



WCMA Announces Industry Leaders to be Honored with 2026 Recognition Awards

Eleven dairy leaders have earned individual honors from Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) for outstanding contributions to the dairy processing industry. Register now at CheeseExpo.org to celebrate honorees at the WCMA Recognition Breakfast exclusively sponsored by dsm-firmenich at CheeseExpo on April 16, 2026.

Life Member Award

In 2026, **Doug Simon** will receive the Association's highest honor: the WCMA Life Member Award. The award recognizes people who have played a significant role in the success of the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association through leadership, support, and service to the institution and its activities. WCMA has offered the Life Member Award since 1918; Simon will be its 96th recipient, including his father, Dave Simon.

Doug Simon is the third generation of Simons in the cheese industry. He grew up in the family business, working in the cheese plant, picking up milk and delivering cheese to customers during his grade school, high school, and college years. During this time, Doug gained a passion for the industry and the people in it.

After high school, he attended Marquette University, earning a degree in accounting and becoming a Certified Public Accountant. Doug worked in public accounting for a few years, but followed his passion back to the family business, Simon's Specialty Cheese, in 1994.

Doug played a key role in the merger of Simon's with Weyauwega Milk Products in 1998 and then the acquisition of Krohn Dairy in 2000. He was tapped to lead Trega Foods, the new name for these consolidated businesses.

In 2008, Agropur purchased Trega Foods and Doug Simon was named President of the Canadian cooperative's U.S. business. During his time at Agropur, Doug was instrumental in driving growth for Agropur's U.S. cheese holdings, making Agropur one of the leading cheese manufacturers in the nation.

Doug stepped down from Agropur in 2022, but has returned to the dairy industry as President, External Manufacturing, with Cheese Merchants.

Doug renewed service on the WCMA Board of Directors in 2025. In previous Board service, he led WCMA for two years as President of the Association from 2002 to 2004, and Secretary in 2001. In all, he served five years on the Board from 2000 to 2005. Under his leadership, WCMA undertook the Growing Milk Initiative to recruit domestic dairy producers to build new dairies in Wisconsin and recruit Dutch dairy farms to resettle in Wisconsin. WCMA forged better ties with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources during Mr. Simon's Presidency and joined with fellow processor organizations to oppose changes to FMMO depooling rules.

Doug also led internal efforts to secure a major gift from Agropur for the construction of the new Center for Dairy Research building at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Luminary Award

Created in 2021, the WCMA Luminary Award recognizes the contributions of individuals who championed new concepts, innovative ideas and superior quality to grow dairy sales in the

U.S. or around the world. These are peerless leaders in sales and marketing; R&D; and quality and procurement. The 2026 Luminary Award recipients are **Greg Anderson** and **Linda Lee**.

Greg Anderson currently works as a Dairy Sourcing Leader for the Kroger Company. He has 52 years of experience in the cheese industry, including cheese manufacturing and various roles in the cheese food service and retail industries, including processing, quality auditing and material sourcing.

A licensed Wisconsin cheesemaker and cheese grader since 1975, Greg also has served as an expert judge in 10 WCMA Championship Cheese Contests.

Greg grew up on a dairy farm in Green County, Wisconsin, taking a job at nearby Klondike Cheese Company in 1974. In his eight years there, Greg was involved in all phases of cheese manufacturing. He joined Dorman Cheese in Monroe, WI, in 1982, and developed their cheese quality and grading programs. Through its iterations as Dorman, Dorman-Roth and then its purchase by New Zealand Dairy Board, the company relied on Greg to work with vendors to source cheese, correct quality issues and uphold specifications. While working with Dorman-Roth, he was introduced to the imported cheese industry, as well.

In 1992, Greg joined Kroger's cheese division – Pace Dairy. He developed programs to source natural cheese for Kroger-owned processing facilities. To this day, Greg remains Kroger's leader in pricing, contracting and procuring cheeses nationally. He leads purchasing and quality control audits for bulk natural cheese, as well as packaged, ready-to-stock dairy products.

Respected for his integrity, clarity and loyalty, Greg builds product pricing models that include farm profitability targets, milk prices, manufacturing costs and shipping costs. "Everyone needs to be a winner – the farmer has to be viable, the cheesemaker, and the retailer, all while meeting the needs of the consumer. In the end, the consumer validates the product, the quality and the price," Anderson told WCMA.

Greg Anderson has undergraduate and graduate degrees in business and legal studies from the University of Minnesota.

Linda Lee's 51-year career in the dairy industry exemplifies dedication, passion, and leadership. Beginning her career as a receptionist for Platteville Dairy, Inc., Linda advanced through roles in accounting and management, ultimately serving as General Manager before transitioning to sales. She assisted the plant through ownership changes to Old Wisconsin Cheese (owned by Carl Buddig Company), then Swiss Valley Farms, and later Prairie Farms Dairy, retiring as their Senior Business Development Advisor for the Cheese Division.

Linda's ability to bridge operations and sales made her an invaluable resource for Prairie Farms Dairy and its customers. She managed major B2B accounts, educated buyers on quality and value, and strengthened the cooperative's competitive position in an evolving marketplace. Passionate about Swiss cheese and committed to supporting farmers, Linda's career reflects resilience, innovation, and a true love for dairy.

Beyond her corporate role, Linda served on the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association Board of Directors for six years (2016-2021) and led events for the Southwestern Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association for decades, building fellowship and networking for manufacturers and industry suppliers.

Cheese Industry Champion Award

Daryl Larson and Phil & Mary Lindemann will be recognized as WCMA's 2026 Cheese Industry Champions, awards that are given to industry leaders who, through their everyday business

decisions, have created tremendous opportunity for others.

Daryl Larson retired at the end of 2025 from his eight-year role as President/CEO at Bongards Creameries, completing a life-long career in the cheese industry.

Daryl began his 50-year career at the Land O' Lakes cheese factory in his hometown of Volga, South Dakota, then had stints at Land O' Lakes plants in Pine Island and Perham, Minnesota, and Denmark, Wisconsin. Then, after one year at Bongards Creameries, he became the Plant Manager at Leprino Foods in Tracy, California. He left Leprino four years later to become Vice President of Operations, overseeing 10 dairy plants, for Dairy Farmers of America.

In 2008, Daryl took an entrepreneurial leap to join Tim Czmowski in building a new cheese plant in Hull, Iowa – Green Meadows Foods.

With the successful startup of the Hull facility and its sale to Agropur, Daryl accepted a role with Bongards in 2012 as Plant Manager of the cooperative's natural cheese plant in Perham, Minnesota. The plant doubled capacity in five years and in 2018, Daryl was appointed President/CEO of Bongards Creameries.

In his eight years as Bongards' leader, Daryl oversaw completion of the expansion of the Bongards processed cheese plant in Humboldt, Tennessee, and the doubling of processed cheese sales volumes for Bongards. Most recently, he led a large project to complete the modernization of the Perham plant and increase its capacity to 5,500,000 pounds of milk per day. This growth allowed current farmer members of the cooperative to expand their operations and added new farm members.

Daryl departs Bongards with the cooperative financially healthy and with a waiting list of dairy farmers that wish to join the cooperative. "The dairy industry has been good to me. I have had the opportunity to work with and for and many very talented people, and I never was unemployed in my entire career," Larson said in a recent media interview.

Phil and Mary Lindemann dedicated more than four decades to advancing the cheese industry through their leadership and innovation at Pine River Pre-Pack, Inc.

Phil began his career in the family business founded by his father, Philip C. Lindemann, and eventually served as CEO for over 40 years. Under Phil's leadership, Pine River Pre-Pack underwent major upgrades and expansions, including construction of a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. Phil was meticulous in selecting high-quality, Grade A cheeses for their spreads, perfecting recipes for ideal consistency and best flavor. Quality and efficiency were top priorities. In 2017, Phil and his team pioneered the development of the industry's first line of clean label Cheddar-based cheese spreads.

Mary served Pine River Pre-Pack as Marketing Director, bringing creativity and strategic vision that elevated the brand's presence nationwide. She championed consumer education and transformed perceptions of cold pack cheese spreads. Together, their efforts positioned Pine River Pre-Pack as a premium choice in retail, food service, fundraising markets, and private label manufacturing.

With decades of dedication from Phil and Mary, Pine River Pre-Pack became the most awarded cheese spread manufacturer in the world, recognized for innovation and uncompromising quality. Phil and Mary retired in 2023, leaving a legacy that continues to shape the future of cold pack cheese spreads.

Distinguished Service Award

The WCMA Distinguished Service Award, reserved for respected and highly valued supplier partners to the cheese manufacturing industry, is the only award that allows all WCMA members to vote on prospective honorees. Leo Bohanon and Craig Campbell have been selected for the honor in 2026.

Leo Bohanon enjoyed a 45-year career in the dairy industry, both on farm and in processing plants. He retired from Hydrite in 2019, reaching the role of Director of Technology. Leo devoted his career to the technological advancement of the dairy processing industry, including his involvement in multiple patents. He developed innovations, including processing aids for whey processing, formulation of membrane cleaners, and single-phase cleaning to reduce water use and increase throughput. Leo also led the way on innovations in liquid ingredients for processed cheese, as well as chemical recording and control equipment for Clean-in-Place systems (CIPs).

Leo's dedication to dairy processing continued beyond the dairy plant. He served as a valued resource to customers in troubleshooting and correcting quality and food safety issues, helping to ensure the safety and quality of the dairy food supply chain. Leo also shared his knowledge and expertise with the industry as a speaker, leading educational sessions for respected industry institutions such as Cornell University's Dairy Processing Extension program.

Craig Campbell is President and an original owner of Advanced Process Technologies Inc. (APT), Cokato, Minnesota, where he has worked for over 25 years. Before joining APT in 2000, he was a process engineer at Scherping Systems.

Founded in 2000, Advanced Process Technologies was built with the vision to deliver exceptional customer service and scalable custom systems for expanding plant facilities. Under Campbell's leadership, APT has developed relationships with top dairy and food producers throughout the United States and Canada, for projects ranging from small upgrades to new state-of-the-art facilities. The company has established new locations in California and Idaho and has more than doubled the size of its Minnesota facility.

In 2017, APT rolled out an employee stock option plan - each APT employee is personally invested in doing the best job they can on every project. In 2018, Campbell and his team rebranded the corporate identity to reflect their personalized customer experience and their continued growth as an equipment provider for the food and dairy industry.

In 2021, Campbell and other APT leaders were featured in an episode of the "Minnesota Made" podcast highlighting movers and shakers in the state. APT is a member of the American Dairy Products Institute, Idaho Milk Processors Association, International Dairy Foods Association and Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association.

Vanguard Award

The WCMA Vanguard Award recognizes cheesemakers or cheese manufacturing employees whose work helped to blaze new trails in dairy operations. In 2026, this award will be given to **Richard Guggisberg** and **Tom Rouleau**.

Living above a cheese factory for much of his life, **Richard Guggisberg** is firmly rooted in the art of cheesemaking.

The son of Swiss immigrants who moved to the rolling hills of Holmes County, Ohio, in the late 1940s, Richard began his cheesemaking education with his father, a Swiss Master Cheese Maker. At just four years old he began scraping the cheesecloths and eventually obtained every job from picking up milk from 28 dairy farms every morning before school, to coming in and helping to make the cheese. Richard gained the experience he used to help develop and eventually perfect his line of award-winning cheese, including Guggisberg's world-famous Baby Swiss.

Through decades of Richard's leadership, Guggisberg Cheese ranks among the top five Swiss cheesemaking facilities in the U.S. and has earned numerous prestigious awards, including United States Grand Champion at the U.S. Championship Cheese Contest.

As a former President of the Ohio Swiss Cheese Association and current board member of the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, Richard continues his involvement in the cheesemaking community and works to keep up with the challenges and changes in the industry. Richard and his wife, Anne, live in Millersburg and have four daughters, six grandsons, and one granddaughter.

Tom Rouleau recently retired as the Technical Manager for cheese at Darigold Inc. and has been involved in the dairy industry for the last 40 years.

Tom began his career at Kraft, working in small bulk cheese plants in Carey and Blackfoot, Idaho. After three years as a supervisor in Carey, Rouleau transferred to Blackfoot, where he took part in a complete plant transition from cheddar production to Parmesan and engaged in all aspects from concept through commissioning.

He then moved to Leprino Foods, commissioning their new cheese plant in Allendale, Michigan. This role allowed Tom to hone his cheesemaking skills in a large, greenfield plant. After a few years in cheese production, he was given the opportunity to branch out and oversee the shredding operations where bulk cheese is converted and frozen for use in the pizza industry.

In 1996, Tom received an opportunity to return to the Pacific Northwest at Darigold in their expanded Sunnyside, Washington plant. After the plant expansion, he stepped into the cheese plant manager role. Over the years he was able to learn more about whey drying and all aspects of plant operations. After a few years he was named manager of the overall site. He held this role for 3 years and then shifted to his passion for the technical aspects of cheesemaking.

Tom was based in Sunnyside for 25 years, with the last 12 years in the "innovator" role of technical manager, as well as providing engineering support and project execution for major expansions within Darigold. During that time, Tom became involved in the BUILD Dairy program, mentoring students who were considering roles in the dairy industry.

Tom was quoted as saying, "Along the way I met and collaborated with colleagues throughout the world, and it made me realize how we are all connected. The dairy industry is made up of an enthusiastic group of people with vision and positive attitudes. I also had numerous opportunities to mentor many students from universities in the Western U.S."

Tom earned the Lifetime Member Award from Oregon Dairy Industries. He has a B.S. in Food Science from Washington State University. Tom remains involved in the industry and continues to consult with Darigold, using his expertise to develop the next generation of cheesemakers.

Babcock Award

The WCMA Babcock Award, named for Stephen Babcock, the famed agricultural chemist and University of Wisconsin professor, recognizes the contributions of those in education or affiliate organizations partnering with processors in the pursuit of dairy industry innovation and excellence. In 2026, the Babcock Award will be given to John Jaeggi and Dr. Phil Tong.

John Jaeggi is a third-generation Wisconsin licensed cheesemaker who began his cheesemaking career over 50 years ago with the family cheese business in Green County, Wisconsin.

He joined the Center for Dairy Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1991 as the Center research cheesemaker and coordinated the Cheese Industry and Applications Group for over 30 years. Today, John coordinates the Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker® Program, which he was integral in launching in 1994.

John is actively involved with cheese manufacturers, assisting the industry with product development, troubleshooting, research activities, short course training, and cheese judging for many contests. He has experience in all natural and processed cheeses and has helped develop numerous contest grand champions.

He has been awarded the WCMA Aschebrock Award, the CALS Academic Staff Excellence in Research Award, the CALS Academic Staff Excellence in Service Award, and was honored by the International Cheese Guild. John has served as an expert judge 16 times for U.S. and World Championship Cheese Contests. In 2025, John was elevated to the role of “Red Hat” Assistant Chief Judge to WCMA’s signature contests.

Phillip S. Tong, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus at Cal Poly State University and is currently a consultant for the food and dairy sector. He has over 40 years of dairy foods education and research experience. He served as Executive Director of the California Creamery Operators Association from 2016 to 2020, Director of Dairy Science, Education and Research for the American Dairy Products Institute (2016-2021), Professor and Director of the Dairy Products Technology Center at Cal Poly State University (1987-2016), and Research Scientist at Kraft Technology Center (1986).

At Cal Poly, Dr. Tong led research on dairy ingredients processing, properties and their food applications; cheese technology; frozen dairy desserts technology; membrane processing; and cultured products, chaired 26 MS students, managed 15 professional Center staff, and was the dairy science lead in the design, construction and opening of the \$7 million, 19,000 square foot Dairy Products Technology Center. He has co-authored over 100 dairy foods publications, organized and led the instruction of over 75 dairy short courses, webinars, and symposia, and gave over 300 presentations to industry groups and academics in 11 countries.

During his time at American Dairy Products Institute, he led the development of Dairy Ingredients 360, an on-line training program and the ADPI webinar series on dairy foods and ingredients. During the same time period, Dr. Tong served as Executive Director of the California Creamery Operators Association which has served as an important forum for dairy farmers, processors, academics, allied industry members, and other partners of the California Dairy Industry since 1900.

He has served as President and member of the Board of Directors of the American Dairy Science Association, Past Chair of the Dairy Foods Division of Institute of Food Technologists, Member of the Center of Excellence of the American Dairy Products Institute, Chair of the American Dairy Science Foundation Board of Trustees, Member of the International Dairy Federation Dairy Science and Technology Committee, Section Editor for the Journal Dairy Science, and he was a regular contributor of articles to “Culturally Speaking” in Dairy Foods Magazine from 2008-2017. He received his Ph.D., and MS in Food Science from Cornell University and BS from University of California, Davis.

Dr. Tong is now an independent consultant and is currently working on training and technology projects for the California Dairy Innovation Center among other dairy consulting activities.