

SPECIAL EVENT

DeLaurenti Specialty Food & Wine will hold the first annual **Seattle Cheese Festival** May 14-15 at the Pike Place Market. The free event will feature cheese samples, exhibits, seminars, wine tasting and even a cheese maze! "I figured it was time to celebrate something that's important to a lot of us here at the store," says DeLaurenti owner Patrick McCarthy. "Regulations have forced almost all cheese producers out of state. However, on the bright side, several smaller local farms and individuals have taken up the mantle of artisan cheese making, and it's time to honor and showcase these people in the Seattle Cheese Festival." McCarthy advises us to stay tuned to the obligatory Web site (seattlecheesefestival.com) and, in the meantime, to "keep eating local cheese!"

Big picture windows overlook the cheese kitchen, allowing visitors to watch Beecher's top cheese maker, Brad Sinko, and his apprentices progress through the entire cheese-making process. The procedure, which takes seven to eight hours, begins when the pure, raw milk goes from the holding tank into the pasteurizer.

From there, it's cooked and stirred in open steel vats and cultures are added. The cultures determine which cheese is being made. Whey (the watery part of milk) is separated from the curds, salt is added and the curds are checked for moisture, acidity and butterfat.

At Beecher's, some of the curds are sold fresh and unflavored; others are mixed with herbs and seasonings. Still others are pressed into blocks and wheels, then aged for up to two years.

In addition to fresh cheese curds and special seasonal cheeses, Beecher's products include Just Jack (a rich, basic jack cheese) and the World Flavors line, which highlights such intriguing possibilities as Marco Polo (flavored with lightly crushed black and green



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