

Southern Sonoma Country Life

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Immerse Yourself in The World of Farmstead Cheese On a Farm Tour or Two at Upcoming California Artisan Cheese Festival

Farm tours bringing attendees face-to-face with the farmers and cheesemakers who work together to create some of America's best artisan cheeses tend to sell out early every year. This year, in honor of the event's 10-year milestone, there will be two full days of farm tours, on both Friday and Saturday, March 18th and 19th, 2016 including destinations outside of the Bay Area, as well as educational components included in every tour.



FRIDAY FARM TOURS

Tour A – Kids, Calves, & More

Attendees of Tour A will start their day at **White Whale Farm** with Anna Hancock, a former lawyer whose love of cheese and four-legged creatures led her to choose farm life over legal briefs. Anna and her team seasonally transform goat milk into award-winning **Pug's Leap** farmstead cheeses, including three recent winners at the 2015 American Cheese Society conference. The next stop is **McClelland's Dairy**, an organic family-run farm with a history as rich as their delicious butter. Nestled in the rolling hills of Two Rock Valley, guests will learn about the farm's history and evolution, the ins and outs of pasture management and what it takes to raise grass-fed dairy cows in Sonoma County. A trip to the nursery will bring guests up close with big-eyed baby calves and the opportunity to milk a cow by hand. Then it's off to the historic Denman Creamery and **PW Scoggins Winery** for lunch and a wine tasting. Following lunch, James Beard-award winning author **Janet Fletcher** will lead a cheese-tasting seminar about mixed milk cheeses, which have long been a mainstay in Europe, and are becoming more and more popular stateside. The final stop will be at the award winning **Rustic Bakery** where guests may stock up on their famous flatbread, lavosh and cheese coins.



Tour B – Sonoma's Specialties

What happens when a classic cow dairy adopts pet goats? Attendees of Tour B will find out from Don and Bonnie DeBernardi at their dairy and creamery. Home to dairy cows since 1968, **DeBernardi Dairy** adopted goats in the 90's, and are now making award-winning aged tomme-style goat cheese. Spring is "kidding" season, so guests will get to meet the newest floppy-eared additions to the farm as well as taste Don's **Two Rock Goat Cheese**, a tribute to his Swiss ancestry. Next, the tour will head to **McClelland's Dairy**, an organic family-run farm with a history as rich as their butter. Nestled in the rolling hills of Two Rock Valley, guests will learn about the farm's history and evolution, visit the nursery to see big-eyed baby calves and get the opportunity to milk a cow by hand. Next, the tour will visit historic Denman Creamery and **PW Scoggins Winery** for lunch and a wine tasting. Following lunch, James Beard-award winning author **Janet Fletcher** will lead a cheese-tasting seminar about mixed milk cheeses, which have long been a mainstay in Europe, and are becoming more and more popular

stateside. The tour will wrap up with a final stop at **Petaluma Hills Brewing Company**, where guests will pair fresh brews with local cheese from **Achadinha Cheese Co.**



Tour C – Legends and Legacies

Guests of Tour C will start their day with a taste of tradition. **Marin French Cheese Company** celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2015, making it the longest continuously operating cheese company in America. Guests will take a historical walking tour of this creamery, admiring the vistas of Hicks Valley Ranch, and taste their signature cheeses. Then the tour will head to **AppleGarden Farm** in Tomales, where owner Jan Lee has transformed grazing land into an orchard, and reminds us that farmstead isn't a term reserved exclusively for cheese. Guests will tour the farm, learn about cider apple selection and dry farming, and taste the fruits of Lee's labor. Guests will then continue on to the historic Dairymen's Bank in Valley Ford where they will be treated to a seminar featuring three of California's most heralded and important cheese legends: **Mary Keehn** of **Cypress Grove Chevre**, **Jennifer Bice** of **Redwood Hill Farms**, and **Phillip Franco** of **Sierra Cheese Co.** Led by James Beard award-winning author **Laura Werlin**, this esteemed panel will take guests through the trials, tribulations, and victories that comprise their own cheese stories and with that, the story of California Cheese itself. And of course, attendees will taste each of these flagship cheeses along the way, before heading next door for a special lunch at **Rocker Oysterfeller's**. The final stop is **DeBernardi Dairy** where guests will meet Don and Bonnie DeBernardi, visit their baby goats and taste their Two Rock Valley goat cheese.

Tour D – Sonoma's Fertile Grounds

This tour begins with a buzz! JB Rumburg of **Velo Fromage**, Kathryn Allen of **Hearth Coffee Roasters**, and Sandra Loofbourow of **Andytown Coffee Roasters**, will kick off the morning with an educational seminar at the Sheraton, called "Third Wave Coffee and The Renaissance of the American Artisan Cheese Movement." Attendees will explore the pairing principles behind different flavor profiles featured in local cheeses alongside a range of coffee varieties prepared in various methods. Fully caffeinated, guests will board the bus and head over to **Bohemian Creamery** to meet Lisa Gottreich, one of the region's

most creative artisan cheesemakers. Here guests will meet a herd of Alpine dairy goats whose milk becomes farmstead cheese, whey soda, and even goat's milk frozen yogurt. The tour will then head to **Devoto Orchards** where second-generation apple farmer Jolie Devoto-Wade and her husband work with organic heirloom apples, including the local Gravenstein, and make three styles of cider each harvest. Guests will tour the picturesque farm, taste the estate cider, and enjoy lunch on the grounds. This tour will wrap with a stop at **Freestone Artisan Cheese**, where guests will meet owner Omar Mueller. His cozy shop boasts a well-curated selection of California's incredible agricultural bounty including local artisan cheeses, olive oils grown and pressed locally, and hot roasted nuts. Omar will surprise the group with a guest cheesemaker appearance and tasting, and if time allows, attendees may walk over to **Wild Flower Bread Bakery** to snag a coveted sourdough loaf from their wood fired brick oven.

Tour E – Preserving Tradition

Guests of Tour E will start their day with a taste of tradition. **Marin French Cheese Company** celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2015, making it the longest continuously operating cheese company in America. Guests will take a historical walking tour of this creamery, admiring the vistas of Hicks Valley Ranch, and taste their signature cheeses. Then they will continue on to **Barinaga Ranch**, a sheep dairy in Marshall, at the height of lambing season. Owner Marcia Barinaga, a scientist turned cheesemaker, is devoted to her animals and committed to raising them in a sustainable manner, while shepherding and cheesemaking in the tradition of her Basque ancestors. After meeting her flock and tasting her award-winning cheeses, guests will take a drive down Highway 1 to **Straus Home Ranch** for lunch and an educational seminar. The **Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT)**, a pioneering organization founded by Ellen Straus and Phyllis Farber to protect working farmland in Marin County, protects this beautiful property and two others on the tour. Guests will learn about MALT's influence on the local dairy landscape and a local cheesemaker and cheesemonger team will guide them through a tasting of cheeses made from "MALTed milk." The tour will finish with a trip to **Nicasio Valley Cheese Company**, an award-winning organic farmstead creamery and a MALT-protected ranch run by the Lafranchi family for three generations.



Tour F – The Land of Milk & Honey

This tour will start in Pt. Reyes Station, where guests will visit the original **Cowgirl Creamery**. In 1997, in a renovated hay barn, Sue Conley and Peggy Smith started making fresh cheeses with surplus organic milk from a West Marin Dairy, and nearly two decades later, the Cowgirls are still making delicious cheese and supporting multiple local dairies. After tasting their cheeses, guests will toast this historic dairy town at **Heidrun Meadery** where they'll taste different varieties of sparkling mead which is made from honey. After learning about their bees, beekeeping, and the traditional Methode Champenoise that transforms this nectar into a delicate bottle of bubbly, guests will drive up the coast for lunch and an educational seminar at **Straus Home Ranch**. The Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT), a pioneering organization founded by Ellen Straus and Phyllis Farber to protect working farmland in Marin County, protects this beautiful property. Guests will learn more about MALT's influence on the local dairy landscape and a local cheesemaker and cheesemonger team will guide you through a tasting of cheeses made from "MALTed milk." To finish, the tour will head to **Neil McIsaac & Son Dairy**, a diversified organic dairy that's been a MALT-protected ranch since 1991. The McIsaac family sells their high-quality cows milk to Clover Stornetta and guests will get to taste their latest line of yogurt and learn about the changes they've brought to the farm to ready it for the next generation.

Capitol Area Tour North

PLEASE NOTE: This tour starts and ends at Nugget Market in Woodland which is about 75 miles away from the Sheraton – Sonoma County, Petaluma.

Guests of this tour will start at **Nugget Market** in Woodland before heading north to explore the "cheesescape" of the North Sacramento Valley. First stop is **Pedrozo Dairy and Cheese Company**, where guests will meet Tim Pedrozo, a third generation dairy farmer and self-proclaimed "accidental cheesemaker." Since 1996, the Pedrozos have been milking a small blended herd of Holstein, Jersey, and Milking Shorthorn cows on their 20-acre farm in Orland, and two years later began transforming that milk into a diverse range of farmstead cheese. Next, the tour will head to **Orland Farmstead Creamery**. Owner Paul Schmidt's passion for farm life started early - he raised and showed cows through 4-H while still in elementary school. Over thirty years after founding his own dairy, he fulfilled his lifelong dream of making farmstead cheese. Orland Farmstead Creamery focuses on fresh cheeses that highlight the quality of milk from their grass-fed cows. A delicious cheese-centric lunch will be held at the **Glen County Country Club** before continuing on to **Sierra Nevada Cheese Company**. Founded in 1997, Sierra Nevada Cheese Company continues to innovate and create new dairy products, made with their meticulously sourced local cow, goat, and sheep milk.

Capitol Area Tour South

PLEASE NOTE: This tour starts and ends at the Sacramento Natural Food Coop in Sacramento which is about 81 miles away from the Sheraton – Sonoma County, Petaluma.

This tour will begin at **Sacramento Natural Food Coop** before heading south into the San Joaquin Valley where guests will visit **Fiscalini Farms**, home to Fiscalini Cheese Company in Modesto. Attendees will taste what happens when fourth generation farm know-how is combined with a very talented cheesemaker and farmstead raw cows' milk. Here's a hint...it's arguably the best cheddar in the West! Next, the tour will visit some smaller hooved friends at **Nicolau Farms**, where goats rule the roost. Walter Nicolau III has a herd of Alpine, Saanen, and La Mancha goats whose "white gold" becomes fresh and aged farmstead

cheeses. After touring the farm, guests will taste cheese and enjoy a cheese-inspired lunch as well as a tasting with **Nutcher Milk Company**. Dairy farmers aren't the only multi-generational farmers in this area – the Phillips family at **Michael David Winery** has been cultivating grapes in the valley for nearly a century on 750 acres of vineyard. Guests of this tour will get to taste their estate wines and also meet Andrea Mongini, veterinarian and owner of **Ewetopia Dairy**, who will sample a selection of her sheep milk cheeses.



SATURDAY FARM TOURS

Tour G – All In The Family

Guests will start this tour with a taste of tradition at **Nicasio Valley Cheese Company**. Since 1919, the Lafranchi family has been dairying on over 1,000 acres in Marin County. At their historic ranch, guests will learn about the family's rich history as local dairy farmers and their path to becoming the only organic farmstead cheesemakers in California. After touring the creamery and tasting the award-winning farmstead cheeses, guests will head out to the coast where they will meet the Giacomini family of **Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company**. This picturesque dairy farm is nestled among rolling hills overlooking Tomales Bay and here guests will learn about how cheesemaking lured the four Giacomini sisters back to the farm. A multi-course lunch at **The Fork** will be prepared by guest chefs **Evan and Sarah Rich** of **Rich Table** in San Francisco, featuring cheeses from Pt. Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co. This tour will finish

on a sweet note at **Sonoma Portworks** with a tasting of unique California fortified wines paired with **Cypress Grove Chevre** at their tasting room in downtown Petaluma.

Tour H – Taste of Place

This tour will kick off with a visit and tasting at the original **Cowgirl Creamery** in Point Reyes Station where Peggy Smith and Sue Conley started their own artisan cheese revolution years ago to help a local dairy farmer with a surplus of organic milk. Then guests will take a short drive up the coast to meet the Giacomini family of **Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company**. Attendees will tour the picturesque dairy farm nestled among rolling hills overlooking Tomales Bay and learn about how cheesemaking lured the four Giacomini sisters back to the farm. A multi-course lunch at **The Fork** will follow, prepared by guest chefs **Evan and Sarah Rich** of **Rich Table** in San Francisco, featuring cheeses from Pt. Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co. The tour will end at **Sonoma Aperitif**, founded in 2015 by Laura Hagar Rush. Guests will learn about her California take on a centuries-old “Vin Maison” European tradition inspired by the bounty of local produce like Chinese quince, Bosc pears and grapefruit.

All farm tours, except the two tours of the Capitol Area, will pick up guests at the Festival’s host hotel, the Sheraton Sonoma County–Petaluma (745 Baywood Drive, Petaluma, CA 94954). Tour departure times are 8:30 a.m. and the tours will be rain or shine. Farm tour attendees are encouraged to wear boots or shoes that can get dirty and bring an ice chest since many farms will have cheese for purchase. The ticket price for the farm tours include lunch, transportation and educational components. Each tour will return guests to the departure site by 3:30 p.m. Tickets are \$135 per person and may be purchased at www.artisancheesefestival.com.


Tickets to the Festival’s other events are also now available, including Friday’s Cheesemongers’ Duel, Saturday’s “California Cheesin’ – We Do It Our Whey!” 10 Year Celebration, and Sunday’s Bubbles Brunch with Celebrity Chef John Ash and The Artisan Cheese Tasting & Marketplace. Tickets for all events may be purchased at www.artisancheesefestival.com.

Those interested can also follow updates by “liking” the Artisan Cheese Festival on [Facebook](#) and following the event on [Twitter](#). All events are priced separately and the [Sheraton Sonoma County – Petaluma](#) is offering special discounted rates on rooms for festival-goers.

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