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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE AMERICAN CHEESE SOCIETY ANNOUNCES 2014 CONFERENCE & COMPETITION**

***31<sup>st</sup> annual ACS Conference & Competition will welcome nearly 1000 cheese industry members to the Sacramento Convention Center July 29 - August 1***

*Denver, CO (January 21, 2014)* – The American Cheese Society (ACS) has announced that it will bring its annual Conference & Competition to California for the first time in more than ten years. With the theme of “*Celebrating the American Cheese Plate*,” the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual ACS Conference & Competition takes place July 29 – August 1, 2014, at the Sacramento Convention Center and at various locations around the state capital. Just as a good cheese plate brings together a variety of tastes, textures, and experiences, so too will this event, which will welcome nearly 1,000 cheese industry members to Sacramento – including cheesemakers, retailers, distributors, importers, specialty food producers, and even enthusiasts who simply appreciate great cheese.

As the “Farm to Fork Capital” of the United States, Sacramento is the ideal locale for this event, which will enhance the idea of “local” and reflect the excitement and growth of the artisan and specialty cheese community throughout North America. The four-day ACS Conference provides an opportunity for attendees to enjoy unparalleled educational, tasting, and networking opportunities with industry leaders from around the world. The ACS Conference also hosts the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Certified Cheese Professional™ Exam, the only exam of its kind, which encourages improved standards of comprehensive cheese knowledge and service throughout the industry. There are currently 253 ACS Certified Cheese Professionals™ throughout the United States and Canada, and more than 150 candidates will sit for the exam in 2014.

Kicking off the ACS Conference on Wednesday, July 30, is the Opening Reception hosted by Marquee Sponsor the California Milk Advisory Board, and keynote speeches by California wine and specialty food trailblazers Darrell Corti and Narsai David. The conference also features a Town Hall Meeting with Sam Mogannam, owner of the Bi-Rite Family of Businesses, and “Meet the Cheesemaker,” where attendees can learn about and taste cheeses directly from producers. Throughout the conference, there will be unique educational and tasting sessions with leading industry figures such as Dr. Rachel Dutton of Harvard University; Gordon Edgar of Rainbow

Grocery Co-Op; Paul Bertolli of Fra' Mani Handcrafted Foods; and Ari Weinzweig of Zingerman's Community of Businesses. There will also be opportunities to take regional tours of cheesemakers, retailers, wineries, and breweries, and to meet with Scholars-in-Residence for one-on-one cheesemaking consultations.

The largest competition of its kind, the 2013 ACS Judging & Competition saw a record 1,794 entries submitted by 257 cheesemakers. Participation in the 2014 Judging & Competition, which recognizes cheeses of the highest quality for their aesthetic and technical merits, is expected to exceed these numbers. After two intense days of judging, the first-place winners in each category will be evaluated together, and a "Best of Show" will be chosen. The winners will be revealed at the annual ACS Awards Ceremony on Thursday, July 31. On Friday, August 1, the "Festival of Cheese" will allow Conference attendees and members of the public to sample over 1,700 competition cheeses plus artisanal foods from across the United States.

Members of the public are encouraged to participate in the 2014 ACS Conference & Competition by volunteering (all volunteers receive one complimentary ticket to the Festival of Cheese), purchasing tickets to the Festival of Cheese, and attending the annual Cheese Sale. The Cheese Sale, on August 2, offers the opportunity to purchase artisan cheeses at incredible prices, with all proceeds benefiting the nonprofit American Cheese Education Foundation. Cheese grab-bags will also be available at both the Cheese Sale and the Festival of Cheese.

Registration opens on May 5, 2014. To learn more about the ACS Conference & Competition, please visit [www.cheesesociety.org](http://www.cheesesociety.org).

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#### **About the American Cheese Society (ACS)**

ACS is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas. At 1,500 members strong, ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for cheesemakers, retailers, enthusiasts, and extended industry. ACS strives to continually raise the quality and availability of cheese in the Americas. Since its founding in 1983, ACS proudly hosts the foremost annual educational conference and world-renowned cheese judging and competition in North America.