



The Great Canadian Cheese Festival
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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Great Canadian Cheese Festival Returns in Support of Canadian Dairy

KINGSTON, Ont.—[The Great Canadian Cheese Festival](#) returns after eight years to support the Canadian dairy industry at Fort Henry on May 24–25, 2025, as the country's largest celebration of cheese.

"When you buy Canadian cheese, you invest in our communities," said Patricia McDermott, owner of Agrarian Market in Prince Edward County and executive director of the festival. "This support means everything. I know what it's like to be on the receiving end of community support as a small business owner in Canada. Buying Canadian cheese encourages innovation, supports farm families and keeps our dairy sector strong. That's what the Great Canadian Cheese Festival is all about."

The Great Canadian Cheese Festival is a national event hosting more than 100 Canadian dairy producers and artisans from coast to coast, open to all ages. All cheeses are Canadian-made from locally sourced Canadian milk. There will be tutored cheese tastings with beverage pairings, children's cheese-making activities, professional development seminars, wine, beer, live entertainment and the opportunity to tour Fort Henry.

"You are supporting something from here, rather than far away," said Shep Ysselstein, cheesemaker, co-owner and operator of Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese in Woodstock Ontario who will be a vendor at the festival. "Right now, people need to be supporting Canadians because we might end up going through more difficult times in the future, and everyone's individual choices to choose Canadian can really boost the market as a whole."

According to [Dairy Farmers of Canada](#), the Canadian dairy industry contributed \$19.9 billion to the GDP and supported around 221,000 full-time positions as of 2015. However, recent trade

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agreements have opened Canadian cheese and dairy markets to international competition.

“It's never been more important to support Canadian products, specifically Canadian cheese in our case, considering all the things that have been happening and the political environment,” said Ysselstein. “There is a large amount of uncertainty right now, and when there is this much uncertainty, it's hard to know exactly what to expect. It makes life a little more difficult.”

According to the Dairy Processors Association of Canada, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership will result in annual [losses of \\$100 million](#); the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement will result in market share [losses of \\$670 million](#); and the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement will result in annual [losses of \\$140 million](#) for the Canadian dairy industry alone. This is a combined annual [loss of \\$300 million](#) and is projected to reach a loss of [\\$2 billion](#) for the Canadian dairy industry.

"Canadian dairy farmers are facing more challenges now than ever," said McDermott. "It brings issues to the surface. It makes you care about the future of our children and how our actions today will shape their tomorrow. The Great Canadian Cheese Festival is more than delicious cheese; it's a conversation about consumer choice shaping the strength of the Canadian dairy industry."

McDermott assumed ownership of the Great Canadian Cheese Festival in 2024 and is expecting thousands of attendees for the festival's return since its last showcase in Prince Edward County eight years ago in 2017. McDermott also hosted the 2024 Ontario Cheese Fest in Prince Edward County.

The Great Canadian Cheese Festival highlights Canadian dairy producers' dedication to innovation, high-quality Canadian products and the best ways to enjoy Canadian cheese. It also aims to answer pressing customer questions like, how can we support Canada? Where do we find Canadian-made products? And what impact do our choices have as consumers?

“We make great cheeses here in Canada,” said Ysselstein. “There might be a perception that great cheeses come from Europe, but I think that can be quickly shown to not necessarily be true when people try the stuff we make here.”

The Great Canadian Cheese Festival is Canada's largest cheese event with the aim to support Canada's cheesemakers and dairy farmers across the country. For more information, please visit: <https://cheesefest.ca/>

-30-

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(The Great Canadian Cheese Festival on June 3, 2017, Prince Edward County)



(Patricia McDermott, executive director of the Great Canadian Cheese Fest at the Ontario Cheese Festival on Sept. 28, 2024, Prince Edward County)



(Shep Ysselstein and Colleen Bator, co-owners of Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese, with their family in Woodstock, Ont., on Feb. 14, 2023.)



(Tutored cheese tastings at the Ontario Cheese Festival in Sept. 28, 2024, Prince Edward County. The same tutored tastings will also take place at the upcoming Great Canadian Cheese Festival)