



PACIFIC COAST
FARMERS' MARKET
ASSOCIATION

CALIFORNIA - A CHEESE-LOVER'S STATE!



Who doesn't love a good artisanal cheese? If you're looking for a creamy blue cheese, a sharp crumbly cheddar, or a soft tangy goat cheese, you're in the right state! California is well known for its superior dairy products and high-quality cheeses. These cheeses have consistently won awards for their quality and flavor.

California artisanal [cheeses](#) are exceptional because of the natural way dairy cows are fed on grass and hay, the handcrafting of the cheese in small batches, and the sustainable way dairies take care of their land. Small artisanal cheesemakers in California can create *terroir*, defined as "a sense of place," referring to subtle local influences in the flavor of food or wine. They do so by managing a number of practices, including choosing the right animal breed for their climate, feeding them on pasture that includes local vegetation, allowing native microbes into their cheese's starter culture, and letting as much of the land's environmental influence into the aging of the cheese as they can.

California has a long history of making cheese, going back to the Spanish missionaries in the 1780s who developed an early form of soft Jack cheese called "queso de pais," or country cheese. Then came a rush of migrants arriving in California to find their fortune during the Gold Rush of 1849, bringing with them their dairy cows to settle here. Clara Steele and her family are believed to be the first migrants to begin a dairy farm in California.

Monterey Jack cheese was invented here in the Bay Area in the 1880s. David Jacks said to be a colorful Monterey land baron and dairy owner developed the cheese around 1882. There are other alternative ideas for the origin of the name – that a "jack," or press, was used to make the cheese. But Mr. Jacks is still credited with its creation.

What better place to find some amazing local cheese than the farmers' market? Talk directly to the dairy farmers and find out more about how they raise their animals, what processes they use, and how they began creating some of the best cheeses the state has to offer! You'll find your favorite artisanal cheeses at your local farmers' market from several of California's local artisan cheesemakers and family farmers. Some of the cheesemakers that attend the markets include:

[Oakdale Cheese](#), Oakdale. This dairy goes back four generations and specializes in Dutch Gouda from their home country of Holland. The recipes have been handed down through the generations and have won many awards for their flavor and freshness. They offer, among others, smoked Gouda, Edam, Aged Gouda, cheddar, Quark, Swiss, and Curd Gouda.

[Stepladder Creamery](#), Cambria. They produce their amazing cheeses from milking to making the cheese, to packaging, and raising their goats, all on their 100-year-old farm. This allows them to manage every aspect of cheese production. They make goats' milk cheeses like a mild creamy Chèvre, a nutty golden Cabrillo, a mild easy-to-melt Lumberjack, and other delicious varieties. You can find them at the College of San Mateo Farmers' Market every Saturday.

[Achadinha Cheese Company](#), Petaluma. They began making cheeses in 1955 from grass-fed dairy cows and moved from Bodega Bay to Petaluma in 1969. There, they added raising goats for the cheese to their cow population. Owned by the Pacheco family for three generations, the farm produces award-winning blended cow/goat cheeses like Portuguese Broncha, tangy Feta, and nutty Cowpricious with a hint of caramel, along with a variety of flavored curds, Fromage Blanc, and more. Find them at several Bay Area farmers' markets including Divisadero, San Mateo, Martinez, Inner Sunset, and Brentwood.

Stop by your local farmers' market and try some amazing California artisanal cheeses. Your taste buds will thank you! Be sure to try **[our recipe for fondue](#)**, too!

TAGS