *tradition:* MASTER CHEESEMAKER JON METZIG AND THE LEGACY OF UNION STAR

For Jon Metzиг, owner of Union Star Cheese in Zittau, Willow Creek Cheese in Berlin, and The Cheese Table in Neenah, cheesemaking isn't a career — it's a lifelong calling. Jon grew up quite literally living above his family's original Union Star Cheese Factory in Fremont, where the rhythms of cheesemaking shaped his earliest memories. He made his first batch of curds at just 6 years old. By high school, he was already taking cheesemaker courses at UW–Madison, followed by food science studies at UW–River Falls and ultimately earning a degree in agribusiness with a food science minor.

At Union Star, the magic begins with the milk. Its milk comes exclusively from one local farm — Silver Shea Holsteins — which offers exceptional quality and gives their cheese a natural advantage. "We tested it scientifically," as Jon says, "to prove that the milk is unique." While large companies focus on maximizing output, Union Star focuses on the details: careful selection of starter cultures, precise timing, and the kind of hands-on attention only a team of veteran cheesemakers can offer. "Our goal isn't pounds of cheese out the door. It's making the best cheese possible."

Those details shine through in its cheesemaking process. One of Jon's favorite moments is when rennet is added to milk and it transforms into a gel — the first step toward solid curds. Aging cheese depends on nurturing the environment to bring out extraordinary flavor. Union Star ages its cheeses with intentional control of humidity, cultures, and yeast, and the results are tasted and evaluated constantly by Jon and his cheesemaker team.

Jon's dedication led him to pursue Wisconsin's prestigious Master Cheesemaker program, a rigorous three-year process that includes exams, product grading, and a lengthy paper (see sidebar on page 59 for more details on the Master Cheesemaker® program.) He became certified as a Master Cheesemaker in cheddar and Colby, joining his father as part of the second father-son Master Cheesemaker duo in Wisconsin history. He continues to submit samples annually to maintain the title and travels regularly to France to deepen his craft.

In October 2025, Union Star expanded with The Cheese Table in downtown Neenah. The opportunity came through a tip from an employee. With support from Future Neenah, Jon created a welcoming, education-focused shop where customers can sample, ask questions, and discover cheeses not found in grocery stores. "We don't want someone to go home with a chunk of cheese and hate it," Jon says with a smile.

Seasonality also plays a role in his work. Fresh mozzarella takes center stage in summer, while short-shelf-life cheeses like Bloom are reserved for warmer months when demand aligns with production. Trends shift, too — recently, customers have been clamoring for raclette.

What stays constant is Jon's belief that cheese is alive — shaped by science, art, and intention. "Cheesemaking is microbiology in real life," he says. "It's a delicious way to connect the dots."



THE WISCONSIN ART OF *cheese curds*

No discussion of Wisconsin cheese is complete without mentioning cheese curds — the springy, squeaky favorites that define our state's dairy culture. Best enjoyed within hours of production, fresh curds have a lively texture and mild, milky flavor that generations of Wisconsinites know and love.

Several local producers featured in this issue help keep the curd tradition strong. Renard's Cheese in Door County makes ultra-fresh curds daily using long-held family recipes. Most of their curds are the classic yellow variety — fresh, squeaky, lightly salted, and mild — but they also offer fun add-in flavors like taco, Cajun, and ranch, adding a bold twist to the traditional curd. Their signature squeak and clean flavor make them a must-try for any cheese lover.

Closer to home, Union Star Cheese Factory and its Appleton shop, The Cheese Table, craft small-batch curds using time-honored methods. Fresh-curd days often draw lines out the door, with many customers grabbing bags still warm from the vat.

Whether snacked on straight from the bag or enjoyed deep-fried at a festival, cheese curds aren't just a treat in Wisconsin — they're a way of life.



plymouth wisconsin **CHEESE CAPITAL FESTIVAL**

Cheese lovers are cheddar-ing up for a gouda time at the Fourth Annual Cheese Capital Festival in Plymouth, Wisconsin, famously known as the Cheese Capital of the World. Taking place on June 26 and 27, this event promises a weekend full of cheesy delights and family-friendly fun.

One of the highlights of this year's festival is the return of the Road America Trans Am SpeedTour car procession on Friday night. In addition, the festival will feature a cheese-themed parade, live music performances, a lively cheese-eating contest, and a hilarious foam cheese wedge race on the Mullet River, where participants will have the chance to win a grand prize of \$1,000. Food vendors will offer a variety of mouthwatering, cheese-centric dishes for everyone to savor.

Families will find plenty of entertainment, with free activities such as face painting, a petting zoo, complimentary milk, dairy promotional materials, and a fun farm-themed playground for the kids.

This is a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in the heart of Plymouth's dairy culture and celebrate the delicacies that have earned the town its world-famous title. Whether you're a food enthusiast or looking for a weekend full of excitement, the Cheese Capital Festival is the place to be for two unforgettable days.





say cheese!

FUN FACTS & STATS ABOUT WISCONSIN'S FAVORITE FOOD

1. CHEESE CAPITAL OF THE U.S.

Wisconsin produces over 3 billion pounds of cheese every year, making it the nation's #1 cheesemaker.

2. VARIETY GALORE

The state boasts 600+ varieties, styles, and flavors — from classic cheddar to adventurous blends.

3. AWARD-WINNING TRADITION

Wisconsin cheesemakers have earned more awards than any other state or country in global competitions.

4. DAIRY ROOTS RUN DEEP

There are over 6,000 dairy farms in Wisconsin, and most are family-owned, passing down traditions for generations.

5. CHEESEHEADS UNITE!

The iconic foam "cheesehead" hat debuted in 1987 and has become a quirky symbol of Wisconsin pride.

6. AGING GRACEFULLY

Some Wisconsin cheddars are aged for 10+ years, creating bold, complex flavors that cheese lovers crave.

7. WISCONSIN WEARS THE CHEESE CROWN

Wisconsin ranks first among all states in the production of cheddar, American, mozzarella, brick, Muenster and Limburger cheeses.

8. LOCAL LOVE

Northeast Wisconsin is home to legendary cheese factories and creameries — perfect for a road-trip tasting tour!

9. CHEESE BEFORE STATEHOOD!

Wisconsin was making cheese before it even became a state in 1848! Our cheesemaking roots run so deep, they predate statehood — proof that cheese has always been part of our DNA.

10. AMERICA'S STINKY SECRET

Monroe is home to the only cheese factory in the United States still making Limburger cheese! This famously pungent cheese has been produced there for over a century.

a local's guide

NORTHEAST WISCONSIN CHEESE SHOPS

NORTHEAST WISCONSIN is packed with cheesemakers and specialty shops that bring the state's signature flavors right into our backyard. Every spot featured in this guide is just a short car ride away. It's an easy, delicious way to explore the region's rich cheese culture without venturing far from home.



AGROPUR INC. **3805 FREEDOM ROAD, LITTLE CHUTE**

Agropur is one of Wisconsin's largest and most respected cheese producers, capable of crafting more than 20 varieties — from mozzarella and provolone to cheddar, feta, and Gouda — across its award-winning U.S. plants. Founded in 1938, the company blends expert cheesemaking with modern consistency, supplying restaurants, retailers, and food manufacturers nationwide. Agropur's Little Chute retail shop, Simon's Specialty Cheese, makes select Agropur cheeses available to home cooks, making these high-quality Wisconsin cheeses easy to enjoy.



ARTHUR BAY CHEESE COMPANY/ MALCORE FOODS **SOLD AT LAMERS DAIRY COUNTRY STORE** **N410 SPEEL SCHOOL ROAD, APPLETON**

Arthur Bay Cheese Company and Malcore Foods are closely linked — Malcore is the longtime Appleton producer behind the cheese spreads, curds, and cut-and-wrapped cheeses sold under the Arthur Bay name.

While their former Calumet Street retail location has closed, shoppers can still find both Arthur Bay and Malcore Foods cheeses at Lamers Dairy in Appleton. It's now the go-to spot for accessing their locally made Wisconsin favorites.



ARTISAN PANTRY **1715 E. MAIN ST., LITTLE CHUTE**

Artisan Pantry in Little Chute brings factory-fresh Wisconsin cheese straight to local shoppers each week. Known for its close partnership with BelGioioso, the shop offers a rotating selection of Italian-style cheeses picked up directly from the factory, ensuring exceptional freshness and quality. Customers can place weekly orders, request special items, and explore award-winning cheeses crafted in Northeast Wisconsin. Artisan Pantry has become a beloved local source for premium, small-batch, Wisconsin-made cheese.



BELGIOIOSO CHEESE **4200 MAIN ST., GREEN BAY**

BelGioioso Cheese is a nationally recognized Wisconsin cheesemaker celebrated for its award-winning Italian-style cheeses crafted with traditional methods and fresh local milk. Founded in 1979, the company produces favorites like mozzarella, parmesan, burrata, mascarpone, and provolone across several state-of-the-art facilities. Known for purity,

consistency, and exceptional flavor, BelGioioso has become a staple for home cooks and chefs alike, offering authentic, high-quality cheeses rooted in Italian heritage and Wisconsin craftsmanship.



GRANDE CHEESE **250 CAMELOT DRIVE FOND DU LAC**

Grande Cheese is known for producing some of the finest Italian cheeses in Wisconsin, crafted exclusively for restaurants using traditional methods and high-quality local milk. Their mozzarella, provolone, ricotta, and aged varieties are prized by pizzerias nationwide. While Grande doesn't sell directly to consumers, home cooks can still enjoy its signature flavor by purchasing select Grande products at Vern's Cheese in Chilton, one of the few retailers offering access to this food-service favorite.



HENNING CHEESE **20201 POINT CREEK ROAD, KIEL**

Henning Cheese is celebrated for its award-winning craftsmanship. In 2024, their aged cheddar earned "Best in Class" and ranked among the Top 20 in the World Championship Cheese Contest. That same year, their bold Dragon's Breath Cheddar also captured first place. In 2025, Henning continued its winning streak with Onion & Chive Cheddar taking top honors. These first-place finishes showcase Henning's dedication to creating exceptional, flavorful cheeses that stand out in Wisconsin's rich dairy tradition.



LAACK BROTHERS CHEESE CO., INC.
7050 MORRISON ROAD, GREENLEAF

Laack Brothers Cheese Co. is a family-run Wisconsin operation known for its versatility — cutting, packaging, shredding, and crafting cold-pack and cream cheese spreads for customers across the Midwest. Laack Brothers Cheese began in 1986 as a cheese and butter wholesaler and has grown into a full-service cheese producer offering custom manufacturing and private-label capabilities. Based in Greenleaf, they supply distributors, grocers, restaurants, and bakeries throughout Wisconsin and beyond. Their commitment to quality keeps them a trusted name in Wisconsin cheese.



LACLARE CREAMERY
W2994 COUNTY ROAD HH, MALONE

LaClare Creamery is renowned for its exceptional goat cheeses, crafted from fresh, local milk. Their award-winning lineup includes creamy chevre, flavorful feta, and aged varieties that showcase the rich, tangy character of goat milk. Each cheese reflects LaClare's commitment to quality and artisan tradition, making them a standout in Wisconsin's cheese scene. For those who love bold, distinctive flavors, LaClare goat cheeses are a true taste of Dairyland excellence.



LAMERS DAIRY COUNTRY STORE
N410 SPEEL SCHOOL ROAD, APPLETON

The Lamers Dairy Country Store is a cheese lover's paradise! Alongside an impressive selection of Wisconsin-made

WISCONSIN CHEESE, *close to home*

One of the perks of living in northeast Wisconsin is that you don't have to crisscross the state to taste the cheeses that make Wisconsin famous. Many of the varieties highlighted in this article — from small-batch artisan cheddars to fresh curds and specialty blends — are available right here at home.

Local grocery stores throughout the Fox Valley stock a wide range of Wisconsin cheeses, offering everything from big-name favorites to hand-crafted specialties. A quick browse through the dairy aisle can feel like a mini road trip through the state's creameries.

You'll also find great selections at local shops such as The Meat Block in Greenville, Voyageurs Bakehouse in Appleton, and Bulk Priced Food Shoppe in Greenville, each offering its own mix of statewide flavors.

Don't forget about the farmers' markets across northeast Wisconsin. Cheesemakers often rent booth space there, selling fresh curds, small-batch releases, and seasonal specialties directly to shoppers.

And for those who prefer to shop from home, many Wisconsin cheesemakers offer direct online ordering, making it easy to have your favorites delivered right to your doorstep.



cheeses, you'll find their own signature brand, Dairyland's Best, which is crafted for exceptional flavor and quality. Whether you're stocking up on classics or exploring new varieties, Lamers offers a true taste of Wisconsin tradition. Stop in and discover why this local gem is a favorite for cheese enthusiasts!



LAND O' LAKES
927 EIGHTH ST., KIEL

Land O'Lakes operates a long-standing cheese plant in Kiel, producing 40-pound blocks of natural cheddar and sweet whey powder. The facility has been part of the community since 1948 and remains known for its consistent, high-quality cheddar production. As one of Kiel's two major cheese plants, it plays a steady role in Wisconsin's dairy landscape, supporting both regional cheesemaking traditions and national food manufacturers



RED BARN FAMILY FARMS
W3933 HIGHVIEW DRIVE, APPLETON

Red Barn Family Farms partners exclusively with small, family-run dairies that meet their strict Red Barn Rules for humane care, pasture access, and exceptional milk quality. Cows are tended individually, without rBST, and raised in low-stress environments that support longer, healthier lives. That premium milk is then crafted by world-class Wisconsin cheesemakers into standout artisan cheeses, including their celebrated Vintage Cupola. Red Barn's mission preserves family farming while elevating Wisconsin's cheese tradition.





SAPUTO CHEESE USA INC.
307 N. CLARK ST., BLACK CREEK

Saputo's Black Creek, Wisconsin, plant is a quiet powerhouse in the state's cheese landscape. Here, skilled cheesemakers craft the mozzarella, American-style favorites, and specialty cheeses that anchor Saputo's U.S. lineup. The Black Creek facility blends Wisconsin tradition with modern consistency, turning out cheeses designed for everyday cooks, food lovers, and specialty makers alike. It's a behind-the-scenes hub that keeps Saputo's reputation for quality — and Wisconsin's cheese legacy — going strong.



SARGENTO CHEESE
1 PERSNICKETY PLACE, KIEL

Sargento's Kiel plant plays a key role in producing the company's well-known natural cheeses, turning out shredded, sliced, and snack-size varieties enjoyed nationwide. The facility focuses on consistent quality and flavor, supporting Sargento's reputation as a leader in real, natural cheese. As one of Kiel's major cheese plants, it helps sustain Wisconsin's cheesemaking tradition while supplying everyday favorites that home cooks and food manufacturers rely on.



SAXON CREAMERY
W2994 COUNTY ROAD HH, MALONE

Saxon Creamery is known for hand-crafted cheeses made from the milk of a single, family-owned herd. Their signature cheese, Big Ed's Gouda, is a rich, grass-fed cow's milk Gouda with

bold butter notes, a supple body, and a bright, grassy finish. Carefully aged on wooden boards, Big Ed's Gouda celebrates Wisconsin's dairy heritage and was named one of the Top 20 cheeses in the world at the 2018 World Championship Cheese Contest.



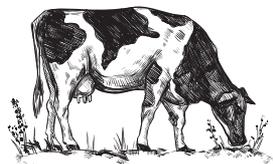
SCRAY CHEESE
2082 OLD MARTIN ROAD, DE PERE

Scray Cheese is a fourth-generation, family-owned De Pere creamery crafting small-batch cheddar, Gouda, Edam, Fontina, and famously fresh curds. Founded in 1924, the factory has grown through each generation while preserving traditional methods, relying on milk from local farms, and steadily expanding production. Today, the Scray Cheese Shoppe connects visitors to their award-winning, handcrafted Wisconsin cheeses, offering a local experience that reflects a century of dedication to quality and community.



TWO GUERNSEY GIRLS CREAMERY
N4006 COUNTY ROAD E, FREEDOM

At Two Guernsey Girls Creamery in Freedom, cheese takes center stage! This family-run micro-creamery crafts small-batch cheese curds and block cheddars using milk from their purebred Guernsey cows, known for their rich, golden milk. Every wheel is made on-site for exceptional flavor and quality. Stop by their retail store in Freedom to experience farm-fresh cheese and support local dairy craftsmanship.



UNION STAR CHEESE
7742 COUNTY ROAD II, FREMONT

Union Star Cheese has crafted small-batch Wisconsin favorites since 1906, blending tradition with hands-on artistry. Visitors can watch fresh curds, cheddar, and specialty blends being made during free morning factory tours. The family-run shop offers a wide range of artisan cheeses, gift boxes, and party trays, all rooted in generations of expertise. A stop at Union Star delivers an authentic taste of Wisconsin's cheesemaking heritage.

THE CHEESE TABLE
125 W. WISCONSIN AVE., NEENAH

The Cheese Table brings Union Star's fourth-generation cheesemaking tradition to downtown Neenah, offering a curated selection of Wisconsin and global cheeses. Shoppers will find Union Star and Willow Creek favorites alongside gourmet varieties, olive oils, wine, crackers, honey, and seasonal gift boxes. The welcoming retail space highlights craftsmanship, quality, and local flavor, giving visitors an inviting place to explore exceptional cheeses right in the heart of Neenah.



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Vern's Cheese in Chilton is a Wisconsin cheese showcase with over 140 varieties, from classic mild, medium, and sharp cheddars to bold European-style selections. Their signature offerings include gourmet string cheese—both fresh and smoked—for a peelable, salty treat. You'll also find block cheddars, curds, cheese whips, and specialty flavored cheeses. Pop into their retail store just a short drive from Appleton to explore this curated cheese paradise.

exploring unique cheeses

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SEMI-SOFT & MILD

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FONTINA

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MORBIER

Mild, creamy, and gently funky with a soft earthiness.

ROTH GRAND CRU

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DANTE

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GRAN CANARIA

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FOURME D'AMBERT

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ROQUEFORT

Sharp, tangy, and rich with a salty punch.

MOODY BLUE

Smoked over fruitwood for a delicate, slightly sweet, and smoky flavor.

HAVE YOU EVER GOTTEN BORED WITH THE SAME OLD CHEESES

like cheddar, mozzarella, and Swiss? The world of cheese is full of creativity and culture, and trying unique varieties can feel like an adventure. Each new cheese offers its own story and flavor. On your next food outing, you can turn it into a fun round of "Name That Cheese," just like the classic game show, but with a twist: "I can name that cheese in two bites." Reach for something lesser-known, and you might discover a new favorite without even trying.





perfect pairings

CHEESE & DRINKS

Cheese and beverage pairings offer an inviting way to explore flavor, texture, and tradition. While wine remains the classic partner, cheese also shines alongside craft beer and crisp cider, each bringing its own character to the table. A helpful rule of thumb is to pair cheese and wine by matching intensity, such as bold reds with aged cheeses and light whites with fresh, soft cheeses.

CHEESE	WINE	BEER AND CIDER
ASIAGO	Cabernet sauvignon (red) Moscato (white)	Amber or brown ale
BRICK	Pinot noir (red) Riesling or Gewürztraminer (white)	Bock or amber ale
BLUE & GORGONZOLA	Pinot noir (red) Riesling or Gewürztraminer (white)	Fruit ales or porter
MILD CHEDDAR	Merlot (red) Sauvignon blanc (white)	Pilsner or wheat beer
FETA	Syrah or Shiraz (red) Sauvignon blanc (white)	Amber or brown ale
GOUDA	Syrah or Shiraz (red), Chardonnay (white)	Pale lager or nut brown ale
HAVARTI	Nebbiolo (red) Riesling or Gewürztraminer (white)	Pilsner or wheat beer
MASCARPONE	Beujolais (red) Moscato (white)	Fruit ales or wheat beer
MOZZARELLA	Merlot (red) Sauvignon blanc (white)	Pilsner or wheat beer
PARMESAN	Pinot noir (red) Chardonnay (white)	Amber or brown ale
ROMANO	Cabernet sauvignon (red) Sauvignon blanc (white)	Golden ale or hard cider
SWISS	Beujolais (red) Riesling or Gewürztraminer (white)	Pilsner or wheat beer





WISCONSIN MASTER *cheesemakers*

If you've ever wondered why Wisconsin cheese tastes a little more "elevated," the **Master Cheesemaker Program**® is a big part of the answer. It's often compared to earning a Ph.D. in cheese, and honestly, that's pretty spot-on. It's the only program like it in the U.S., and it takes years of experience, study, and hands-on work to get that title.

To even apply, a cheesemaker needs a full decade of licensed experience in Wisconsin, plus several years of making the specific cheese they want to specialize in. Once they're in, the process takes nearly three years. There are advanced classes, sensory evaluations, plant inspections, and a final exam that's famously tough. Only a small number of cheesemakers ever earn the right to call themselves Masters.

What that means for the rest of us is simple: When you see the Master's Mark on a cheese, you know someone with deep knowledge and a ton of pride personally oversaw the making of it. It's a sign that the cheese meets the highest standards Wisconsin sets for itself — and those standards are already pretty high.

The program isn't just about technique, either. It's about tradition, mentorship, and keeping Wisconsin's cheese culture strong. Masters keep learning, keep experimenting, and keep pushing the craft forward.

In the end, choosing a cheese made by a Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker means you're tasting dedication, history, and a whole lot of heart. Be sure to look for the Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker badge when you purchase your next container of cheese.

SIMON'S SPECIALTY CHEESE

2735 FREEDOM ROAD, APPLETON

Simon's Specialty Cheese has been a family-driven Wisconsin tradition since 1940, rooted in the hard work and dedication of three generations of the Simon family. What began as a small cheese plant and modest retail counter has grown into a large, destination-style store that celebrates the very best of Wisconsin craftsmanship. Today, Simon's sells its award-winning cheddar, feta, mozzarella, provolone, and their famous fresh squeaky curds — plus their extra fresh cheddar cheese. It's a customer favorite that melts beautifully and makes an exceptional grilled cheese sandwich. Each of these cheeses is locally sourced from Wisconsin plants in Little Chute, Luxemburg, and Weyauwega.



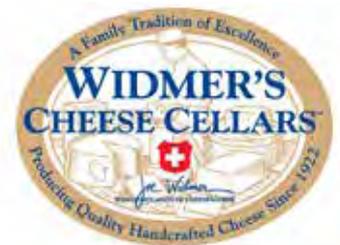
Beyond their own cheeses, the store features more than 100 additional Wisconsin varieties, showcasing signature flavors from creameries across the state. Visitors can explore an impressive selection of locally made products, including gourmet foods, sausage, fudge, homemade pizzas, craft beer, wine, and an array of Wisconsin-themed gifts. The shop is known for its expansive layout — truly a one-stop celebration of Wisconsin and its food culture.

Simon's also creates beautifully curated cheese gift boxes, shipped to customers across the country, making it easy to share authentic Wisconsin flavor with friends, family, or clients near and far. Whether you're sampling fresh curds, browsing specialty items, or assembling a custom gift, the experience is elevated by Simon's friendly, knowledgeable staff who take pride in helping guests discover new favorites. There's no cheese like Wisconsin cheese, and there's no Wisconsin cheese like Simon's.

WIDMER'S CHEESE CELLARS

214 W. HENNI ST., THERESA

Widmer's Cheese Cellars has been crafting exceptional, small-batch cheeses for more than a century, carrying forward a legacy rooted in old-world Swiss tradition and refined through three generations of family expertise. Founded in 1922 by Swiss immigrant John O. Widmer, the creamery quickly became known for its signature Wisconsin brick cheese. Today, Master Cheesemaker Joe Widmer continues that heritage — still using the same open vats and even the original set of bricks his grandfather purchased in 1922 to press curds, a method unmatched anywhere else in the United States.



Widmer's cheeses have earned an impressive list of accolades over the decades. Their brick and cheddar consistently place at the top of national and international competitions, including honors at the World Championship Cheese Contest and the American Cheese Society. Their four-year-aged cheddar, in particular, has become a standout, celebrated for its depth, crystalline texture, and balanced sharpness. These awards reflect not only technical mastery but also Widmer's unwavering commitment to traditional craftsmanship.

Visitors to Theresa can experience this living heritage firsthand at Widmer's retail store, where an observation window offers a behind-the-scenes look at the cheesemaking process. The shop features a wide selection of fresh Wisconsin cheeses — brick, cheddar, Colby, baby Swiss, curds, spreads, and seasonal specialties — along with friendly staff who help connect guests to the creamery's rich history.

With its blend of heritage, craftsmanship, and award-winning quality, Widmer's Cheese Cellars remains a true icon in Wisconsin's dairy landscape — honoring its past while continuing to shape the future of artisan cheese.

Brûléed Grilled Cheese

By CARLY CERNIGLIA



You read that right: Brûléed grilled cheese. This sandwich was inspired by Mandy Lee's Wrong and Impossible Sandwich, where she brûlées the entire sandwich. This naughty sandwich is stuffed with creamy Havarti, smooth Muenster, and delicate prosciutto. Dunked in custard and brûléed, this sandwich is perfect for brunch, breakfast, and — dare I say — dessert!

Serves two

INGREDIENTS:

Six slices brioche bread
 One egg, lightly beaten
 2 tablespoons Kewpie mayo
 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
 2 tablespoons butter
 1/4 cup whole milk
 3–4 teaspoons sugar
 Two slices Muenster cheese
 Two slices Havarti cheese
 Four slices prosciutto

DIRECTIONS:

Cut the crusts off the bread. In a medium-sized frying pan, melt butter. Once hot, dip two slices of brioche into the egg mixture briefly, on both sides. Fry the egg-dipped bread in the pan until golden. Flip and repeat on the other side. Remove from the pan and set aside. Save the remaining beaten egg for later.

Mix the mayo and Dijon. Spread the mixture onto one side of the remaining four pieces of bread. Top one slice of the mayoed bread with two slices of prosciutto. Top the prosciutto with one slice of Muenster. Top the Muenster with one of the fried, egg-dipped bread slices. Top the egg fried bread with one slice of Havarti. Place one of the remaining three mayoed pieces of bread, mayo side down, on top of the Havarti. Assemble the second sandwich in the same manner.

To the remaining lightly beaten egg, whisk in whole milk. Quickly dip the entire sandwich, all sides, in the mixture. About 1–2 seconds per side. Place the sandwich on a plate and repeat with the second sandwich. Sprinkle 1 teaspoon of sugar over each of the two large sides of the sandwiches, spreading evenly. Transfer the sandwiches to a sheet pan lined with foil. Broil on high, about 2 inches away from the broiler, for about 2 minutes. Keep a close eye on the sandwiches and move the pan as needed to achieve even browning. Remove from the oven once caramelized and let sit for a minute. Flip the sandwiches and repeat on the other side. Let the sandwiches cool for a few minutes and then slice. Enjoy!

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Kaffeost

By JASON PATZER

I like to connect my columns to the central theme of each issue, and one might think that would be a problem this month. Well, I've got news for you: Not only is it not a problem, but I was actually looking forward to the opportunity.

Kaffeost is popular across the broader definition of Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, and Finland. I first heard about it while watching a travel food show called *Somebody Feed Phil*. In the Helsinki episode, he tried a version of it, and his Finnish hosts weren't even really sure how it came to be so popular. They jokingly said that it might have been Santa. Regardless, as a coffee enthusiast living in the cheese state, I had to check it out. Not to mention, Finland is consistently rated as the happiest country in the world — maybe Kaffeost is the reason why.

The process is really quite simple. You only need two ingredients: cheese and coffee. You can't get just any cheese, though — you need to get something called bread cheese. Wisconsin-based cheesemaker Carr Valley has the most readily available version around here. It is a firm cheese that has been baked. It doesn't squeak like a fresh cheese curd does, but the texture is somewhat similar, so there can be a bit of a squeak. It is mild in flavor and described as buttery and slightly salty.



It doesn't melt like a standard cheese, and that's what makes it perfect for dunking or soaking it in your coffee.

The cheese is cubed into small, bite-sized pieces and placed in your coffee mug. Freshly brewed coffee is poured over the top. The heat from the coffee softens the cheese, and the two ingredients share subtle flavor nuances with each other.

In my experience, a medium roast coffee worked well, as the roast flavor of the coffee complemented the baked and toasted notes of the cheese. As far as the coffee goes, the overall flavor doesn't change much, but the mouthfeel is where you really notice it. As you can see in the photos, there will be a bit of an oil slick on the coffee. This creates a creamy, heavier mouthfeel — somewhat similar to adding actual cream to your coffee but without diluting the coffee.

All in all, this hasn't become a regular thing at my house, though I have had it a few times. I still prefer my coffee with a nice coffee cake or pastry instead. However, if you need or want to watch your carb or sugar intake, this is a nice healthy alternative to have alongside your morning coffee. Bread cheese is also a high-protein food so if you're a just-coffee-for-breakfast kind of person, this would be a great addition to help hold you over until lunch. Or, like me, it can just be a fun little thing to do on occasion and share with friends.

Jason Patzer has worked in coffee for over 11 years. He started Patzer Coffee as a way to continue his passion for coffee after leaving the industry. You can follow him on Facebook & Instagram @patzercoffee. Or on his website, patzercoffee.com, where he highlights the local coffee community.

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CHEESE FACT

It takes about **10 POUNDS** of milk to make just 1 pound of cheese! A gallon of milk weighs 8.6 pounds, which means more than 1 gallon of milk is needed per pound of cheese.



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Tiramisu Cupcakes

WITH MASCARPONE FROSTING

By CARLY CERNIGLIA

These rich, fluffy dark chocolate cupcakes are topped with dreamy mascarpone cheese frosting, making them a delicious take on classic tiramisu. Spiked with coffee liqueur, the cupcakes are moist and decadent. Topped with dark chocolate ganache, they're the ultimate dessert. Black cocoa can be a little tricky to find in stores, but it is easy to get online! The closest substitute you could use would be Dutch-process cocoa if you can't find black cocoa.

Makes 17 cupcakes

INGREDIENTS:**For the Cupcakes:**

240 grams cake flour
80 grams black cocoa powder
1 tablespoon baking powder
350 grams sugar
Two eggs
150 grams sour cream
160 ml vegetable oil
1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
2 teaspoons vanilla paste
200 ml hot, strong brewed coffee
40 ml coffee liqueur

For the Mascarpone Frosting:

One stick unsalted butter, room temperature
8 ounces mascarpone cheese
2 teaspoons vanilla bean paste
3 cups powdered sugar
1 cup heavy cream

For the Ganache:

66 grams 72% dark chocolate
66 grams heavy cream
4 grams unsalted butter

Garnish:

Chocolate curls

**DIRECTIONS:****For the Cupcakes:**

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line 17 cupcake tin cups with paper liners.

In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, sour cream, vegetable oil, salt, vanilla, and sugar. Add flour, black cocoa, and baking powder and whisk until almost combined. Mix together coffee and coffee liqueur, and whisk into the batter in three additions, stirring until incorporated.

Divide batter evenly between the cupcake liners. Bake for 15-18 minutes, until a cake tester comes out clean, or the cupcake springs back when lightly touched. Let cool in the tin for 5 minutes, then transfer cupcakes to a wire rack to cool completely.

For the Mascarpone Frosting:

In a large bowl, beat butter and mascarpone with a hand mixer or stand mixer until smooth. Slowly mix in powdered sugar. Slowly mix in heavy cream and beat on medium-high until fluffy and stiff peaks form. Stir in the vanilla. Keep chilled until ready to frost cupcakes.

For the Ganache:

Place chocolate, butter, and heavy cream in a small bowl. Microwave for 30 seconds. Stir until completely melted and incorporated.

To Assemble:

Divide frosting evenly over cooled cupcakes, creating a small indentation in the frosting. Spoon slightly warm ganache into the indentation and top with chocolate curls. Store leftovers in the refrigerator. Enjoy!



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A FISHY STORY

FISH BECOMES POPULAR DISH DURING LENT

By TIM FROBERG

Fish can't fly, but they sure move off the shelves of retail stores and markets during March.

Fish consumption across the world soars during the 40 days of Lent, a Christian period of self-sacrifice that started Feb. 18 and runs through April 2.

Lent is a part of Catholicism, but is not exclusive to it, and involves fasting, self-denial, prayer, and charity. It is Catholic tradition to abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent and to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (April 3).

Many people choose to fill the meatless days with fish as an entrée. Restaurants in the United States report a 20% increase in seafood sales during Lent, while some seafood retailers see spikes as high as 200%. According to CBS News, cod (60%) was the most popular fish consumed during Lent, followed by tilapia (32%) and salmon (30%).

Fish sales rise so significantly during Lent that even butcher shops such as Jacobs Meat Market in Appleton make sure they have plenty of fresh and frozen seafood available. Jacobs offers at least two fresh and two frozen fish specials each week during Lent.

"We're professionals in the meat industry and traditionally don't carry a lot of fresh seafood except during Lent because our customers ask for it," said Jacobs owner Luke Jacobs.

"We're getting in some really good fresh fish like wild swordfish, Faroe Island salmon, tilapia, Chilean sea bass, Alaskan halibut loins, wild halibut, monkfish, and ahi tuna loins.

"We have a whole freezer door full of frozen fish, so we have plenty of salmon year-round, along with anything from lobster tails, scallops to haddock loins and shrimp.

Fresh salmon is Jacobs' No. 1 seafood seller during Lent, but many other types of fish do well.

"Salmon is the most popular because a lot of people around here know about it and see it on restaurant menus," Jacobs said. "One fish that has gotten very popular is Chilean sea bass. Monkfish has become more popular, too.

"A lot of people like swordfish, which is more of a muscly fish, kind of like a steak. Other people like a flakier fish. There are a lot of different fish out there, and people really appreciate it when we can offer it fresh."

Jacobs says you don't need to be a top chef to prepare a delicious fish meal.

"There are many different ways to prepare fish," he said. "Some are going to grill it. Some are going to bake it. Some are going to pan-fry or deep-fry it. Most fish are generally pretty easy to cook. You just need to make sure you have the time to actually turn the fish or make sure it doesn't flare up on the grill."

Consumers should understand that fish prices have escalated in 2026 due to the new U.S. tariffs on imported seafood. More than 80% of the U.S. fish supply is imported.

"Prices are higher because of the tariffs," said Jacobs. "I'm not used to tariffs because we're a meat market and I buy all American beef, chicken, and pork. A lot of the fish comes from Mexico and Canada, so we have to be mindful of pricing with the tariffs."



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CHEESE FACT



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A PERFECT MATCH

WISCONSIN WINE & WISCONSIN CHEESE

By STEVE JOHNSON



We wear our cheeseheads not only because we are proud Packers fans, but also because we know that our state produces some of the best artisanal cheese in the world. We have been doing this cheese thing for quite a while here, but recently, the Frozen Tundra has also become home to wines that are also grown and produced here, in this unexpected corner of the wine world.

One of the great joys of the food and drink world is pairing amazing cheeses with delicious wines. The French and Italians have been perfecting this for hundreds of years.

Terroir is a set of environmental factors that create a sense of regionality. When it comes to wine and cheese, both products reflect the impact of sunshine, temperatures, soils, and the skills of local craftsmen. This sense of terroir brings these regional products together. That is why wine from Italy often tastes better with cheese from Italy, and French wine and French cheese work so well together. Now it's Wisconsin's turn.

To enjoy cheese with wine, first taste them separately to

understand their unique flavors and textures. Then, try to match the intensity and texture of each. Lighter cheeses pair well with lighter wines, while bolder cheeses pair well with bolder wines.

Another tip is to remember that tannin, primarily in red wines, cuts through the fat in cheese and gives you a harmonious balance on your palate. Sweeter wines can also counterbalance the saltiness of some cheeses.

Now sip the wine and inhale a bit of the wine's aroma over your tongue, take a bite of cheese, then sip the wine again. You will notice how the interaction of the two gives you a third dimension of flavor and experience. It can be almost otherworldly.

Now let's talk about some Wisconsin cheese and Wisconsin wine combinations that work particularly well.

Soft cheeses, such as brie or goat cheese, are made for crisp white wines. The acidity in Wisconsin-grown wines like Frontenac Blanc, Itasca, and La Crescent will make your mouth water as you enjoy the creamy texture of these cheeses. Other complementary wines include sauvignon blanc and pinot gris.

Hard cheeses like aged cheddar and parmesan are made for bolder reds like Marquette and Frontenac because those wines work well with the protein and higher fat of those cheeses. Other complementary wines include cabernet sauvignon and malbec.

Blue cheeses like Gorgonzola and Roquefort are made for sweet wines like icewine, ice cider, or port wines. The power of each is balanced and enhanced by the other.

The balancing of flavors and textures, and the combination of what each brings to the party, is the magic of enjoying cheese with wine.

The next time you sit down and entertain guests, consider proudly serving and pairing Wisconsin cheese with Wisconsin wine. It's a unique experience and one that your guests will remember as we build a tradition much like our Italian and French counterparts have for hundreds of years.

Steve Johnson is co-owner and winemaker at Parallel 44 and Door 44 in Kewaunee and Door Counties. His passion is growing and crafting wines from Northeast Wisconsin, an unexpected, but increasingly recognized corner of the wine world.



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WISCONSIN GRASSHOPPER



DRINK

Take the classic grasshopper cocktail to the next level by blending the crème liqueurs with frosty vanilla ice cream. The minty green hue and silky texture make this boozy milkshake perfect for St. Paddy's Day or as an indulgent after-dinner treat. Top with a swirl of whipped cream and a cherry to give it that nostalgic Wisconsin supper club charm.

INGREDIENTS

- Two to three large scoops of vanilla ice cream (about 1.5 – 2 cups)
- 1 ounce green crème de menthe
- 1 ounce white crème de cacao
- Optional: Green food coloring
- Whipped cream, maraschino cherry, or chocolate shavings for garnish

DIRECTIONS

- Place the ice cream, crème de menthe, and crème de cacao into a blender. Add a few drops of green food coloring if desired.
- Blend on high until completely smooth, like a milkshake.
- If the mixture is too thick, add a splash of heavy cream or milk.
- Pour into a chilled dessert glass.
- Top with whipped cream and a cherry or chocolate shavings.

BREWS



SIP

SNAKE CHASER IRISH-STYLE STOUT

This smooth stout pours a deep black topped with a creamy tan head. Rich aromas of toffee and coffee complement the robust ale, which is lightly hopped and packed with roasted malt flavor, finishing with just a hint of sweetness.

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SWEET NEW ORLEANS

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLE IN THE BIG EASY

By TIM FROBERG

New Orleans is nicknamed “The Big Easy,” and I can see why.

It’s incredibly easy to get a sensational meal.

It’s easy to navigate this friendly, festive, compact city of 384,000 — 200,000 less than Milwaukee.

And it’s super, duper easy to have a great time in the Crescent City, which competes with Las Vegas as the party capital of the United States. If you’re in New Orleans and not having fun, that’s probably on you. New Orleans has been called “Disneyland for Adults” because of its eat, drink, and be merry vibe and a culture that celebrates music, nightlife, fine dining, and adult cocktails. Had the Grinch lived in New Orleans instead of Whoville, he might have slammed down a Hurricane or two and never tried to hijack Christmas.



My wife and I took a recent road trip to the land of good times, gumbo, and gators, returning to Wisconsin with awesome memories and tighter-fitting pants.

We stayed at the Westin on the edge of the French Quarter in downtown New Orleans. It proved to be the perfect home base, allowing us to park our car in the hotel garage and travel everywhere on foot.

The sights of New Orleans and the French Quarter are fabulous, but the sounds are just as memorable. The clubs are loaded with top-notch performers, but you don’t need to pay a cover charge to hear exceptional blues, jazz, and Dixieland music.

You can usually hear music from local musicians at any time during the day on a city street, outdoor café, or park like Jackson Square: the historic 2.5-acre gathering spot in the heart of the French Quarter.



One of my favorite New Orleans’ memories was enjoying a café au lait and a classic New Orleans-style beignet (a deep-fried pastry dipped in powdered sugar) while listening to an incredible brass band deliver wonderful tunes like *You Are My Sunshine* at Café Du Monde: the oldest and best-known beignet shop in the city, dating back to 1862.

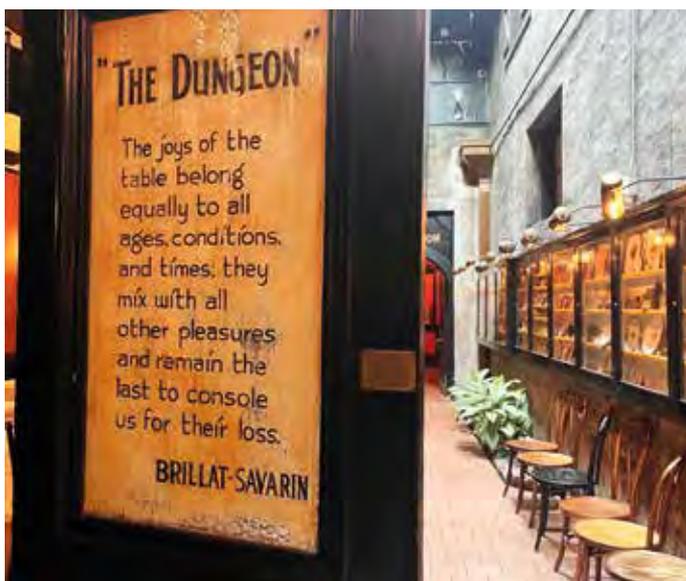
But we didn’t live on beignets during our five days in New Orleans. New Orleans is known for its legendary food scene and its diverse offerings, so we weren’t looking for cheese curds. We devoured traditional Creole-Cajun dishes like gumbo, jambalaya, catfish étouffée, shrimp and grits, shrimp



creole, crawfish, Po' Boys, muffulettas, alligator, turtle soup, red beans and rice, and Oysters Rockefeller — oysters baked in rich, buttery, creamy sauce.

The latter was created at Antoine's, one of the city's oldest and most iconic restaurants. We made it a point to have lunch there, and it was no mistake. My shrimp and grits entrée and the Oysters Rockefeller were off the charts. So was the Baked Alaska, a decadent dessert that I tried for the first time.

Antoine's — a favorite of legendary foodie Anthony Bourdain — opened its doors way back in 1840 and serves as a living history museum of sorts. Guests are allowed to tour the 15-room building after dining, and it's worth the walk. Lining the walls are endless photographs of celebrities who have dined there, from presidents to popes. The rooms are filled with paintings, old menus and cookbooks along with Mardi Gras costumes and memorabilia. We checked out the legendary wine cellar, which contains roughly 25,000 bottles of vino, and the Mystery Room, which served as a speakeasy accessed through a secret door during the days of Prohibition.



We also had a fine meal at Brennan's, another famous restaurant in the French Quarter. Brennan's is known for its original creation of Bananas Foster, and it's an extraordinary must-eat dessert that is tough to find outside of New Orleans.

Still, you don't need to dine at a high-end restaurant to get incredible food in New Orleans. One of my best culinary experiences was wolfing down muffuletta and Po'Boy sandwiches at Central Grocery and Deli, a third-generation,

old-school Italian grocery store-deli that gave the world the original muffuletta back in 1906. We also hit numerous small cafes, and the food was terrific at every stop.

A visit to Bourbon Street is mandatory when visiting New Orleans. It's Party Central, a loud, liquor-fueled vibrant hub in the French Quarter where the good times roll every evening. Bourbon Street — which consists solely of foot traffic — is packed with historic bars, street musicians, entertainers, wide-eyed tourists, and assorted weirdos. Yes, it can get crowded and overwhelming at times, but it's worth checking out just for the people-watching experience.

Hurricanes, the Jimmy Buffett-endorsed cocktail of the South, and Hand Grenades, the kind you drink, not throw, are sold right on Bourbon Street in plastic cups. But we wanted to do it right. So, we hunkered down in the piano bar at Pat O'Briens — home of the original Hurricane — and enjoyed this iconic rum-based drink while singing along to popular tunes delivered by the dueling pianos act.



We spent hours wandering the French Quarter, visiting voodoo shops like Reverend Zombie's House of Voodoo and cemeteries. The voodoo shops are fascinating, filled with freaky gifts, amulets, and figurines. Had I known then what I do now, I would have purchased a good luck charm for the injury-ravaged Green Bay Packers and something to curse the football gods' most beloved team, the Chicago Bears.

What's interesting about the New Orleans cemeteries is that the dead are buried above ground in tombs, vaults, and mausoleums due to the city's below-sea-level elevation. That has always made in-ground burials a major problem because excessive flooding can cause coffins to rise and actually float away, an issue faced by early settlers in the city.

We didn't spend much time or money on tours, but did take part in a few, and they were well worth it.

The first was Cajun Encounters, a swamp tour that took us into the bayous and wetlands of Louisiana, about an hour from New Orleans. It was awesome. Our boat was captained by a funny, knowledgeable, swamp-savvy old pro named Neal, who reminded me of comedian Ron White with his laid-back, observational style. Neal made sure we got our money's worth out of the two-hour boat ride.



We saw alligators up close — so close that Neal kept warning not to put our hands anywhere near the railing — along with a variety of local wildlife such as egrets, raccoons, and wild boars. Surprisingly, the swamps — with lush vegetation and towering cypress trees draped with Spanish moss — were tranquil and quite beautiful. I wouldn't want to go for a swim there, but experiencing the swamp scene from a boat is a fun outing that I would highly recommend.

We also took part in a ghost tour, which proved to be a blast. With its rich history of voodoo and paranormal activity, New Orleans is considered to be one of America's most haunted cities. The mid-evening ghost tour took us through the heart of the city and to alleged haunted houses that would have scared the socks off the Ghostbusters.

Our guide, A.J., told us some of the creepiest ghost and vampire stories I've ever heard. New Orleans actually has a community of people who identify as real-life vampires, including one Count Dracula wannabe whom A.J. bumped into on the streets during the Halloween season. When A.J. commented, "Nice costume", the man growled back, "It's not a costume!"

My favorite part of the tour came when A.J. told us a hair-raising story about a haunted house owned during the 1800s by Madame Blaque. She was a New Orleans socialite and diabolical serial killer who tortured and murdered enslaved people in her house of horrors. The house was pitch dark as we stared at it, but suddenly a light flashed inside one of the rooms. Practically everyone in our group, including myself, jumped...and high enough to dunk a basketball. But it wasn't a spook. It turned out that a person was actually living in the house and had simply turned on a light.



It all made for a fun, festive vacation. Those who want a quiet, tranquil spot or have just launched a diet should look elsewhere. But folks with a sense of adventure for food, drink, music, and merriment should put New Orleans near the top of their list of must-see cities.



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Artisan Ambience: The **Cheese** Infused Home

By SARAH PETERSON

When most people think of home decor, they imagine elegant furniture, vibrant artwork, and luxurious textiles. But one unexpected element is making its way into kitchens and living rooms: **cheese**.

Yes, cheese — the beloved food that has delighted taste buds for centuries — is now being used creatively to enhance living spaces, and it might hit close to home for us cheese-loving Wisconsin dwellers.

Cheese-inspired home decor isn't what it sounds like. (If you're thinking about hanging a wedge of cheddar on your wall, think again.) The concept blends a love for artisanal food with an appreciation for unique design elements. For instance, a large wooden tray, platter, or cutting board can serve not only as an artistic piece on a coffee or dining table but can also create an eye-catching, edible display for guests when turned into an exquisite "cheese-cuterie" board, filled with various bite-sized cheeses, fruits, crackers, or nuts.

Themed wall art is another way cheese is making its way into homes. Artists are creating prints and paintings that feature cheese, such as classic still-life oil paintings, vintage-inspired posters of illustrated cheeses, and photos of local cheeses or cheese shops. Etsy.com offers downloadable art you can print and frame yourself. Hanging these in the kitchen or dining room can give a restaurant feel or add a personal, local touch. Consider hanging three prints in a row or creating a framed "gallery wall" featuring cheese-themed art.



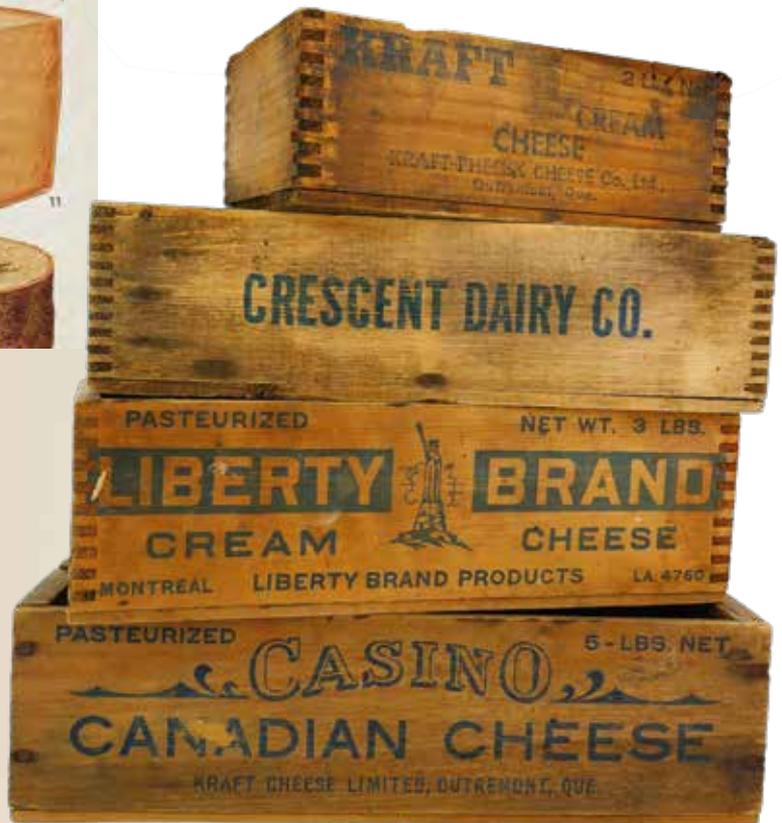


On a more daring note, **“cheesy”** colors are inspiring home accent choices.

Bright orange or yellow probably come to mind, but surprisingly, cheese offers a sampler of rustic and earthy colors — from creamy custard whites to warm ambers, or moody dark reds, browns, and grays. When deciding on colors for walls, pillows, table settings, or other accents, look no further than your cheese drawer.

Cheese has a long history, especially in Wisconsin, so vintage pieces such as wooden cheese crates or boxes, metal cheese graters, cheese crocks, and covered ceramic cheese dishes are being used as unique accent pieces for shelves or counter space. Current cheese knives or wooden/slate cutting boards are often crafted using fine materials and are not only functional but also double as elegant decor in kitchens or serving areas.

While it may seem unusual, using cheese as inspiration in our homes can add a sophisticated, personal, and colorful tone. For us in Wisconsin, it can also connect us to the history and culture that make us who we are today.



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GMC Sierra Upgraded For More Luxurious Ride

By TIM FROBERG

Trucks have a long history of being valued more for practicality than style.

They have never been designed to win automotive beauty contests and generally prioritize power and payload capacity over elegance and aesthetics.

What good is a nice-looking truck if it can't carry the load and properly transport goods?

However, times are changing. The GMC Sierra 1500 truck offers consumers a stylish look along with more luxury amenities than most new pickups ... and at a reasonable price.

The GMC Sierra 1500 certainly passes the eyeball test. In addition to its good looks, the truck has a spacious cabin that ranks among the largest in its class. But it's a working truck, too, with payload and towing capacity that rate among the best for a full-sized truck.

The Sierra 1500 compares favorably with a top competitor: the Chevy Silverado. They're basically the same truck mechanically, with both boasting similar powerful engines. However, the Sierra 1500 targets luxury with more high-end materials like

its upscale interior, massaging seats, and better standard infotainment. The Silverado has a lower starting price and focuses more on its utility value.

The Sierra 1500 offers a comfortable ride and impressive, user-friendly technology that includes a large 13.4-inch touchscreen, a 360-degree camera, and a super cruise hands-free driving option.

The Sierra 1500 has several trim levels available like the well-regarded SLT, AT4, Denali and Denali Ultimate models. Sierra also offers a new all-electric, EV truck.

The GMC Sierra 1500 is an updated model — not a full redesign — and builds on its current generation. It offers refinements such as new colors and wheel options and upgraded towing technology, but maintains the same foundation as the 2025 model. It comes with a three-year, 36,000-mile warranty. Powertrains come with a five-year, 60,000-mile warranty.

"The GMC Sierra is more upscale than its Chevrolet sibling," stated a review on kellybluebook.com. "Impressive payload and towing numbers, plus a spacious cab make this a great truck for many people. It gives truck buyers the best of both worlds:

excellent towing and payload capacity as well as near-luxury amenities."

A review on the Car and Driver website said: "The GMC Sierra is just as tough as its Chevy cousin, but brings a bit more class and refinement."

A review on Edmunds.com added: "The GMC Sierra is a terrific full-size pickup that offers excellent working capabilities alongside a spacious interior. There are multiple powertrains to choose from, so no job is too tough for this truck. Overall, the Sierra is a competent and worthy light-duty pickup truck for everyday use."

Price: Starting at \$38,000

Engine: Base model is a 2.7-liter turbo 4-cylinder with 8-speed automatic transmission. Three other engine options are available, including a 6.2-liter V-8.

Towing capacity: 8,800-9,800 lbs.

MPG: Up to 23 city, 28 highway

0 to 60: 5.4 to 5.7 seconds for trims with the more powerful 6.2-liter V8 engine.

Hip Dysplasia in Dogs

By DR. SETH OBERSCHLAKE

Hip dysplasia is a common orthopedic condition in dogs that affects the hip joints and can lead to pain, arthritis, and decreased mobility over time. While it is often associated with large or giant breeds, hip dysplasia can affect dogs of any size or age.

In a healthy hip joint, the ball of the femur fits snugly into the hip socket, allowing smooth movement. In dogs with hip dysplasia, this joint does not form properly. The loose fit and joint malformation lead to abnormal wear and tear, causing inflammation and eventually arthritis. Genetics play a major role, but factors such as rapid growth, excess weight, and inappropriate exercise during puppyhood can worsen the condition.

Signs of hip dysplasia can vary. Some dogs show symptoms as young puppies, while others may not show obvious problems until they are older. Common signs include stiffness (especially after rest), difficulty rising, reluctance to jump or climb stairs, decreased activity, limping, or a “bunny hopping” gait when running. Because dogs are very good at hiding pain, subtle changes in



behavior or activity level are often the earliest clues.

Diagnosis is typically made through a physical exam and X-rays. Identifying hip dysplasia early allows for better long-term management and improved comfort. While hip dysplasia cannot be cured, there are many effective ways to manage it.

Treatment plans are tailored to each dog and may include weight management,

controlled exercise, physical therapy, joint supplements, and pain or anti-inflammatory medications. Keeping dogs lean is one of the most important factors in reducing stress on the joints. In more severe cases, surgical options may be recommended and can be life-changing for some dogs.

If you are considering a puppy, choosing a responsible breeder who screens breeding dogs for hip dysplasia can reduce the risk. For growing puppies, proper nutrition and avoiding excessive high-impact exercise are also important.

If you notice any changes in your dog’s movement or comfort, talk with your veterinarian. With early detection and appropriate care, many dogs with hip dysplasia can live happy, active, and comfortable lives.

Dr. Seth Oberschlake is a 2014 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine. He has worked at Heritage Animal Hospital since 2015 and recently became the sole owner.

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Apollo

Apollo is a 1-year-old neutered mixed breed and a true ray of sunshine! He is outgoing and ready to bring some extra joy to your life. He would do well with another dog that can match his play style, and children who are robust enough to handle his energy!



Princess

Princess is a 1.5-year-old spayed mixed breed. She is timid when first meeting new people, but once comfortable, she is a sweet and playful girl! Princess is happy to meet and play with other dogs, but would prefer to live as an only pet!



Carly

Carly is a 12-year-old spayed female. She is sweet and affectionate and is looking for a loving environment to live out her golden years. She is on a prescription kidney diet for kidney disease.



Marguerite

Marguerite is a 2-year-old spayed female. She has proven to be outgoing in her foster home. She is curious and enjoys head pets and ear scratches! She may enjoy having another feline companion in the home.



Plant Your Own TOMATOES, PEPPERS, AND EGGPLANTS

By HOLLY BOETTCHER

Starting vegetables from seed is a great way to save money. The best part is you can grow vibrant, flavorful varieties that you won't find at garden centers. In east-central Wisconsin's climate, March is the ideal time to kick off this rewarding project. If you're new to starting plants from seed, simply follow these easy steps to get started:

Supplies Needed

I enjoy trying new varieties each year. After you select seeds, you need a container to mix soil, seed-starting mix (not to be confused with potting soil), seed-starting trays, a plastic dome, pencil, heat mat, fan, watering can, journal, and labels.

Preparation

If reusing seed-starter trays from the previous year, disinfect them with a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. If you skip this important step, your tomato seedlings will most likely wither and die from "damping off." Equally important is to use seed-starting mix and not potting soil. Begin by mixing a small amount of starter mix with warm water until it begins to clump. Gently press starter mix into the cells of the seed starter trays.

Planting Seeds

Refer to seed packets for recommended planting depth. To plant, dip the eraser end of a pencil in water and use the eraser end to gently pick up seeds by pressing the eraser onto each one. Plant three seeds per cell for best results. Label your trays and jot down notes — trust me, you'll forget what you planted otherwise! Create a "mini greenhouse" by covering the trays with a plastic dome or even a plastic bag. Place the trays in a sunny spot or on a heat mat to provide the ideal conditions for germination. Keep soil moist by watering from the bottom only — pour a small amount of water into the bottom tray and let it soak into the seed-starting mix. Avoid letting water stand in the trays to prevent overwatering.

General Care

When seedlings reach about an inch in height, use scissors to snip off the weaker plants, leaving the strongest seedling to thrive. This is a great time to feed them with a water-soluble plant food specifically labeled for vegetables. Check on them daily to ensure soil trays are moist and don't dry out.

Hardening Up

To prepare your seedlings for life outdoors, simulate wind by running a fan on them gently for a short time every few days. This helps strengthen their stems.

As the weather warms in spring, gradually introduce seedlings outside for small amounts of time each day. This process is called "hardening up." Be careful not to place them out in full sun or on a windy day. Wait until at least Memorial Day or until all risk of frost has passed before planting outdoors.

Enjoy!

Growing your own vegetables is an incredibly rewarding experience! I love growing a rainbow of colors and ordering my seeds from Baker Creek, rareseeds.com. What vibrant hues will you be planting this year?



Holly Boettcher is a master gardener, entrepreneur, and aspiring naturalist. Her love for the outdoors and nature shines through everything she does. Holly and her husband are the founders of Whistler's Knoll Vineyard on Highway JJ near Hortonville. Follow Holly on her new Facebook page: Gardening Through Life With Holly.

THE OTHER TYLER SJOSTROM

A few years back, I received an unsolicited direct message on social media. “Great show last night! Next time you’re back in Asheville, I’d love to buy you a coffee.” I think there was a heart emoji, maybe a treble clef as well.

Problem is, I’d never and still have never been to Asheville, and certainly wasn’t playing any great shows there. “Hi! I appreciate you reaching out, but I think you might be looking for someone else,” I replied. “Happy hunting.”

The next year, a friend returned from a weekend in Chicago with a souvenir for me. “I was in a bar, and there was a sign advertising a concert by someone with your exact same name. I stole it for you.” The sign hangs in my garage to this day.

Eventually, I deduced that these two events were related; somewhere in that mysterious netherspace between Illinois and Appalachia, there was a person with the same name and interests as mine, and seemingly doing more with them than I was. And, because he was using the traditional umlauts – Tyler Sjöström – he was even more outwardly Swedish than me. I wasn’t happy or sad about it, but I was definitely aware.

It was about three years ago now that I decided to release some original music under my own name, and the biggest hurdle I found was an existential one — what do I call myself? Should I claim

ignorance of Other Tyler and just force my fat face into the ring? Should I give myself a clever stage name, like maybe Dad Fashion or Scalloped Rhubarb? Or should I acknowledge Other Tyler’s



ONE MORE THING

By TYLER SJOSTROM

presence but — since I’ve been using our name for five years longer than he has — claim seniority?

In the end, I chose to use just my favorite part of our last name — “Tyler Sj.” And

as I released a few songs here and there, I began to interact with Other Tyler and his music. We became friendly online acquaintances, quietly pulling for each other as we leaned into the novelty of the situation. And we also found a lot in common — we both are fathers of young sons, both have brothers named “Ryan,” both have spent a lifetime correcting those who mispronounce our surname. (We also both have merch; he has one of my t-shirts, and vice versa.)

There was a time when the mere fact of his existence would have bothered me, especially as his trajectory outshined mine. But as it stands now, we’ve found a gracious kinship that gives us each something in return. I proudly share his music whenever I can, and he gets regular reminders of the townie musician he once was. In a lot of ways, we’re flipsides of the same musical ambition, and we understand that more deeply because of all the things we’ve always shared.

Maybe someday we’ll collaborate, maybe we won’t. It would certainly be fun to do. But in the meantime, it’s enough to know that not only is the musical space big enough for both of us, but Appleton would be as well if and when he makes it up this way.

So check out the music of (other) Tyler Sjöström as soon as you can. You’ll be glad you did. And next time you see either of us, we’ll take you up on that coffee.

Tyler Sjöstrom is an Appleton-based writer who will show you pictures of his kids whether you ask for them or not. Heckle him at tysjostrom@gmail.com or read more at tyler-sj.com.

“We are people just like you.”

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Carly

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