

CALIFORNIA CHEESE

2025 COMPETITION GUIDE

It's your moment to shine!
Enter today.

For more than 170 years the California State Fair has been a constant showcase of the talents and achievements of the people of California. Entering into the California State Fair's 2025 Competitive Exhibits Program allows you the opportunity to showcase your abilities, and revel in your accomplishments!

The California State Fair's friendly competitions are designed to acknowledge the best of the Golden State. Our Competitive Programs inspire talented Californians, as well as highlight the latest advances in technology, agriculture, and industry.

More than 750,000 visitors are expected at the State Fair this summer. Your work is an integral part of the State's celebration, and we look forward to seeing your talents on display during the annual State Fair from July 11-27, 2025

We encourage you to enter today and begin making lasting memories for yourself, and for the hundreds of thousands of State Fair patrons!

Sincerely,



Tom Martinez

Chief Executive Officer

GOVERNOR

Gavin Newsom

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January 8, 2025

On behalf of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, a warm welcome to you as we all prepare for the exciting 2025 fair season! We are thrilled you are joining us this year and sincerely thank you for your continued involvement in showcasing your products, livestock, and expertise. Your contributions help make our fairs successful and provide an invaluable experience for our communities.

Fairs play an essential role in connecting food and agriculture with the public. They are not only a time for us to celebrate the fruits of our labor, but also serve as a critical platform for educating future generations about the importance of farming and food production, livestock management, and sustainable practices. Through your participation, you directly contribute to the appreciation of the vital role agriculture plays in our lives and foster an understanding of the tremendous diversity, innovation and new technology that create new opportunities in agriculture and our rural communities.

The fairgrounds are not just a venue for the annual events. Throughout the year, they serve as a hub for various interim activities that support local economies, offer educational programming, and foster community engagement. From hosting agricultural workshops and livestock sales to providing facilities for regional competitions and cultural festivals, the fairgrounds contribute to the vibrancy and resilience of our agricultural community. Additionally, they play an important role in emergency preparedness, providing a space for disaster response and recovery efforts during critical situations, such as flooding or extreme weather events.

We understand the dedication and hard work that goes into preparing for the fair, and we want to express our deep gratitude for your commitment to making each fair season a success. Your participation ensures the continued relevance of our fairs and strengthens the agricultural ties that bind us all together as a community.

We look forward to this fair season and its great success!

Yours truly,

Karen Ross
Secretary





Showcase your award winning Cheese in the Guide to the Best of California Magazine!

The Guide to the Best of California Magazine showcases the Double Gold and Gold winning cheese, wine, craft beer and olive oil from the 2025 California State Fair competitions.

Showcase your award winning cheese to enthusiasts eager to learn about the Best of California in one publication.

The guide is marketed as a resource all year long and is available on the official California State Fair website, shared on Facebook and X to over 220,000 followers, emailed to 60,000+ people, and 10,000 print magazines are distributed at high profile locations, and Farm-to-Fork events:

- ✿ Governor's Office and State Capitol
- ✿ California State Fair Wine Garden & Wine Experience Classes
- ✿ California State Fair Hot Spots
- ✿ Industry & Community Events

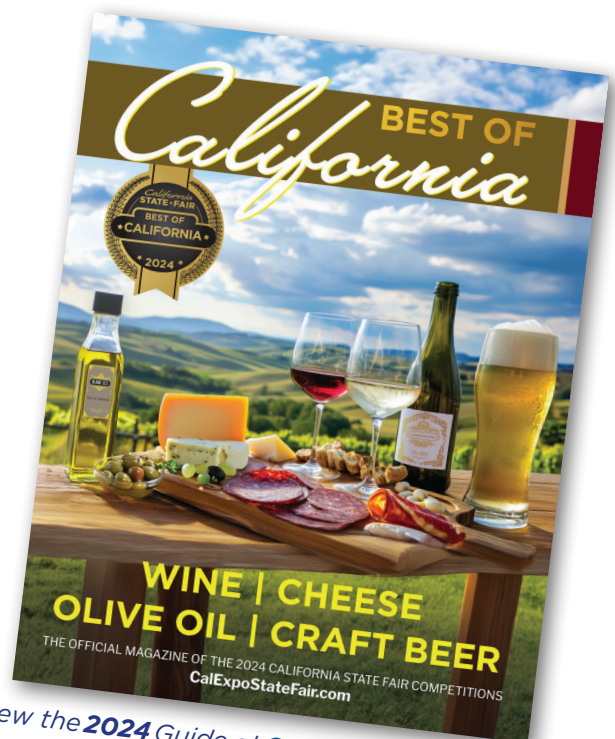
Ad spaces are available in the Guide to the Best of California Magazine starting at \$2,250.

Contact Event Partnership:

Holly Palandoken

holly@eventpartnership.net

805.888.9165



View the **2024** Guide at CalExpoStateFair.com

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Please visit the following link for rules online:	
https://calexpostatefair.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/25-General-Rules.pdf	

IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO KNOW

Contact: **Tyler Albert**

Cheese Competition Coordinator

Phone: (916) 407-6572

Email: cheese@calexpo.com

Entry Dates:

February 1	Entries Open
February 28	Entries Close
March 10 - 14	Ship or Hand Deliver according to Times & Location (p.7)
March 19	Judging Day
March 31	Results Available Online

The California State Fair July 11-27, 2025

The California State Fair has always been the awe-inspiring showcase of the state’s finest, and ever since the first fair in 1854, California has upheld this tradition. People come from all over to witness the competition and innovation that our exhibitors produce. We continue to add new and exciting competitions to our competitive programs to showcase California’s very best!

Why enter the Competition?

This competition celebrates the hard work, craftsmanship and talent of California Cheese makers. Cheese judges are selected from respected cheese makers, cheese merchants, writers, promoters, and educators. The California State Fair will be highlighting and celebrating the winners in press releases as well as showcasing them in all of our social media platforms.



COMPETITION OVERVIEW



Entry in the California State Fair Cheese Competition is open to California Cheese companies only.

The California State Fair will award Best of California and Best of Show for cow milk and other milk types to include goat, sheep, buffalo, etc. This competition guide is posted in advance and will be subject to any action that may cause revision or curtailment of the sections or regulations as listed.

How to Enter

Go to CalExpoStateFair.com/competitions, scroll down and click on the California Commercial Cheese icon on the competitions page and follow the instructions. Use a Visa or Mastercard to pay entry fees.

RULES & REQUIREMENTS

1. Entry information and fees must be submitted online no later than February 28, 2025.
2. Entry fee: \$40 per entry.
3. Entry Size: For each entry, submit two samples, no smaller than 16 ounces or 1 pound each. **If cheese is produced in sizes smaller than 1 pound, submit a minimum of 2 pounds total.**
4. Entry is open to **California Cheese companies** only.

5. Enter online at CalExpoStateFair.com/competitions.
6. Entries are limited to original licensed manufacturers. Those wishing to enter products produced by another plant must submit a letter stating which products are involved. There will be no duplication of samples entered under different brand names.
7. Each entry can only be entered into one class. **DO NOT ENTER** the same cheese into multiple divisions/classes.
8. All samples must meet the standards of the California State Food and Agriculture code and are subject to testing at the discretion of the Fair Management and/or Judges.
9. Award-winning producers will be invited to participate in the Cheese Shoppe sampling and sales center in California's Kitchen exhibit at the California State Fair.
10. Copies of official scores, awards and ribbons will be sent to exhibitors. Results are not given by telephone.

DELIVERY & SHIPPING

Deliveries must be received between Monday, March 10, 2025 and Friday, March 14, 2025, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Shipping & Hand Delivery

**California State Fair
Attn: Cheese Competition
Administration Building
1600 Exposition Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95815**



JUDGING

1. Blind Judging: Judges will taste cheese with all branded packaging removed or concealed.
2. Double Gold, Gold, Silver, & Bronze Awards are given based on individual merit. The California Commercial Cheese Score Card is as follows:
 - Aroma: 10%
 - Texture/Body: 20%
 - Appearance – Color/Rind/Paste: 20%
 - Flavor (includes Finish): 50%
3. Best of Show Awards are given by a blind comparison tasting among eligible Gold and Double Gold Award entries.
4. Best of California Awards are given by a blind comparison tasting among eligible Best of California entries.
5. The decision of the Judges is final. No changes will be made after judging is complete.
6. The California State Fair reserves the right to create or combine divisions or classes if warranted by the number of entries.
7. Judges reserve the right to transfer entries to another division or class, if deemed appropriate.

AWARDS

Medal Qualifications

Double Gold: 98% or over

Gold Medal: 95% - 97%

Silver Medal: 90% - 94%

Bronze Medal: 84% - 89%

Best of Show

Two winners will be selected from the fourteen Best of California Winners, one for cow milk and one for other milk type.

Best of California

One Best of California Award for cow milk and other milk type will be given in each Division, selected from only Best of Division winners, for a total of fourteen awards

California Cheese Score Card

Aroma: 10%

Texture/Body: 20%

Appearance - Color/Rind/Paste: 20%

Flavor (includes Finish): 50%

Following the competition, you will receive an award letter via email with judges notes and an Award Order Form attached. This Order form must be submitted to receive your awards.

Requests must include the recipient's full name and mailing address and should be sent to cheese@calexpo.com.

At this time, you will also be able to purchase additional rosettes, award stickers and/or receive a digital version of the Best of Show, Best of Class, Double Gold, Gold, Silver or Bronze awards you earned.

Results will be available on CalExpoStateFair.com/competitions by March 31, 2025.

Additional Benefits For Award Winners

The California State Fair is proud to promote award-winning California Cheese in the following ways:

The Best of California Magazine

The official magazine of the California State Fair's commercial competitions features award-winning wine, cheese, extra virgin olive oil and beer with full page articles and photos. It's a great buyer's guide to California's very best. Visit our website to view past editions.

Competition Results Press Release

This annual press release is full of competition information and highlights the Best of Show winners. Add your own list of awards, business info and a personalized statement, and forward to all of your favorite local news outlets to spread your good news!

Best of Show Award Ceremony & Press Event

Best of Show winners from the California State Fair's esteemed commercial competitions for wine, cheese, olive oil, beer and cannabis are presented with their engraved Golden Bear statuette awards at this annual event. Watch for special events throughout the day!

Sales & Sampling at the California State Fair

Sample and sell your cheese. A tasting booth includes merchandising space, large counters, and food prep and storage facilities. Reserve the space by the day. Priority registration is offered to 2025 competition winners, starting with Best of Show winners. Fees apply

Tasting Classes at the California State Fair

Your consumers have spoken! They desire additional knowledge of how to taste, purchase and enjoy California cheese. Sign up to lead one or more 20-minute tasting classes in the beautiful Taste of California Classroom. Facilities, sampling supplies, a classroom aide, and seating for 24 students are provided.

DIVISIONS & CLASSES

No restriction on the number of entries for Classes. However, entries shall not be duplicated varieties.

Division 1300: Cottage Cheese

- Class 1 Small Curd Cottage Cheese
- Class 2 Large Curd Cottage Cheese
- Class 3 Nonfat Cottage Cheese
- Class 4 Flavored Cottage Cheese (*fruit, herb, vegetable*)

Division 1305: Cultured Cheese

- Class 1 Crème Fraîche
- Class 2 Fromage Blanc
- Class 3 Quark
- Class 4 Kefir
- Class 5 Mascarpone
- Class 6 Fresh Cultured Cheese with Flavor Added
- Class 7 Other - Not described above

Division 1310: Soft Cheese

- Class 1 Cream Cheese
- Class 2 Pasta Filata - fresh mozzarella
- Class 3 Feta - all milk
- Class 4 Feta - all milk, flavor added
- Class 5 Ricotta
- Class 6 Teleme (cryovac or flour)
- Class 7 Soft Fresh Cheese - open category, goat
- Class 8 Soft Fresh Cheese - open category, sheep, water buffalo or mixed
- Class 9 Soft Fresh Cheese - open category, cow
- Class 10 Soft Fresh Cheese Flavored
- Class 11 Middle Eastern, Eastern European, Indian
- Class 12 Other - Not described above

Division 1315: Semi-Soft Cheese

- Class 1 Blue Veined Cheese
- Class 2 Open Category Goat
- Class 3 Open Category Sheep, Water Buffalo or mixed

- Class 4 Open Category Cow
- Class 5 White Surface Mold - Brie
- Class 6 White Surface Mold - Camembert
- Class 7 White Surface Mold - Flavor added
- Class 8 White Surface Mold - Open
- Class 9 Washed Rind - Schloss type
- Class 10 Washed Rind - Raclette type (*aged over 45 days*)
- Class 11 Washed Rind (*aged over 60 days*)
- Class 12 Hispanic Style (*state type*)
- Class 13 Pasta Filata (*Mozzarella, Provolone, String*)
- Class 14 Middle Eastern, Eastern European, Indian
- Class 15 Other - Not described above

Division 1320: Semi-Hard Cheese

- Class 1 Monterey Jack
- Class 2 Goat, Sheep, Water Buffalo, or Mixed Milk
- Class 3 Hispanic (*state type*)
- Class 4 Cheddar (*aged over 30 days*)
- Class 5 Medium Cheddar (*aged 3-6 months*)
- Class 6 Aged Cheddar (*aged over 6 months*)
- Class 7 Flavored Cheddar
- Class 8 Colby
- Class 9 Swiss
- Class 10 Italian Style
- Class 11 Open Category - Goat, Sheep, Water Buffalo, Cow or Mixed Milk
- Class 12 Other - Not described above

Division 1325: Hard Cheese

- Class 1 Hispanic, Portuguese Style
- Class 2 Aged Jack
- Class 3 Flavor Added
- Class 4 Grating or Grana Style
- Class 5 Other - Not described above

2025 GENERAL RULES

CLICK LINK OR SCAN QR CODE TO VIEW GENERAL RULES ONLINE:

<https://calexpostatefair.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/25-General-Rules.pdf>

