



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

For Release: May 29, 2019
Contact: Rep. Don Vruwink, 608-266-3790

Wisconsin Proud: Embracing Our Dairy Heritage

By State Representative Don Vruwink

June is National Dairy Month and every year I look forward to going to dairy breakfasts hosted by families in each of the four counties I represent: Rock, Walworth, Jefferson and Dane.

These dairy breakfasts brings back memories of my youth on a dairy farm, when I licked the cream that rose to the top of the milk can, made home-made ice cream with milk from our farm, and ate cheddar cheese with almost every meal.

Launched in 1937 as National Milk Month, it is now recognized as National Dairy Month to include the full array of dairy products.

Today, our state's dairy industry rings up \$82,500 every minute. Wisconsin ranks second in milk production, only behind California. Dairy supports one out of every 10 jobs and is a \$43.3 billion industry here.

There was a time when the term "Cheesehead" was said derogatorily by out-of-staters with an air of superiority. However, rather than being offended, Wisconsinites embraced the name and started wearing foam cheese hats to Packer games and other festivities.

We don't shy away from our title of America's Dairyland; we wear the title proudly. There's a reason that school kids say "cheese" during a photo shoot: Because cheese makes you smile.

Wisconsin makes a lot of cheese and continues to make more every year. In 2018, we broke our cheese production record for the 17th straight year. Wisconsin accounted for 26 percent of the nation's cheese production in 2018. If Wisconsin were a country, it would rank fourth in the world in cheese production.

We are unabashedly proud of our dairy heritage. Not too long ago, “Eat Cheese or Die” was a popular slogan for bumper stickers and T-shirts – a play on the state motto for New Hampshire, “Live Free or Die.”

Roughly 90 percent of Wisconsin’s milk is turned into cheese and about 90 percent of that cheese is sold outside of the state. Last year, Wisconsin’s 240 cheese factories once again led the nation in cheese production, with 26 percent of the supply produced here and 49 percent of specialty cheeses like Limburger, feta, mozzarella, and Hispanic varieties.

June really is a special time to celebrate our dairy heritage. I am proud to represent all of the dairy farmers and workers in the 43rd Assembly District. This June, I encourage you to attend the dairy breakfast of your choice. You can find the statewide list at hooraywisconsindairy.com.

-END-

State Rep. Don Vruwink represents parts of Rock, Walworth, Jefferson, and Dane counties. These include the communities of Whitewater, Milton, Edgerton, Footville, the Town of Janesville, part of the Village of Oregon, and surrounding townships. He can be reached at 608-266-3790, Rep.Vruwink@legis.wisconsin.gov, and P.O. Box 8953, Madison WI 53708.