



# Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

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## Gov. Evers Kicks Off Dairy Month Announcing Major State Investment in Wisconsin Cheese Company

*WEDC will provide up to \$1.5 million for Masters Gallery Foods expansion in Oostburg*

PLYMOUTH — Gov. Tony Evers today announced the state of Wisconsin is supporting a major expansion of Masters Gallery Foods with up to \$1.5 million in performance-based state tax credits from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). The company is investing \$60 million into expanding their cheese packaging and distribution facility in Oostburg with plans to create 105 new jobs.

“Nobody knows dairy like Wisconsin, and I’m proud of our work and investments to ensure this industry continues to succeed and thrive for years to come,” said Gov. Evers. “This investment today not only supports the growth of Masters Gallery Foods but new opportunities for good-paying, family-supporting jobs in the greater region.”

Coinciding with the state’s celebration of June Dairy Month, Gov. Evers made the announcement during a visit to the Cheese Counter and Dairy Heritage Center with WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes.

“Sheboygan County has been our home since 1974, and we’re thrilled to continue our growth with the recently completed expansion of our new Oostburg facility,” said Jeff Gentine, Masters Gallery Foods president and CEO. “We’re very grateful for the financial support from the State and WEDC as we remain committed to investing within the community, providing long-term career opportunities for our team members while supporting the needs of our expanding customer base.”

Based in Plymouth, Masters Gallery Foods was founded in 1974 by Leonard “Butch” Gentine Jr. and has grown from a small cheese brokerage firm into a national cheese supplier. The family-owned company now has two state-of-the-art cheese packaging facilities located in Plymouth and Oostburg. Serving private label, retail, and food service customers, Masters Gallery has one of the largest privately held cheese inventories in the United States.

Last year, Masters Gallery began work on a 110,000-square-foot addition to its Oostburg facility. The project doubles the size of the current production area as well as adds storage and warehouse space. The company is spending about \$23 million in construction costs, as well as about \$37 million on equipment. The expansion is set to create 105 new jobs paying more than \$23 an hour on average.

“Cheese is big business in Wisconsin historically, today and, I believe, in the future as well,” Secretary and CEO Hughes said. “Cheese companies, such as Masters Gallery Foods, support our family dairy farms and help feed our world. More than that, though, Wisconsin companies and workers continue to move the dairy industry forward with innovations, research and training that make our state a leader in the food and beverage industry—drawing companies and investors from around the world.”

Wisconsin is the country’s No. 1 producer of cheese with nearly 1,200 licensed cheesemakers producing more than 600 types of cheese. About one-fourth of all U.S. cheese is produced in Wisconsin with the state producing 877 million pounds of specialty cheeses last year, according to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

Plymouth is known as the “Cheese Capital of the World” and is home to Masters Gallery, Sartori, Sargento, and Great Lakes Cheese. The city estimates that up to 15 percent of the country’s cheese goes through Plymouth.

“As America’s Dairyland, Wisconsin is known for the quality and quantity of our cheese,” said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. “Today’s announcement is another example of the governor’s support of and investment in Wisconsin’s \$104.8 billion agriculture industry. DATCP will continue to serve as a resource to the industry as it expands and innovates, and I look forward to more quality cheese from Masters Gallery Foods.”

The Cheese Counter and Dairy Heritage Center in Plymouth’s historic downtown features a cheese shop and café specializing in items such as grilled cheese sandwiches and macaroni and cheese, as well as a museum highlighting the area’s rich dairy heritage. WEDC provided a \$100,000 Community Development Investment Grant to the city of Plymouth to help create the museum in 2016.

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