

**Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker**  
**PAUL REIGLE**  
**Maple Leaf Cheese – Monroe, Wis.**

Paul Reigle took a rookie cheesemaking job at Maple Leaf back in 1983 as a means to an end. A recent high school graduate, he planned to continue his education in a computer-related field—but that never happened. He might not have seen cheesemaking in his future at the time, but he soon discovered it was in his blood. He's now a Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker, and an MVP at Maple Leaf.

“My intent was to go to school and work at Maple Leaf part-time to pay for it, but I found that I really enjoyed working here and learning about the art of cheesemaking from Jeff (Wideman), who himself is a Master Cheesemaker,” Reigle says. “Within six months to a year I was hooked. For me, this is not just a job. It's the art and the passion for quality that I learned early on in this plant that really draws me in.”

Within two years after starting at Maple Leaf, Reigle obtained his cheesemaking license. This year, he became a Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker certified in Yogurt Cheese, a Maple Leaf specialty. He is now production manager and part owner of Maple Leaf Cheesemakers, Inc.

Reigle says he entered the Masters program mostly out of personal interest in advancing his expertise as a cheesemaker, and partly out of respect for what he'd seen the program do for Wideman, a Master certified in Monterey Jack and Cheddar. “Jeff's always been a great teacher, and was very supportive of me entering the program,” Reigle says.

“Jeff knew so much going in, but he came out knowing so much more. He was really able to be a great teacher,” Reigle says.

Personally, he adds, completing the three-year advanced training program has helped him strengthen his own weaknesses. “When you make cheese every day, there's a lot that you just do and know on a certain level, but you may not really understand why things work the way they do or how to manipulate them. That's what this program teaches you. It helps you put the pieces of the puzzle together.”

Having completed the Master Cheesemaker program once, Reigle already has plans to enroll again for certification in additional varieties. “I definitely want to go back through,” he says. “Next, I'll go for Jack and Cheddar, and I'll probably go through a third time, as well.”

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