A fromage marriage: Demand rises for cheese wheel cakes

By Chelsey DeQuaune

MADISON, Wis. — It seems the negative strings behind the phrase “who cut the cheese?” are falling off. Instead of traditional wedding cakes, brides and grooms are cutting their cheese wheel wedding cakes and saying “I do” to an artisan cheese movement.

Ken Monteleone, owner, Fromagination, Madison, Wisconsin, says he wasn’t shocked when his cheese shop began receiving requests for cheese wheel wedding cakes.

“It happened organically,” he says. “Customers came to us asking for cheese traps for weddings, then we got calls asking for cakes of cheese.

“It’s fun. You can get creative, especially if you look at the beauty of an artisan cheese wheel,” Monteleone says. “Our cheesemakers are so creative in the shape of their cheeses that they become perfect for a cake.”

Fromagination began making cheese wheel cakes five years ago. The service wasn’t marketed, but Monteleone says the company made them as they were requested.

“The last two years it seems more people come to us wanting cakes,” he says. “We love it. It’s another way to showcase what’s going on in our state with artisan cheeses.”

Depending on the cheese, cakes can be paired with dried fruit. Fromagination also offers guidance with cake decorations.

“It’s interesting when you look at colors and textures,” Monteleone says. “You can make it very unique.”

The demand for Fromagination’s cakes isn’t only in Wisconsin. This month, Monteleone says the store shipped a Groomsman cake ($50), a small side cake, to Brooklyn.

While Monteleone says most of Fromagination’s orders are custom, he wanted to create a page on the company’s website showcasing what the shop does or could do. Click on the “shop” tab at www.fromagination.com to find “cakes of cheese.”

“The website is a starting point,” Monteleone says. “We sit down one-on-one with people and ask a series of questions. They taste cheeses, then we establish what they like. We build the cake on their preferences. Regardless of the kind of cheese they prefer, we can build a cake from there.”

Fromagination’s El Cantito Cake is the cheapest cheese wheel cake offered on its website ($65). The two bottom layers are LaVon Brie made with cow’s milk. The middle layer is LaClare Farms Martone made with cow’s and goat’s milk.

The top layer is Landmark Creamery Petit Nuage made with sheep’s milk. The entire cake serves about 52 people.

“El Cantito — the little song — is not enough for a grand fiesta, but it will serve a small gathering of well-wishers or wedding attendees,” Pro-maginatation says. “All three of the cheeses incorporated pair well with other reception items such as wine, fruit, crackers and preserves.”

The website also features a Rustic Reunion Cake ($350), Meadow Memoir Cake ($350), Summer Festival Cake ($450), La Reine du Pacage Cake ($550), Pure Bliss ($450) and The Old Country Cake ($500).

“Depending on your ancestry, this cake might help you include the spirit of your great-grandmother at your wedding,” Fromagination says of The Old Country Cake, which can serve up to 200 guests.

“It features a blend of cow and sheep milk cheeses from Wisconsin, Spain, Ireland and Minnesota.”

Cheese Wheel wedding cakes are falling off. Instead of traditional wedding cakes, brides and grooms are cutting their cheese wheel wedding cakes and saying “I do” to an artisan cheese movement.

U.S. Senate passes TPA bill; president expected to sign

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate Wednesday passed Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) by a vote of 60-38, sending the legislation to the president who is expected to sign it into law. TPA will help streamline the passage of trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) by allowing only an up or down vote by Congress with no amendments.

Last week the U.S. House passed the TPA legislation.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, who authored the bill along with Finance Committee Ranking Member Ben. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., says Washington has not acted on trade policy of this magnitude in nearly 15 years.

“With Trade Promotion Authority back in our trade arsenal, we can continue as the premier leader on global trade and open more international markets for American farmers, ranchers and businesses,” Hatch says.

Dairy and other agriculture industry organizations praised the Senate’s passage of TPA, saying it will help bring more export opportunities for their products. (See column, “Congress clears path for expanded trade opportunities,” on page 4 in this week’s issue of Cheese Market News.)

The U.S. dairy industry will continue to grow and prosper with increased trade opportunities, and TPA is critical to ensuring that U.S. dairy companies receive the best deal in future trade agreements,” says Connie Tipton, president and CEO of the International Dairy Foods Association. “We thank all the senators and representatives who supported TPA and look forward to the president signing this important legislation into law as soon as possible.”

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) say TPA, which expired in 2007, is important.

“For details, see page 5.

GMA, IDFA appeal ruling on Vermont GMO labeling law

WASHINGTON — The Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA), International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Snack Food Association and National Association of Manufacturers this week filed a brief with a federal appellate court claiming that a district court judge erred in refusing to block implementation of a Vermont law that would require the labeling of products with ingredients from genetically engineered (GE) plants.

In the appellate brief filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, the four trade associations are challenging Vermont’s Act 120 violating the First Amendment’s free speech guarantee because they say it imposes burdensome new speech requirements on food manufacturers and retailers.

The Vermont law requires food manufacturers to include a label on certain products with GE ingredients that indicates the

Winners named in 2015 Wisconsin State Fair Contest

WEST ALLIS, Wis. — Winners have been selected in the 28 classes of the 2015 Wisconsin State Fair Cheese & Butter Contest, which took place here yesterday at the Wisconsin State Fair Park.

The 2015 Grand Master Cheesemaker will be named and recognized, along with the other winning cheesemakers, during the Blue Ribbon Cheese & Butter Auction Turn to CONTEST, page 10

Turn to WHEEL, page 19

The Weekly Newspaper Of The Nation's Cheese And Dairy/Deli Business

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looks like a cake because of its bloomy white penicillium candidum rind that protects the cheese and the line of ash through the center. “We didn’t think of stacking the different sized wheels into cake form until Venissimo (a San Diego cheese shop with four locations) sent us a picture of its creation,” says Janne Rasmussen, marketing manager, Cypress Grove. “We’ve been selling them directly and through distributors and retailers ever since.” Cypress Grove’s 9-pound Ultimate Cheese Cake ($205+) starts with a 5-pound wheel of Humboldt Fog, a 3-pound Truffle Tremor in the middle and a 1-pound Humboldt Fog Mini on top. Optional add-ons include a 1-pound Truffle Tremor Mini ($27) or slices of Bermuda Triangle ($37.50) around the outside of the bottom two layers. “We’re glad to see other cheesemakers and cheese shops jumping on board and offering their own versions,” Rasmussen says. “From groom’s cakes to gluten and sugar-free options, we love seeing cheese become a bigger part of special moments.” Rasmussen also says Cypress Grove is launching a Facebook giveaway contest of its Ultimate Cheese Cake. Participants tell the company about someone they know who deserves the cake. Cypress Grove will choose one winner who will have a year to claim an Ultimate Cheese Cake for the special occasion of his/her choice. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/CypressGrove.

Carr Valley Cheese Co., Middleton, Wisconsin, lists four “Celebration Cakes” on its website (www.carrvalleycheese.com), but says the possibilities are endless. The company began offering cakes in 2010. “I see a movement away from the traditional cakes to more non-traditional choices, so this follows that trend,” says Patty Koenig, senior administrator, Carr Valley. “I see it growing for the future.” Because Carr Valley offers different types of wheels, the cost varies on the age, style and milk used. Koenig says average prices are $150-$300.

Koenig also says a typical cake would be a 10-pound bottom layer of its Gouda, a 6-pound middle layer of its Glacier Point Blue and a 3-pound top layer of a custom-made Cranberry. For more information please visit www.nasonvilledairy.com.
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Chipotle Cheddar all dipped in white wax for $175. Most cake choices take two to three weeks to prepare. The white wax covering allows the host to decorate them as they please.

“These cakes have become a favorite of cheese lovers and have been served in place of dessert for those who do not have a sweet tooth, but more commonly we see these as a beautiful and creative way to serve artisan cheese during a cocktail hour or reception,” Koenig says. “The leftovers are a great party favor to take home." Koenig says. “We see these as a beautiful and creative way to serve artisan cheese during a cocktail hour or reception.”

Bespoke custom designs are typically for larger cakes costing around $475. Wilcock says hard cheeses, such as Cheddar and Yarg, are the most popular. The biggest cheese wheel wedding cake Bespoke has made was 26-pounds of cheese. While Wilcock says she sees cheese wheel wedding cakes being ordered by mostly young couples, she says cheese knows no age.

“We've found while traditional cakes still have a place at weddings, couples are looking for something different — quirkier,” Wilcock says. “Traditional cake is often left at the end of weddings, whereas cheese seems to go down well and can double as evening food for guests." Currently, Bespoke offers artisan cracker selections on request with cakes purchases. However, Wilcock says cake accompaniments is an area the company is looking to expand into in the near future.

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