

## Raise Your Glass (of Milk) and Celebrate Dairy Month

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***Sen. Smith writes about how Wisconsinites can celebrate Dairy Month in June. Dairy breakfasts are just one way to show your appreciation for our farmers and members of Wisconsin's agricultural industry.***

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MADISON - There has always been an attachment to agriculture for Wisconsinites. From the earliest days, the hilly landscape and fertile soils of the Driftless region provided perfect conditions for producing food. It helps, too, that Wisconsin has so much fresh water nearby.

Thanks to this ideal landscape and generations of hard work, Wisconsin built a reputation over time as a top agricultural producer and a state that will never deny a love for food.

While our state is a national leader in cranberry and potato production, dairy is still king in Wisconsin. Despite the loss of many farms in our state, we've still held on to the title of America's Dairyland – and for good reason. We have 1.28 million cows and almost 7,000 dairy farms in Wisconsin, which is more than any other state. Dairy alone accounts for \$45.6 billion to our economy in Wisconsin. If these numbers didn't convince you, the fact that Packer fans wear a foam cheese hat to games is evidence enough that we take our title of America's

Dairyland very seriously.

Wisconsinites will never shy away from the chance to eat a squeaky cheese curd, order a scoop of fresh ice cream or go head-to-head in a milk chug challenge. And that's why we proudly celebrate June as Dairy Month. It all starts with fresh milk from healthy cows, but there are so many hardworking professionals that go to work every day so you can enjoy the best dairy products in the country. From our dedicated farmers and milk haulers to the technicians and cheesemakers of Wisconsin – we celebrate them and their work during Dairy Month!

Year after year, Wisconsin cheesemakers prove their products are incomparable. From Colby to cheddar; from Gouda to asiago; from string cheese to cheese curds, we're spoiled here with the best tasting cheeses in the world. With over 1,200 licensed cheesemakers producing over 600 types of cheeses, we have almost twice as many cheese choices than any other state. Our cheesemakers produce 26% of the cheese consumed in America, which amounted to 3.39 billion pounds in 2020.

Our cheesemakers export their products around the world with the leading importers of our dairy products being Canada, China and Japan. Okay, maybe the deep-fried cheese curds aren't the healthiest food, but you can't beat that very special treat to share with friends.

Don't just take it from me; athletes can also vouch for Wisconsin dairy. Fun fact: chocolate milk is a proven best source for sport recovery. In fact, studies conducted in high school sports camps found that athletes drinking chocolate milk saw greater improvement in their performance over those who drank a sugary sports drink. It appears chocolate milk is not just for fun and flavor.



For almost 50 years, Wisconsin has celebrated June Dairy Month with dairy breakfasts in nearly every county. Each year a different farm will host a dairy breakfast in their county, making it even more fun and interesting. Anyone can attend and they do by the thousands. You'll find hundreds of people in line for delicious pancakes, waffles, milk, cheese curds and ice cream served by the host family and volunteers from the area.

Dairy breakfasts are more than just about the food, though. It's about learning where our milk comes from. As visitors tromp around the grounds, they're able to take hay rides, examine the latest equipment and even watch demonstrations. Of course, the animals are often the main attraction for young kids.

Dairy breakfasts have proven to be extremely successful over the years. Host families put in a lot of work to make it a memorable experience for every visitor. Show your appreciation for our farmers and members of Wisconsin's agricultural industry by visiting a dairy breakfast this June. Find your nearest dairy breakfast at [WisconsinDairy.org](http://WisconsinDairy.org) and bring the family out this month to enjoy some live music, farm activities and the best breakfast you could ask for.

*Statistics in this column come from the [Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection](#)*

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