



*Bruce found equipment in many different places. His steam-jacketed copper kettle and other specialized equipment came from Switzerland. The unusual size of the kettle allows him to make four 180- to 200-pound wheels of Emmentaler at a time.*

## A MASTER MASTER CHEESEMAKER

*by Henry Verden*



There are many artisan cheesemakers in Wisconsin, but not all of them are innovators and award winners. Those that are make cheeses that are not food, they're an experience. If you're lucky, you get to meet one of these artists.

I recently met Bruce Workman, Master Cheesemaker from Edelweiss Creamery. Bruce is a cheesemaker to the core. He's worked in cheese factories most of his life, and he wouldn't have it any other way. As of April 23, Bruce will have seven Master Cheesemaker certificates—that's more than anyone else in the state. That's the equivalent of seven PhDs in cheese. He is a certified Master for Gruyère, Raclette, Baby Swiss, Havarti, Butterkäse, Emmentaler, and specialty cheese, a low-fat, low-sodium Lacy Swiss.

It's almost easier to get top secret, security clearance than a Master Cheesemaker's certificate. First off, you have to work as a licensed Wisconsin cheesemaker for ten years and spend five years making the cheese for which you want to apply. You must pass an oral exam



to get into the program, attend three years of classes, and submit samples of your cheese four times a year to demonstrate consistency and quality. Finally, you finish with a comprehensive take-home exam. If you get through all that, you receive your Master certificate. Bruce has done this seven times.

Bruce served as a Master Cheesemaker and plant manager for Roth Käse USA for ten years. “I started on the floor, but I kept ending up moving farther and farther away from actually making cheese. I’m a cheesemaker at heart, so when the opportunity to buy the old Town Hall Creamery came up, I took it,” said Bruce.

There has been a cheese factory on the Town Hall Creamery site since 1873. When Bruce bought the current building in 2003, it was on its last legs. “It was pretty much condemned,” said Bruce. “The ceiling had fallen down and the floor was gone. We hauled 22 20-yard dumpsters of junk out of here. I replaced almost everything. Only the tiled walls and the windows are original.”

Bruce formed a co-op with four dairy farmers and an outside investor to finance the project. The co-op bought the land and building from Bruce. “Their job is to supply high-quality milk. My job is to turn out high-quality cheese with that milk.”

The Emmentaler is Bruce’s pride and joy. The process of making Emmentaler starts at 2 a.m. I asked Bruce why he starts so early. He explained that in the past milk storage was an issue. Milk had to be processed as quickly as possible to make room in the holding tanks, but that isn’t the problem any longer. “Now it’s really a matter of tradition and economics. I’m working during off-peak hours for electricity and it’s cooler during the early hours.”

Working during the cooler hours of the day is important because cheesemaking is hot work. The milk is tested for quality then heated to pasteurize it. Next the milk is pumped into a vat where calcium chloride is added. Rennet and cheese-specific bacteria are added as it cooks. “I’m kind of like a bartender for cheesemaking,” said Bruce. “There are all these different cultures and processes, and it’s my job to know the right blend to create the perfect mix.”

All five of the products Bruce makes are unique (he is currently not

producing Gruyère or Raclette). Edelweiss Emmentaler is a dry, hard Swiss cheese with marble-sized holes and a nutty, sweet flavor with just a hint of bite. Emmentaler is an essential ingredient in any good fondue recipe, mixed in equal parts with a quality Gruyère. Baby Swiss, Bruce’s other Swiss, is moister and sweeter with pea-sized holes. It’s perfect for munching with crackers.

Bruce Workman’s plant is far from the largest in the state, but it is definitely one of the best because Bruce is dedicated to making it so. Edelweiss Emmentaler is his flagship cheese, but you’ll do yourself a huge disservice if you don’t try his other cheeses as well. Bruce is a man in love with his job and it shows in every bite. His products demonstrate what Wisconsin cheese is all about.



*Just like cooking at home, half (or more) of the process is cleaning up—the cooking equipment is just much, much larger. Here, Matt Boelk washes up one of the cheese vats.*



(OPPOSITE LEFT) Once the curd forms it is cut into smaller pieces, sized according to what type of cheese is being made. (OPPOSITE RIGHT) Computers monitor most aspects of the cheesemaking process. (TOP LEFT) After cutting, the curd is pumped into forms where it's pressed into cheese. (TOP MIDDLE) Some cheeses float in brine to start the aging process. (TOP RIGHT) Bruce stands with a wheel of his flagship Emmentaler.

• IF YOU GO •

Edelweiss Creamery  
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 (608) 938-4094  
 edelweisscheese@tds.net

Plant Location:  
 W6117 County Hwy. C  
 Monticello, WI 53570

EDELWEISS CREAMERY SWISS FONDUE

- 3-4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dill seed
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 1½ ounces kirsch (optional)
- juice of 1/2 lemon
- 1 pound Edelweiss Creamery Emmentaler, shredded
- 1 pound Roth Käse Grand Cru Gruyère, shredded
- cornstarch for thickening, if needed
- white pepper and nutmeg to taste
- 2 loaves crusty bread (Swiss, French, or Italian) cut in bite-sized cubes

**An online extra!**  
[www.bountifulcupboard.com](http://www.bountifulcupboard.com)



Add garlic, dill seed, and wine to pot and bring to a high simmer on stove. Lower heat slightly and start adding shredded cheese a little at a time, stirring constantly until all cheese has been added. Do not add all the cheese at once. After cheese is completely melted, add lemon juice. At this point the fondue should be the consistency of a creamy sauce. If the fondue appears thin, mix cornstarch to a little wine and add slowly. There is always a moment where it looks like it will not turn out, just be patient and keep stirring. Bring fondue to a boil, remove from stove, and move to lit base/burner on table.

To serve, adjust burner so fondue continues bubbling very lightly. Serve each guest a handful of cubes to start. The remainder should be in a basket or bowl on the table so guests can get more themselves. Spear fondue fork through soft part of bread and into crust, making sure bread is secure. Dunk bread to the bottom of the pot and stir. Allow excess cheese to drip off and enjoy. For an extra treat serve apple or pineapple chunks, ham chunks, or mushrooms for dipping as well.

Serves 4 as a main course or 12 to 24 as an appetizer or snack.

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