

Kaserei Champignon Dairy Takes First & Second Spot at World Cheese Awards 2013

Friday 29 November, 2013

Celebrations are the order of the day in Bavaria as a cheese made by a family dairy Kaserei Champignon has taken not just the top World Champion spot, but second place too with the same cheese. The Montagnolo Affiné, a creamy blue cheese, impressed the world's top cheese judges as they tasted more than 2,700 cheeses at this year's World Cheese Awards held at BBC Good Food Show, NEC.

The Montagnolo Affiné had been entered into two different classes in the World Cheese Awards and when judges re-judged, tasted and voted the final 15 Super Golds, the cheese came both first and second.

"We have learnt this morning that our Montagnolo Affiné has won the first prize at the WORLD CHEESE AWARDS 2013 in the UK - this is the first German cheese to have won this prize. To have been honoured as the best cheese in the world by such a prestigious and independent expert jury pleases us and makes us very proud. This award shows that our cheese makers at Kaserei Champignon, having more than 100 years' experience and tradition, not only craft our products with knowledge, but also with commitment and ambition. The whole team at Kaserei Champignon says thank you for this very special honour," said Robert Hofmeister, CEO at Kaserei Champignon.

John Farrand, MD of the Guild of Fine Food, organiser of the competition, said: "After 25 years of the World Cheese Awards this is the first time that a cheese made in Germany has won the top honour. Our judges were united in their praise for the Montagnolo Affiné with one judge describing the cheese as 'visually beautiful with a soft blue grey bloom and melt in the mouth, velvety flavour'. This is a very worthy winner from an accomplished cheesemaker. To take first and second place shows that our judges' palates tune in to faultless cheeses; in this case they picked two made by the same cheesemaker."

Unknown to the judges, Montagnolo Affiné had been entered by UK representative Elite Imports Ltd into both the blue cheese section of the awards and a new category for cheeses that have already won major international competitions. In 2012 the cheese was named Supreme Champion at the Nantwich International Cheese Show.

The cheese beat two English Stiltons that also made it into the final 15. More than 250 cheese experts gathered at the NEC to whittle 2,777 entries down to just 58 'Super Gold' cheeses in the space of a morning's judging, as well as awarding bronze, silver and gold medals to nearly 700 well-crafted cheeses. The Super Golds were then re-tasted by a panel of 16 expert judges representing 13 nations, including Australia, France, Mexico and the US before they voted to select the Supreme Champion.

David Gremmels of Rogue Creamery in the USA, one of the final judges, described the Montagnolo Affiné as "a brilliant blue". "You get a sweet, creamy flavour, a medium spiciness from the blueing, and the rind melts beautifully into the paste."

Louis Aird of Canada's Saputo Dairy Products said it was a blue for people who don't think they like blue cheeses. "We are blue cheese producers ourselves, and I would love to be able to make a blue like this. As soon as I put it in my mouth I thought, 'Wow, this is a champion'."

Third place this year went to a Le Gruyère AOP Premier Cru from Cremo Von Muhlenen, which was just one point behind Montagnolo Affiné in the final voting. Le Gruyère AOP is the only cheese to have topped the World Cheese Awards on three occasions.

Controversy surrounded this year's awards after the Guild of Fine Food was refused permission to bring in cheeses from countries including South Africa, Brazil, Mexico and Japan, apparently on public health grounds. Despite this, 2013's competition has attracted a near-record level of entries, with 79% coming from overseas.

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