



Chicago Section
Institute of Food Technologists



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42nd Midwest Regional Collegiate Dairy Products Judging Contest

The 42nd Midwest Regional Collegiate Dairy Products Judging contest was held on Saturday October 19th at the Kraft Technical Center in Glenview IL.

This contest is designed to test the sensory evaluation skills of dairy and food science students. They are trained to recognize the characteristics of quality dairy products. They also learn how to identify product defects in six categories of products: Milk, Ice Cream, Cottage Cheese, Cheddar Cheese, Butter and Yogurt.

Samples of each product are evaluated for their distinctive sensory attributes in appearance, body and texture, and flavor. The students have to understand the industry standards for each item, and they must also learn the defects of each in order to effectively grade the products. The students spend hours looking at samples of these items and honing their skills. They are then graded on how closely their criticisms match those of the industry professionals who pre-judge the same samples. It takes a trained palate to win.



This year, the Regional contest hosted seven teams from the Midwest.

Those teams were

Michigan State U
Loughry College
So Dakota State U
U Missouri
Iowa State U
U of Minnesota
U of Wisconsin

and coached by

John Partridge, Joshua Hall
John Partridge, Joshua Hall (sister college of MSU, from Northern Ireland)
Lloyd Metzger
Rick Linhardt
Stephanie Clark
Tonya Schoenfuss
Robert Bradley



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The top award winners were:

All Products Team - South Dakota State University

All Products Graduate Student - Suresh Sutariya SDSU

All Products Undergraduate - Taylor Jones SDSU



The contest is supported by several organizations. Kraft Foods has hosted the event for the past 40 years. They have provided space for the contest, support in form of personnel and supplies, lunch, and tours of the R&D facility for the students. It is a great educational event and it is unlikely that it would have continued this long without Kraft's involvement.

This year, support also was received from the CSIFT, which allowed the contest to give awards and cover the costs of basic supplies.

This event is an excellent training tool for future food and dairy scientists. Besides giving training that these future food industry professionals might not get elsewhere, it lays the groundwork for excellent sensory evaluation skills.

Many of the contestants have fond memories of the event and come back to work as the officials for the contest. This year, for example George Strayer of Dean Foods was the head judge for Ice Cream. He recalled that 40 years earlier in the same Kraft cafeteria, he was the student competing for his team. Eric Steer, currently the plant manager for Reiter Dairy in Springfield IL, met his wife as they competed on the Mississippi State University team together. (The whole Steer family attended this event- Eric, Ashley and their two daughters!) Tori Boomgaarden is the key contact at Kraft and had also competed as an undergrad. She came back from her honeymoon in time to coordinate the contest. There are many more stories like these.



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This contest is typically held two weeks before the National Contest and is the only regional contest left in the US. It is excellent practice for the National contest. This year the Nationals will take place on November 4, at McCormick Place in Chicago. It is held on the show floor of the Dairy Expo. Stop by and see the contestants at work!