

DEPARTMENT 40 – DAIRY PRODUCTS

To be shown in the Dairy Building
Superintendent: Kendra Anderson (#309-825-2196)
Premiums Offered: \$3,128.00

INFORMATION

Entries

Required fees include \$7.00 per exhibit Entry Fee and a \$3.00 per exhibitor Office Fee. Entries in all classes shall be made through the online fair entry system at the Illinois State Fair website. Payment must be made via credit card at the time of entry. No other type of entry will be accepted. Assistance with entries is available at the Competitive Events Office, Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. All entries must be submitted online on or before July 31, 2026. Fees will not be refunded. Exhibitors are highly encouraged to bring a copy of their entry receipt to check-in.

Deadlines and Check-in

Entry Deadline	Friday, July 31
Entry check-in	Tuesday, August 4, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 5, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Judging	Wednesday, August 5, 1:00 p.m.
Exhibit Pick-up	Monday, August 24, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

General Requirements & Criteria for Competition

1. General rules apply to all divisions in this department.
2. Any company may enter dairy products made from cow's milk regardless of where the dairy products are processed or the state of residence of the processor.
3. Entry tags are prepared for each class entered, and will be available at entry check-in. If mailing entries, please clearly label your products with the class number and type of product/flavor. If you have any questions, please contact the Superintendent at 309-825-2196 (cell) or Lindsay Ryan at 618-944-0806.
4. Please provide one empty container per flavor for ribbon display.
5. Entries must be received, at or below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, in original retail packaging, by Wednesday, August 5, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. If shipping samples by UPS, FedEx, etc., use the following address: Illinois State Fair, Dairy Building, 801 Brian Rainey Ave, Springfield, Illinois 62702. If shipping container is recycled, be sure to delete Hazardous Materials label and bore dry ice label.
 - a. Butter class – if your product is sold in quarters, you may send 1 package of 8. If your product is sold in 1 lb. wraps, please send 2 packages.
 - b. Cultured dairy products – send 2 intact (in original retail packaging) single-serving containers (4 to 12 ounces) or 1 bulk container (16 ounces or larger).
 - c. Fresh curds – please send 2 cartons or bags.
 - d. Small-format cheeses (i.e. 4-to-6-ounce feta, chevre, wedges of cheese) – send 2 intact products (in original retail packaging) (i.e. 2 tubs, 2 logs, 2 pyramids, 2 wedges). Send 2 medium-weight cheeses.
 - e. Large-format cheeses – send 1 package of original retail format (i.e. loaf Swiss) or 1 un-plugged 10 lb. block or wheel (i.e. Manchego, Cheddar or Swiss-style cheeses). The product will be sampled, vacuum-packaged and placed on display at the Illinois State Fair.
 - f. Ice cream – send 2 two-pint containers or 2 one-half gallon sized containers.

- g. Frozen desserts – send 2 whole cheesecakes or 2 whole ice cream pies.
 - h. Milk – send 2-quart size containers, 2 half-gallon size containers or 2-gallon size containers. Milk submitted in glass or translucent plastic jugs should be wrapped in brown paper bag to avoid an oxidized flavor from UV rays.
6. Each plant/facility may enter as many dairy products as they would like, but premiums will only be paid for two entries per class.
 7. Entries do not compete against each other for ribbons within categories. Standards of excellence apply to all entries. Winning products, along with corresponding rosettes, will be displayed at the Illinois State Fair. Assuming minimum scores are met, ribbons will be awarded for up to three products per class (though ties can be awarded if equal scores are attained). Ribbons, premium checks, and score sheets will be sent to the winners at the conclusion of the Illinois State Fair.
 - a. 1st place in class AND superior quality (>95 points), BLUE ribbon and \$20 award premium
 - b. 2nd place in class AND at least superior quality (>90 points), RED RIBBON and \$10 award premium
 - c. 3rd place in class AND at least good quality (>85 points), WHITE RIBBON and \$5 award premium
 - d. Five “Best of Show” awards will be awarded upon judges’ discretion and receive an additional \$30 award premium. The “Best of Show” dairy products will also be sold during the Governor’s Commodity Auction on Wednesday, August 19, 2026.
 - e. Ties are permitted for 1st, 2nd and/or 3rd placing in each class if scores are the same. However, a tie will not be permitted for “Best of Show”.
 8. All dairy products entered in contest will either be disposed of or donated at the conclusion of the fair unless other arrangements are made. Ribbons will be mailed to exhibitors at the conclusion of the fair.

CLASSES

Division 4001 – Dairy Products

Class No.	Class Description	
01	Butter	Sweet cream, cultured, unsalted, flavored, etc.
02	Cheese - cold pack, cheese food	Flavored or unflavored, any fat level
03	Cheese - curds	Plain or flavored
04	Cheese - flavored	Pepper cheese (natural cheese with added hot chili peppers, e.g. jalapeno, chipotle, habanero, cayenne or tabasco), Soft cheese (natural cheese with 51% or higher moisture content), Semi-soft cheese (natural flavored cheese with 40% to 50% moisture), Smoked cheese (smoke flavored natural cheeses made from cow’s milk including Cheddar, Swiss, Baby Swiss, Muenster and all Italian varieties), Hard cheese (natural flavored cheese with 39% moisture or less). Includes string, shredded and crumbled cheeses.
05	Cheese - Latin American	All Mexican, Hispanic and Latin American cheeses regardless of style.
06	Cheese - natural, unflavored	Mild and/or aged Cheddar, Gouda, Mozzarella, Colby, American cheese, Swiss-style, Muenster, and other natural cheese not listed. Includes string, shredded and crumbled cheeses.
07	Cheese - processed (pasteurized processed cheese, cheese food, cheese spread)	Flavored or unflavored, any fat level, may be loaves or slices – except spreads.
08	Cheese - reduced fat or low-fat	Natural or flavored cheeses

09	Cheese - smear ripened	All-natural smear “surface” ripened cheeses, e.g. Tilsiter, Limburger, Brick, Gruyere and other soft, semi-soft or hard smear ripened cheese, flavored or unflavored.
10	Cream - plain	Half and half, whipping cream
11	Cultured Liquid and Yogurt	Plain yogurt, flavored yogurt, drinkable yogurt, buttermilk, kefir
12	Cultured Dairy Products - cottage cheese	Reduced or full fat cottage cheese, including small or large curd cottage cheese with dressing
13	Cultured Dairy Products - all other	Other cultured dairy products such as sour cream, Mexican crema, clotted cream, etc.
14	Ice Cream - premium with inclusions	12% butterfat or over, nuts, variegates, added fruits, etc.
15	Ice Cream - premium without inclusions	12% butterfat or over, plain vanilla – New York, French, Vanilla Bean, Chocolate, etc.
16	Ice Cream - regular	Less than 12% butterfat, any flavor
17	Other frozen desserts	Frozen yogurt, SoftServe, frozen custard, variegates, novelty items, cheesecakes, etc.
18	Lactose-Free Milk - plain	Unflavored milk with lactose removed through lactase enzyme addition or other means
19	Lactose-Free Milk - flavored	Flavored milk with lactose removed through lactase enzyme addition or other means
20	Milk - chocolate	Skim, 1%, 2%, whole
21	Milk - flavored (other than chocolate)	skim, 1%, 2%, whole
22	Milk - plain	Non-fat, low-fat, reduced fat, whole
23	Sour Cream Dips - flavored	French onion, ranch, and other flavors

END OF DEPARTMENT 40 – DAIRY PRODUCTS