

Don Vruwink: Celebrate Dairy in Wisconsin

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Here are a few examples of the pride Wisconsinites take in living in the Dairy State:

Last October, when the head of the state's largest business lobby proposed removing "America's Dairyland" from the state license plate, the backlash was swift and the idea died.

There was a time when people used the term "cheesehead" to refer derisively to Wisconsinites. But we quickly embraced the name and now foam cheeseheads are standard headgear at Packer games and other events where we want to show our Wisconsin pride.

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As a member of the Assembly Agriculture Committee, I heard testimony on legislation to make cheese the official state dairy product. When the bill came to a vote, the committee chairman asked members to name their favorite cheese instead of saying "aye."

National Milk Month originated in 1937 as a way to encourage more milk consumption. June is now recognized as National Dairy Month to include the entire dairy industry.

Here in Wisconsin, we have especially good reason to celebrate. Consider these facts:

- Wisconsin's 9,250 dairy farms account for 23 percent of all dairy farms

nationwide.

- The Wisconsin dairy industry employs nearly 42,000 people, generates \$2.14 billion in direct wages, and has an economic impact of more than \$23 billion.
- Roughly 90 percent of Wisconsin's milk is turned into cheese and about 90 percent of that cheese is sold outside of the state.
- If Wisconsin were a country, it would rank 4th in the world in cheese production.
- Last year, the Dairy State once again led the nation in cheese production, and specifically in American, cheddar, provolone, parmesan, Romano, brick, Muenster, processed cheese, specialty cheeses, feta and limburger. We account for 26.6 percent of the nation's cheese.

As the State Representative from the 43rd Assembly District, I am proud to represent dairy farmers and workers in Rock, Walworth, Jefferson, and Dane counties. I look forward to the June dairy breakfasts every year.

The Rock County Dairy Breakfast will be held Saturday, June 9 at 4522 W. Mineral Point Road, Janesville, which is about 1.5 miles west of Parker High School. The Walworth County Dairy Breakfast will be held at the Walworth County Fairgrounds in Elkhorn on Saturday, June 16.

For more details on these events and other county dairy breakfasts, please visit <https://hooraywisconsindairy.com/events/>.

I encourage you to show your support for our dairy farmers and processors by attending a dairy breakfast this month. If you see me, please come up and say hello!

— *Vruwink, D-Milton, represents the 43rd Assembly District.*