

BEHIND THE SCENES



Meet Ann & Chris Renard

Ann and Chris Renard are the owners of Renard's Cheese Store, Melt Bistro, and Rosewood Dairy. Chris leads Rosewood Dairy while Ann expertly runs the Renard's Cheese and Melt Bistro side of the business.

Chris is the great-grandson of founder Howard Renard. The art of crafting cheese was passed down within his family, from his grandfather to his father, and finally to Chris. He is a third-generation cheesemaker who has been honing his skills since a very young age.

Chris is among an elite group of industry professionals to have earned the prestigious title of Master Cheesemaker. Wisconsin is the only state in the U.S. to offer this rigorous program, and achieving this certification is no easy feat. It is a rigorous 3-year program that requires 10 years of experience before one can even apply. It is the equivalent of a Ph.D. in cheese, which ensures that our cheeses meet the gold standard of quality and craftsmanship. While Chris utilizes this expertise daily, it is especially beneficial when developing new products or enhancing family recipes that have been passed down through the generations. He is actively involved with the training and mentoring of his team at Rosewood Dairy. Chris also maintains oversight of all the cheese that is crafted and the running of the factory.

Ann Renard is the visionary of the company; she stepped in to lead the corporate management of Renard's Cheese more than 15 years ago. Ann has a strong background in business and sales that she has applied to elevate the company to where it is today. Ann developed a business plan early on and has implemented many changes that have grown the company from 15 employees to more than 80 employees. Her leadership continues to grow and develop the business and elevate the company's vision and standards.

Chris and Ann are a dynamic business couple as they collaborate on projects, from the development of new cheese flavors to building their overseas sales team. Yes – Renard's Cheese is available internationally!

New Release Farmers with Guacamole

Do you love Farmer's Cheese? Enjoy Guacamole? Renard's Cheese has married the two flavors together! This unique combination will delight your senses. A mild creamy cheese enhanced with the delicious flavor of Guacamole. Farmer's with Guacamole is the best of both worlds – Low fat and delicious!



APPEARANCE: Milky white with the infusion of guacamole.

TEXTURE: Smooth supple semi-soft

FLAVOR: Mild, smooth buttery texture with a nutty sweet avocado flavor and a hint of garlic and onion

PAIRING: Beer - Pilsner, Saison, Ale, Stout
Wine - Chardonnay, Moscato, Pinot Noir

SERVE: Melt over Nachos, in Quesadillas or in a Burrito. Makes a lovely melted cheese sandwich. Wonderful for just snacking and a great addition to your cheeseboard. It's hard to believe this cheese is reduced fat!



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Round Table Discussion

Ann and Chris Renard recently sat down to discuss their “behind the scenes” process for developing new cheese recipes. When considering new offerings, they said, it is of vital importance to maintain the exceptional standards for which they are known. Seeking inspiration for new recipes is a deliberate, ongoing business strategy. It is driven by trends, customer requests, and the Renard’s desire to continuously improve while still staying true to the company’s vision. Recipe development is a collaborative effort between Chris and Ann, the Renard’s Cheese cheesemaking team, and several industry partners.

The first step in creating a new recipe is to identify the style of cheese to base the recipe on. Some examples of this would be Cheddar, Monterey Jack, or Farmers, just to name a few. The style of cheese is selected based on the end goal for the body, flavor, and texture. The cheesemakers then work closely with specialized culture experts to determine which combination of cultures they will begin experimenting with. Another resource that Ann and Chris often consult with on new ideas is the University of Wisconsin’s Center for Dairy Research (CDR). CDR offers industry expertise to cheesemakers, providing assistance with recipe development and troubleshooting as needed. During this stage of the recipe development process it is also determined if any spices or additional ingredients will be necessary to achieve the full flavor profile. Once the final ingredients and cultures are selected, the cheesemaking team can move on to the trial batch phase.

Perfecting a recipe can require several test batches to get it right. Each batch yields from 1,200 to 1,500 pounds of cheese, which requires 12,000 to 15,000 pounds of milk to produce. There are many in-depth processes involved in the creation of new cheese varieties. While developing a new recipe, the cheesemakers carefully monitor and record its temperature, pH, fat content, salt content, and moisture levels. Once the product is satisfactory, it is pressed into wheels or blocks. The cheesemakers then dip it in wax or seal the product for curing.

The cure time is dependent on which characteristics are being sought for each particular cheese. The first samples are typically pulled around 2 to 4 weeks. At that time, the cheesemakers determine if they are happy with the product flavors, body, and texture. Sometimes the product will require more curing time. If the results are not as expected, the cheesemakers will review the make records, adjust for necessary changes, and begin a new trial batch.

Trial batches that show promise are sent to our retail store, where employees are welcome to provide input on the latest creation. Additionally, the Renard’s Cheese store team members will offer samples of the new product to the public to obtain feedback.

The public’s comments will be written down for the cheesemakers to review later. Depending on customer response, the cheesemaking team may choose to adjust their recipe and create a new trial batch. This cycle continues until the recipe is perfected.

As an example, last year Ann and Chris decided to develop a new flavor of cheese. They chose Farmer’s cheese as a base for a number of reasons: it’s low in fat, an excellent snacking cheese, and it melts to a smooth and creamy consistency, so it’s ideal for cooking use. They decided that Farmers with Guacamole would be their choice of flavor, so the recipe was created and trial batches began.



The first batch lacked flavor. The second batch had a strong flavor but a weak body, which resulted in crumbly cheese. The third batch had exceptional flavor and body, but posed a different sort of challenge: the spices reacted during the make process and turned the cheese an unappealing aqua color! Aqua is a great color for Easter eggs but not for cheese, and it certainly doesn’t denote flavors of guacamole. Ann and Chris were caught off guard by the color change, but they sent this batch to the retail team for testing based on flavor and texture. The flavor and body got great reviews, but the color did not prove popular. A fourth and final trial batch was successful in all aspects, and is available for sale today. Farmers with guacamole has a mild, smooth, buttery texture with a nutty, sweet, avocado flavor and a hint of garlic and onion.

When crafting a new recipe, the end goal is always to achieve a specific flavor profile, texture and body. In cheese competitions, judges prefer the flavor of the cheese itself to outshine any spice or seasoning that it contains. The seasoning should complement the flavor of the cheese without overpowering it. Though winning competitions is impressive, Renard’s Cheese determines the ultimate success of a cheese by the customers’ delight and repeat sales of the product.

