

THE CANADIAN CHEESE GRAND PRIX HISTORY AND THE CHEESE INDUSTRY IN CANADA

Starting with the first edition in 1998, Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) have spared no effort in order to make the Canadian Cheese Grand Prix an outstanding event. The Grand Prix generates ever-increasing interest, as much from cheese makers as from cheese lovers.

Canadian Cheeses in Competition

With this competition and the prizes offered, Dairy Farmers of Canada contributes to the development of the Canadian cheese market and offers continuous support to the dairy industry. DFC represents approximately 12,965 dairy farmers.

The event's goal is to make Canadian cheeses better known and appreciated by consumers, as well as the food industry and hotel and restaurant professionals. It also aims to support cheese makers in their search for excellence and in the development of new products and gives them a chance to benefit from the many positive outcomes of a Grand Prix victory.

The Canadian cheese industry is comprised of more than 173 cheese makers who produce more than 667 different cheeses (including goat, ewe and cow cheeses). The Canadian Cheese Grand Prix is open to cheese makers of any cheese manufactured in Canada exclusively from 100 per cent Canadian Cows' Milk, Milk-Derived Ingredients from 100 per cent Canadian cow's milk or both. No imported dairy ingredients are permitted. Canadian cheese, produced with a unique blend of old world tradition and new technology is internationally renowned for its high quality. In order to make excellent cheese, good quality milk is required. This is due to the strict standards that are implemented by provincial government inspections of the milk producers and distributors. Cheeses made from 100 per cent Canadian milk are held to the highest standards, and the 100% Canadian Milk symbol is your guarantee that the cheese is made from milk from right here in Canada, renowned for its high quality, purity and great taste.

According to Federal Government legislation, the milk used for cheese making is generally pasteurized. Pasteurization involves heating milk to a constant temperature, for a set time, to destroy dangerous bacteria. There are some exceptions, such as raw milk cheeses. Cheeses made with unpasteurized milk undergo a carefully monitored process to ensure a safe and tasty product. Butterfat content is also controlled. The cheese maker can rely on a constant standard of milk that can be adjusted to produce a wide variety of Canadian cheeses, from skim milk Mozzarella to creamy smooth Triple-Cream Brie.

Cheeses and Prizes

Every winner receives a trophy and a certificate. By means of a point system, the jury selects three finalists and from these finalists, one winner in each category (from one through 18 inclusive).

The 'Grand Champion' is chosen among the 'Category Champions' taking into account points attributed to each category winner and other weighting factors determined by the jury.

Past Grand Champions

1998

In 1998, 150 products were entered in the first edition of the Grand Prix, 33 cheese finalists were selected. Twenty-eight cheese makers from all over the country entered their best cheeses. The final competition took place on September 13th in Halifax.

The **Lechevalier-Mailloux** cheese was selected as the Grand Champion. A soft, washed-rind cheese made from raw milk by La Ferme Piluma in Saint-Basile-de-Portneuf in Quebec and made at Luc Mailloux's dairy farm, this cheese offers a wealth of aromas.

2000

On May 25th, 2000 at the Institut de Toursime et d'Hôtellerie du Québec in Montreal, the **Bleu Bénédictin**, produced at the Saint-Benoît Abbey in Saint-Benoît-du-Lac in Québec, was crowned Grand Champion. A total of 141 cheeses were entered in the second edition of the Grand Prix and 49 cheese finalists were selected.

The **Bleu Bénédictin** is a semi-soft blue cheese, made from whole milk, with a natural rind, surface-ripened. The body is creamy, and reveals an aroma rich in mushroom and peach kernels.

2002

The finals of the third edition took place on May 22nd, 2002 in Toronto. The jury selected 48 cheeses entered by 17 cheese makers as finalists. On the whole, 31 cheese makers, from coast to coast, entered 160 cheeses in the competition.

Le Migneron de Charlevoix, part of the washed-rind cheeses category, was chosen as the Grand Champion. **Le Migneron de Charlevoix** is produced in Baie Saint-Paul in Charlevoix, Quebec and is made exclusively with the milk of cows pastured in the region, where it ages for 50 days. This surface-ripened washed rind semi-soft cheese keeps under its straw to copper-coloured crust a tender ivory interior.

2004

For the fourth edition of the Grand Prix, 46 cheeses made by 11 cheese makers were selected as finalists, among 182 cheeses entered by 39 cheese makers across Canada.

Category winner and Grand Champion of the 2004 Grand Prix was **Le Douanier** from Fromagerie Fritz Kaiser in Noyan, Quebec.

This washed-rind cheese features a horizontal stripe in the middle known as the 'morbier'. Originally, this mark was left by ashes from the fireplace that served to protect the cheese before the curd was added from the next batch. Today, the stripe is made from vegetable ash and included for decorative purposes. Depending on its age, the mild character of the cheese becomes more marked on the palate, with a stronger fruity taste.

2006

In February 2006, 189 Canadian cheeses made by 45 different cheese makers entered the competition. The Jury selected 41 cheeses and **La Sauvagine** from La Fromagerie Alexis de Portneuf in Quebec was declared the Grand Champion.

La Fromagerie de Portneuf is built on tradition and family values. They produce a wide range of specialty cheeses including three category winners. **La Sauvagine**, the winner for the washed rind category and also Grand Champion, is a creamy cheese with a moist rind that ripens from the outside in. Its distinct flavour is both smooth and delicate, and uniquely balanced with a hint of butter and mushrooms.

2009

In the 2009 competition, 172 cheeses were submitted in the Grand Prix. A soft washed-rind cheese called **Kénogami** from Fromagerie Lehmann in Lac-Saint-Jean, Quebec, was selected as the Grand Champion. The **Kénogami** has an aroma of mild herbs and a creamy, buttery, nutty flavour. Made from the milk of their own herd of cows, the Lehmann family has produced cheese on their small family-owned and operated farm in Lac-Saint-Jean since 1983.

Outline of the Cheese Industry in Canada: a World Class Industry!

From the point of view of economic activity generated, the Canadian Cheese industry is mostly concentrated in Ontario and in Quebec.

With 76.5 per cent of cheese varieties produced in Quebec, the province remains the main cheese producer in the country. The Canadian cheese industry has for a long time attained world class status, notably with its Cheddars, which have become the industry benchmark in their category. Established on the international market and winning numerous prizes, Canadian cheeses have won Canada a place among the greatest cheese producing countries in the world.

Cheddar is the heavyweight champion at retail, followed by processed cheese and Mozzarella.

In the fine cheese category, Feta sells the most, followed by Brie/Camembert, Havarti, Swiss and Gouda.