

American Cheese Society

Cheese Festival Planning Guide

A Resource for Cheese Guilds





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Introduction

The American Cheese Society (ACS) created this guide as a resource to help regional cheese guilds organize their own cheese festivals. It contains useful information, links to online resources, and templates that organizations can reference during the festival planning process, onsite at the event, and after the event is over. While this document includes a broad range of festival planning tips and recommendations, it is not a comprehensive resource. If you would like to share additional information for inclusion in this guide, please feel free to reach out the American Cheese Society's Meetings & Events Manager at info@cheesesociety.org.

Most Festivals are Awful

In her article, "Why? An Introduction to Festival Planning", Hope Tschopik Schneider, credited with producing one of Los Angeles' most important festivals, The Olympic Arts Festival in 1984, most eloquently explains the festival experience:

"Festivals are not necessarily "good" things nor are they always very good parties or great communal celebrations. Indeed, most festivals are awful. They present local artists under bad performance conditions, on temporary stages, using rented sound systems. This to a bemused audience unsure of who is performing, who sit in the sun on rented folding chairs with children who are uncomfortable and restless, surrounded by a sea of people who are milling about, looking for food, shopping amidst assembled street fare items, inhaling the delicate smell of fried food mingled with the even more exotic fragrance of porta-potty chemicals." ...

I do think it is possible to create a Festival, a festival of value, distinction and purpose. To do so requires real integrity of purpose (WHY?), real definition and intimate understanding of its audience (FOR WHOM?), a real commitment to the uniqueness and quality of the artists to be presented (WHAT?), and a real sense of the magic of place (WHERE?). It also requires enormous hard work in both planning and implementation. In essence, because a festival is a series of one- time, unique events with new combinations of people, there is no room for error and no time for refinement. It takes enormous resources to do a festival well, either in the form of a highly motivated and involved community or in the form of large sponsorship/funding commitments. Festivals, once the definition of who, what and why is set, are exercises in precise technical and production planning. There are endless details to run down and nail to the floor. There are fundraising, accounting and cash flow problems to solve. There are production problems to solve. There are audience amenity problems to solve. There are public assemblage and flow problems to solve. There are political problems to solve.

There are huge marketing and public relations problems to solve. Festivals, no matter how small or community based, require a staff of vision, expertise and commitment, an ace technical crew, brilliant marketing and real dollars, up front."



You can read more about festival planning in the excellent free online festival handbook, "[About Festivals](#)," produced by Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs courtesy of the [Brewers Association](#). While it's not cheese festival-specific, this document is a compilation of articles from various contributing editors, including Schneider, with some fantastic insights into the myriad of considerations surrounding successful festival execution.

Many guilds successfully partner with outside organizations to put on their major fundraising events, including festivals. This is an outstanding way to minimize upfront costs, liability, and resources. Some guilds nationwide hold wonderful events that are organized almost entirely by the guild director, but building these events can be a process that requires years, or in some cases, decades of experience.

Those incredible guild-run festivals come at the cost of many hard-learned lessons. Indeed, event partners and/or sponsors are key to developing a successful event for guilds, both new and veterans to the event planning process. Recruit committee members from groups whose goals are compatible with those of your festival. Consider promoters already producing your local well-established specialty food festivals, 501(c)3/6 state Not for Profit Corporations, representatives from local arts councils, farm market associations, civic organizations, colleges and universities, and state and local departments of tourism or agriculture.

Event partners or sponsors add experience and expertise, often assisting with up-front funding, and offer fundamental connections for the venue, food, porta-potties, musicians, and volunteers. They can strengthen your credibility, generate publicity, and donate goods and services for the event. It's vital that the organizing team clearly define the roles and responsibilities, physically and financially, of each participating organization/partner to help the team work effectively and stay on-track throughout the process.

A helpful resource on making the most of your nonprofit events:
<http://nonprofit.about.com/od/fundraising/a/specialevents.htm>

Guild-run events don't always raise a lot of money immediately. They can be a part of your organization's strategic plan to cultivate future fundraising, and to boost the profile of artisan cheese in your community. Eventually, after spending money, learning what works and what doesn't, and the careful construction of a strong event program, festivals can become guilds' top income source. Unfortunately, one bad event raises all levels of red flags for artisan cheese and our highly regulated industry. Events requiring a high level of food safety, and those with the potential for the consumption of alcohol of any type, must be consciously planned and executed with the utmost competence, or the results could be detrimental.

We've created a basic checklist of best practices through the collaboration of our events team



and leaders from guilds nationwide that hold major festivals. This document is not meant to be all-encompassing in its details, but it is intended to serve as a basic starting point for your consideration in putting on a cheese festival that elevates artisan cheese in your region, shines a positive light on your guild, and promotes your members' businesses.





Pre-Event Venue Planning & Logistics

Thorough pre-planning for an event is crucial to its success. Before choosing a venue and dates(s), it is important to have a clear vision for your festival, to ensure that both align with your goals and that there are no major obstacles that may prevent success. You will also need to carefully think through the below items before you open registration.

- Secure your venue and dates with a signed contract.
- Confirm the capacity of the venue.
- It is a public or private property? Private businesses and venues can often provide liquor and food serving licenses under which the event can umbrella.
- Avoid other large established events and holidays that conflict with your event date.
- Obtain permits – special event/celebration/festival, catering, fire permits if cooking, etc. Determine if permits are pulled by guild, alcohol producer (if serving), or others.
 - If you have alcohol at the event, verify: will the event need a license or will each vendor need their own license to serve alcohol?
- Security – are police/paid security required? Do you have an emergency plan in place?
 - Most venues will outline security requirements in their contract.
- Catering/Food options – on-site services only, food trucks, or no other food at all?
- Refrigeration – will you have refrigeration provided by the venue or will you need refrigerated trucks/trailers?
 - If trucks or trailers are needed, will they be diesel or electric? Make a plan for re-fueling diesel if the trailers will be docked for multiple days.
 - Enclosed vs. outdoor docks may dictate the trucks' power source.





- Trucks may require interior lighting. This can be installed with a combination of stanchions, construction string lights, and zip ties. To save money, you can also provide flashlights and headlamps for those accessing the trucks.
- Insurance – see “Insurance Logistics” below.
- Bathrooms – are there enough? This porta-potty website can help you calculate the number of porta-potties needed: <https://www.unitedsiteservices.com/portable-rental-needs/porta-potty-planning-for-events>. Porta-potties used over multiple days will require a refresh. Hand washing stations or hand sanitizer may also be needed on-site.
- Electricity – if you anticipate that producers may require electricity at their booths, determine whether the venue has adequate electrical outlets readily available. Some venues will require you to order and pay for each electrical connection.

Insurance

As an organization, you should already have insurance. However, additional insurance is often needed for events to cover attendees and the venue at which you are hosting your event. Below are some things to keep in mind when securing additional insurance coverage. Please contact your current insurance agent for their recommendations before hosting any event.

- Your guild board members should already be protected with Directors and Officers Insurance or "D&O." D&O policies vary greatly between companies.
- General liability and liquor liability (GL & LL):
 - Event Policies again vary depending on the company. There are a number of insurance companies that specialize in Event Policies, and you may want to look for multiple quotes to compare coverage pricing and options.
 - If you are hiring companies for services, such as port-a-potties, those companies should be asked to add your organization to their policy as an additional insured.
 - Obtain certificates of insurance listing your organization as an additional insured from any food and non-alcohol vendors. Confirm whether your GL& LL policy will cover vendors serving alcohol.
 - Additional coverages to consider securing:
 - Damage to Rented Premises
 - Medical Expenses
 - Any Auto
 - Excess Liability or an Umbrella
 - Costs – GL and LL policy pricing depends on the number of attendees and the current market. Speak to your insurance agent for an accurate quote.



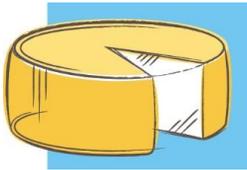
- Additional insurance to cover weather events:
 - From Paul K. in Nebraska: “Even though they are rain-or-shine events, there are things that don’t go so well in a torrential downpour / high winds etc. It isn’t very expensive considering it’s only against your base expenses (not any ticket reimbursements etc.) so in the scheme of things, it doesn’t hurt to have it.”
 - From Eric B in Michigan: “We used to consider the use of “Rain Insurance” for our rain, snow, or shine Beer Festivals...but once we were fortunate enough to call our events “sell-outs” prior to the day-of, it wasn’t an issue anymore! I will say that bad weather in one of our first events could have KILLED our finances since we fund all Guild operations by our Festivals, so I wouldn’t rule out weather insurance as an option.”

Cheese Shipping and Storage

It is important that the cold chain is maintained for any cheese that is shipped to your event, and that cheese and other perishable items don’t come out of temperature before an event. Below are tips on receiving and storing shipped cheese.

- Shipping and Packaging Tips for Producers:
 - Please view the American Cheese Society’s Judging & Competition shipping and packaging [video](#) for helpful instructions that may be shared with producers.
- Receiving Tips:
 - Cheese should remain closed inside its sealed shipping box until it is ready to be opened, inventoried, and stored in refrigeration. If you will not be able to unpack and inventory a shipment of cheese for some time, open the box and remove insulated packing materials, and place the opened box in refrigerated storage until you are able to unpack and inventory each item and store them properly.
- Refrigerated storage before, during, and after the event:
 - Trucks should be kept at 41 degrees to assure food safety.
 - To ensure truck temperatures, doors should remain closed as much as possible. Assign a team member to check the interior temperatures in your trucks at least twice per day.





- Cheese should be stored on shelves or on speed racks, using trays or baking sheets, and it should not be stored directly on any surface. If cheese must be taken out of its original packaging before the event, keep the opened or prepped cheese in Ziploc®-style bags, plastic wrap, or cheese paper.
- Cheese should not be consumed after it has been “out of temperature” for longer than 4 hours (varies based on weather and cheese type). Plan to discard cheese after this period of time and refresh with cheese from refrigeration. A local hog farmer can be a good resource for disposing of out of temperature cheese.
- Selling cheese at your event? Cheese sold at an event should never be handled or left out of temperature for an extended period of time.



Cheese Prep and Materials

Preparing and serving cheese should always be done safely and according to HARPC food safety standards. The American Cheese Society (ACS) has provided multiple sources below to help cheesemakers safely serve their products.

- Vendors should be prepared to bring their own cheese sampling/prep tools and supplies, unless you will be providing them for the vendors.
 - Each cheese should be prepped with its own clean and sanitized knife or wire, cutting board, and by someone wearing food service gloves. Change the knife or wire, board, and gloves between each cheese that is being prepped.
 - Review chapter 7 of [ACS Best Practices Guide for Cheesemakers](#) for more details.
- All work stations should be equipped with proper sanitation equipment:
 - If a 3-part sink is available it should be utilized and cleaned as needed.
 - The preferred sanitizer is Quaternary ammonium solution (aka “Quat”).
 - Proper proportions will be listed on the bottle (may vary).
 - Allow all items to air dry after sanitation before being used again.



Serving Cheese

- Anyone handling or serving cheese should be wearing food handling gloves and hairnets/beard-nets/hats.
- Gloves should be switched out for each cheese if handling cheese directly.
- Cheese should be served with a one-time-use toothpick or serving spoon. Festival attendees should not help themselves to cheese without a serving utensil, in order to avoid contamination.
 - As a reference, the American Cheese Society (ACS) uses about 20,000 toothpicks to serve about 550 lbs. of cheese over 3 days at an annual craft beer festival.
- Consider utilizing a food safety checklist when overseeing food handling at the event. See ACS's [Food Safety Checklist for Events](#) as an example.
- At venues that require ServSafe® training, one of the following may be acceptable in lieu of ServSafe® handling or manager training (via the Massachusetts Cheese Guild). You can access information about these trainings via [ACS's Safe Cheesemaking Hub](#):
 1. **HARPC** training;
 2. **FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food** training (offered by International Food Protection Training Institute, Institute for Food Safety and Health, Association of Food and Drug Officials);
 3. **Online Food Safety Basics for Artisan Cheesemakers** (offered by North Carolina State University, free for American Cheese Society members).





Cheese Calculations

When sampling cheese at a Festival, producers do not want to run out of cheese. However, they also do not want their un-sampled product to go to waste. Waste impacts a business's bottom line. Zoe Brickley of [Jasper Hill Farm](#) in Vermont recommends using the basic calculations below to estimate cheese totals for an event:

- For a busy cheese festival where a producer is sampling 3-4 cheeses, plan on 1 lb. of each cheese per hour. Typically, pre-cut cheese is sampled faster and in greater quantities than cut-to-serve samples. For an event of greater than 500 people, calculate about ½ oz. per person. For smaller festivals or events with many other food options, plan on 1-2 lbs. per hour. Remember to keep track of how much cheese you go through at an event so you can adjust your totals accordingly in the following year.

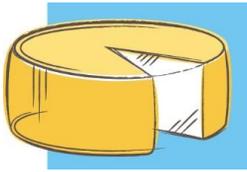


Image: Jasper Hill Farm

Alcohol Logistics

Alcohol partners can help fund a festival, as well as attract attendees who are looking to enjoy more than just cheese. When serving alcohol at a festival, consider the following:

- Applying for a liquor license (varies state to state, county to county).
 - Contact your local [Alcohol Beverage Control](#) (ABC) board for local rules and restrictions.
 - Some venues might “umbrella” your festival under their liquor license.
- Will you limit the number of samples or offer unlimited pours? Some states cannot offer an unlimited number of samples for a ticketed event, but may permit additional samples for sale in addition to complimentary samples that may be included with admission.
- Does state law require sample tokens/tickets?
- Sample sizes – how many ounces are permitted?
- Will alcohol be delivered via distributor or brought in directly by the participating producer? Consider the transportation, logistics, and legalities related to getting the alcohol to the event.
- Check laws regarding out-of-state alcohol producers: temporary registration may be needed for products such as beers that are not normally sold in the state.
- Some states prohibit brewpubs from distributing their beer to events.



- Do you need to hire [Training for Intervention Procedures \(TIPS\)](#) certified servers?
- Can you host cash bars and serve donated alcohol in the same event space?
- Plan to have appropriate law enforcement/security onsite (check venue contract and local laws).
- Make sure there is enough ice for participating alcohol producers:
 - Consideration must be made for indoors vs outdoors, winter vs summer, etc.
 - The Brewer’s Association used 272,000 lbs. (136 tons) of ice in 2012 at the Great American Beer Festival® (GABF). With 2,774 beers on the floor, that’s an average of about 100 lbs. of ice per each beer over 3 days (4 sessions). They keep the kegs in ice/melted water overnight, then drain the tubs and re-ice them at the beginning of each session.
 - Ice math: GABF ice amounts to an average of about 25 lbs. of ice per beer/per four hour session. They recommend estimating for 30-50 lbs. of ice per beer for a 4-hour event (Brewers never have enough ice...).
 - Since there might be a mix of kegs and bottles, ice varies – bottled beers don’t usually require as much ice in the bus tub as kegs, plus the beers typically come off refrigerated trailers, so they are often cold from the onset.

Alcohol Calculations

Calculations for alcohol quantities at your festival will vary depending on the event itself, and the type of alcohol sampled. For beer, the Brewers Association’s recommendations include:

- Overestimate the amount needed, but not by too much: you don’t want a lot of beer left over, but you also don’t want to run out.
- From the Brewers Association Events Committee, this is a guide and not a rule...

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{\# of minutes the event is open [round up]} \times \text{pour size} \\ & \times [\approx 2 \text{ to } 10] \text{ pours per minute}^* \\ & = \\ & \text{\# of ounces of beer each brewery should bring.} \end{aligned}$$

**The number of ounces poured per minute varies depending on the type of event. For an event where the idea is to have a conversation with the vendor and sample alcohol with food, such as SAVORSM: An American Craft Beer & Food Experience, the Brewers Association estimates spending 30 seconds with each attendee, for 2 pours per minute.*



For example: SAVORSM is 4.5 hours long = 270 minutes (round up to 300 minutes)

300 minutes x 2 ounces per pour x 2 pours per minute (spending a minimum 30 seconds with every person for 4.5 hours) = 1,200 ounces per session/12 ounces per bottle/24 bottles per case = 4.1 cases per session or draft equivalent.

*128 ounces in a gallon
5.6 gallon keg = 716 ounces
15 gallon keg = 1,920 ounces*

Vendors are not likely pouring every minute of the event, so the above allows for a bit of overage. If a brewery is drinking a lot of their own beer, for instance, this might be low – so somewhere in the 4 – 6 case range may be appropriate.

- If a producer knows that a product is super popular and will be hit hard, send more.
- For a more frenetic event, an alcohol partner might be pouring 10 pours per minute (a pour every 6 seconds consistently for every minute of the festival), in which case the amount of product will be higher.
- An alcohol partner ideally should not pour more than 20 pours per minute....less if the pour size is more than 2 ounces.
- It doesn't really matter how many people are at the event. An alcohol partner can only serve so much product during the event hours. Take into consideration how many other companies are pouring and if they are serving out of more than one side of a booth.
- Another way of calculating beer quantities and more insights from Brian in Texas:

"For beer calculation, I use 32 to 40 oz. per person. Multiply by the projected attendance (in my case, 5000) and you get ounces. I divide by 128 to get gallons and figure kegs from there."

"I put a limit on the number of different beers they can bring, just to make it fair to everyone. I ask for a max of four brands. I also ask specifically for seasonal, one-offs and new releases (really important). And I do the rotating tap schedule, where we tap a firkin (usually) every 30 minutes at a different brewery's booth. This keeps it fresh and interesting though out the day (beer nerds are notorious for arriving early but I want to make it fun for the latter half of the day too)."

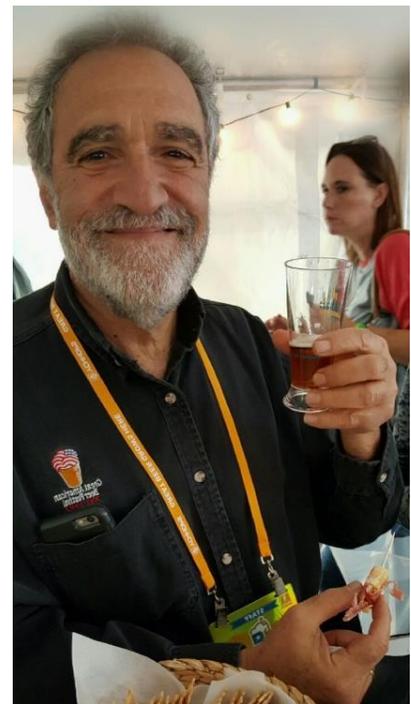


Photo: Bobbi Evans-Truesdale



Volunteer Management

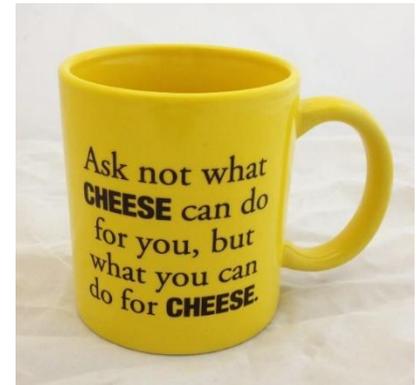
Volunteers are your festival's most important assets; treat them well. It's not just about having enough volunteers, but about having well-trained volunteers – this is very important and can alleviate stress from all parties involved in the event. However, if volunteers do not understand their roles or what is expected of them, they can sometimes do more harm than good.

- Recruitment:
 - Recruit volunteers from already existing volunteer databases, sponsors, clearing houses, guilds (enthusiast) membership, etc.
 - Gather skillset and cheese-handling experience information during the sign-up process to help match volunteers to the best role.
- Scheduling and confirmation of volunteer days/shifts:
 - Thank volunteers for signing up right away, and then follow up with an email a week or so prior to the event with specific times, dates, locations, and other details (what to wear, duties, etc.). This ensures volunteers have all the necessary information and acts as a reminder.
- Assignment of Volunteers:
 - Make volunteer roles and assignments as clear as possible.
 - Structure the day for volunteers so that timing and location assignments are clear.
 - Use skillsets captured at sign-up to assign experienced cheese handlers appropriately.
- Training:
 - Create a volunteer handbook with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and a waiver of liability.
 - See example: [Volunteer Agreement and Standard Operating Procedure for ACS Events.](#)
 - Offer basic training prior to the event:
 - Utilize online webinars and virtual meeting software to explain volunteer responsibilities and expectations and respond to volunteer questions.
 - View ACS's [Essential Festival of Cheese Volunteer Training](#) for tips.
 - On-site training:
 - Assign key volunteer leaders for check-in, on-site training, etc.





- On-Site Supervision: Plan for an additional on-site volunteer coordinator for event days.
- Evaluation:
 - Conduct a post-event survey of volunteers to help improve roles each year and address additional volunteer needs.
- Recognition:
 - Shirts, hats, name tags, on-site food and beverages, thank you gifts (see photo at right of a mug given to ACS volunteers), thank you notes, recognition parties, etc., can all help to ensure your volunteers know they matter and are appreciated. See the [ACS Volunteer Statement of Philosophy](#), and consider how your group might envision the important role of volunteerism in making your event a success!



Other Logistics & Things to Think About

- Ticket sales, ticket printing, and ticket shipping – will you go paper or paperless? Are you equipped to accept digital tickets at the door of the festival?
- Cheesemaker badges/credentials – these should be unique each year, and alphabetized and stored securely on-site. Consider whether cheesemakers will have a separate check-in entrance, or whether they will access the same entrance as event attendees.
- VIP hour: This is an excellent sponsor or member benefit, and a chance to raise additional funds in support of your organization!
- Commemorative merchandise: will you sell items on-site, take orders in advance, or sell items online? See more below.
- Will you supply attendees with a festival glass if you will serve beer or other alcohol? Will it be glass or plastic? What is the sample size? Will you include your guild's logo? If the artwork includes the date, this item cannot be reused in future years.
- Music/bands, A/V, sound, and lights: all of these elements can make for a more interesting event, but be sure that cheesemakers, other vendors, your members, and attendees come first. Participants will need to be able to communicate with attendees, and loud music or lighting that is too dim can take away from this experience.
- Walkie-talkies: these are a must if the event is in an area where you're unsure of cell coverage. Keep in mind that when 3,000 attendees are tweeting about the cheese they're consuming, cell service can get very bogged down. If you are inside a large event space, such as an exhibit hall at a convention center, cell service can also be spotty.



- Sponsorship sales and fulfillment:
 - Sponsorships are a great way to relieve member's costs for tables, tools, etc.
 - Ensure you are aware of any IRS guidelines or restrictions regarding the way(s) in which sponsors can be recognized on-site and in event materials.
- Work with local public transit agencies to give them a heads' up regarding increased traffic, and consider promoting the use of local transit systems (bus, light rail, etc).
- Online presence:
 - Website: ensure event information is readily available online, including venue, location, time, ages admitted, ticket availability, volunteer recruitment, etc.
 - Social Media – actively utilize Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other sites.
 - Ticket sales: determine when online sales will end, and if/when you'll switch to selling tickets at the door. Do you have a capacity that you can't exceed?
- Print promotions – flyers, posters, coasters, postcards, community and daily newspapers (calendar listings and/or advertisements), rack cards:
 - Provide print materials to be displayed at local cheese shops, grocery stores, coffee shops, hotels, and restaurants. Consider offering discount codes unique to each location, which will encourage the businesses to promote your event.
 - Work with local Convention and Visitor Bureaus to help promote your event to locals and tourists. They are eager to promote happenings in town!
- Promotion on TV and radio – donating tickets to your local radio stations can earn you thousands of free advertising dollars! If you can get a station to advertise and promote your festival for a month in exchange for a booth at the festival, you will save marketing dollars and reach new audiences simultaneously.
- Cheesemaker Registration:
 - Develop an online form that can be printed for onsite use at registration. Include a section where appropriate Food Safety forms must be filled out.
 - Determine the categories/tiers available for booths/registration in advance.
 - Communicate clearly to cheesemakers as to what is required of them in order to participate. How many cheeses are permitted? How many passes are provided for cheesemakers? (No, you don't need passes for 30 staff to sample two styles!)
 - Consider offering discounted tickets for friends and employees of participating producers.
- A cheesemaker's dinner or reception on the night before the festival is an excellent opportunity to raise member/sponsor dollars in support of the event.



Merchandise

Selling logo or event-focused merchandise can be a way to add to your bottom line. But remember, to sell a t-shirt, you need to print a t-shirt – which costs money. Things to consider if you do plan to sell merchandise include:

- Staffing/cash registers/change/methods of accepting payment on-site.
- If you take electronic payments on-site, can you provide receipts? Will you need extra supplies, such as extension cords? And is there a hard-wired Internet connection in case the WiFi is spotty?
- Consider your festival “store” set up – where products will be displayed, if you will need to provide shopping bags, etc.
- Will you print T-shirts for volunteers & staff?
 - ACS prides itself on creating a unique, fun volunteer shirt for its annual conference volunteers each year. This has proven to help drive volunteer numbers so that people can “collect” them all, and it provides a great opportunity to recognize event sponsors and partners with logo placement.
 - ACS offers additional merchandise at its bookstore that is conference-specific (limited quantities of t-shirts and hats) as well as stock items from our web store. We do our best to order just the right number of conference-specific items, but sometimes we end up with t-shirts left over. These can be sold at a discounted rate online, or donated to a local charity.

Onsite Logistics

Below are items you will either need to consider for the day of your event, or items that will come up on-site that you will need to plan for:

- Safe cheese preparation stations and storage.
- Storage for alcohol - jockey boxes, bus tubs, etc.
- Dump buckets for excess alcohol or cheese.
- Drinking water stations.
- A team and procedure in place for set up and tear-down (tear-down is often difficult for tired team members, so consider bringing in a fresh crew for this part of the event, or provide an incentive such as snacks or a meal for the tear-down team).
- Signage/decorator to ensure attendees can navigate the event, and a timeline to work with the decorator and/or volunteers to ensure signage is hung and set-up is completed on-time.



- Create an entrance gauntlet/line formation design, and a plan to keep it safe.
- Plan for logistics at the entrance to the festival for ticket-holders and producers/media/others with badges.
- ID check – plan for volunteers/off duty police on site if alcohol is being sampled.
- If space permits, set up a media room with refreshments and WiFi/Internet access. Offer media early entrance, so they can see the event before it is filled with attendees.
- Catering details – make sure the food vendors are experienced with big festivals and bring enough servings. If you plan on food trucks, ensure they are legal. If they need refrigeration on-site, will they share refrigerated space with cheesemakers?
- Security logistics/emergency planning. Depending on the size and nature of the festival, you may want to consider hiring an EMT or having a First Aid tent or table.
- Have procedures in place for dealing with over-served and/or upset and disruptive attendees.
- Plan for left-over cheese: contact a food shelter for unopened cheese that does not reach 4 hours out of temperature. If cheese is not safe for human consumption, a local farm may be interested in taking left-over cheese for their livestock. Volunteers can also take home remaining, food-safe cheese as an extra thank-you for their support.

Sustainability

Consider limiting your event’s environmental footprint as much as possible. Below are suggestion from the Brewers Association and their members:

The Michigan Brewers Guild takes a Zero Waste approach to planning their festivals. They consider every single thing that will be brought to the event, with a focus on eliminating anything that will eventually become garbage. From Scott Graham, Guild Director: “The bulk of all festival waste is composted and reused locally. The key to success is working with local partners and volunteers to sort waste properly and to follow up with removal and disposal. Multiple recycle stations are placed throughout the festivals with clearly marked bins so everyone can contribute to effective sorting.”

The Brewers Association works with companies such as Zero Hero and the Denver Convention Center to make sure compost and recyclables are being handled properly.

- They utilize a volunteer green team and a point person to oversee that the stream is kept clean.
- Other sustainability considerations: wind credits, corn-based cups, décor, reduce/eliminate unnecessary promotional materials, recycled paper, no plastic water bottles, compostable food utensils, bulk condiments vs. mini packets (phase out disposables), have food vendors use recyclable or compostables.



- They offer 5 gallon water dispensers at multiple locations instead of plastic water bottles. It's vital to keep the attendees hydrated.

Post-Event Logistics

It is important to conduct a festival debrief to review what went well, what didn't go well, and what needs improvement in future years. Doing this within a week of the event is a good idea so that the experience and emotions of the event are still fresh in everyone's memory.

- Reviewing final bills for accuracy.
- File all proper tax paperwork post-festival.
- Thank you's – send digitally or via print to volunteers, cheesemakers, sponsors.
- Hold a post-event debrief with all key players – a Word document template is helpful for each person to fill out shortly after the event to capture all information while it's fresh.
- Post a list of to-do's and considerations for the next event:

How do you measure the success of the event? Did you provide a good platform to promote members' cheeses? Did you shine a positive light on their products? Did you earn positive media coverage for participating cheesemakers, and what is the value/reach of that coverage? Did you stay on budget? Did the event have a good vibe?

If you could remove one element from the festival to make your life easier, what would it be? If you could add one, what would it be?

How can you make the festival more environmentally-friendly?

Who are you most thankful for in regards to the event?

What do you enjoy or look forward to the most about the next event?

Did the venue work? Was it the appropriate size?

Would you like to increase the size of the festival moving forward? If so, will this require changing venues, increasing staffing, etc.?

What is the thing that you wish the attendees knew or understood better?

Our hope is that this guide will help you plan and execute a successful cheese festival. If you have additional festival or event-planning insights and would like to add them to this resource, please [email](#) ACS's Meetings & Events Manager. Best of luck with your event!

Special thanks to the Brewers Association and their network of guild leaders across the country for their contributions in helping create this document.

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