



The University of Vermont



Catherine W. Donnelly, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus

The University of Vermont

Department of Nutrition and Food Science
Burlington, VT 05405
USA

802-598-6287

Catherine.Donnelly@uvm.edu

cwdlakeview@gmail.com

Short Summary of the talk (max. 300 words)

Title Ending the War on Artisan Cheese

Over the past 25 years, the U.S. FDA has waged a punishing war against artisan cheeses, both domestic and imported. Attempts to ban the use of raw milk in cheesemaking and instead require milk pasteurization is not the only issue at play in the global assault on traditional cheesemaking. FDA has attempted to ban the use of wooden boards in cheese aging. Many traditional cheeses made from both raw and pasteurized milk use aging on wooden boards to control cheese moisture levels and allow development of flavor and character. The FDA has also tried to ban the use of ash in cheesemaking, a traditional practice that selects for important microbial groups during ripening of some bloomy rind cheeses made from pasteurized milk. And the FDA and other governments have established stringent *E. coli* standards that many artisan cheeses, regardless of whether produced from raw or pasteurized milk, simply cannot meet.

But was the FDA really trying to help U.S. industrial dairy giants fight a trade war with Europe over protection of cheese names? Writing about raw milk cheese presents an opportunity to explore centuries-old food traditions, and to sound a warning to consumers that without vigilance, these traditions may be eliminated for reasons that are simply not scientifically justified. Fortunately, members of Congress came to the aid of artisan cheesemakers because science was on their side, and the FDA was unable to scientifically defend its position on wooden boards, *E. coli* criteria, and use of unpasteurized milk in cheesemaking. Congressional oversight was essential to get the FDA to back down from proposed regulations that would have punished U.S. artisan cheeses and PDO and AOP cheese imports from Europe.

The FDA has been given unprecedented new regulatory authority under the Food Safety Modernization Act. The raw milk cheese debate provides a convenient and cautionary lens through which we can examine FDA's functioning. As evidenced through *Ending the War on Artisan Cheese*, we must hold our regulators accountable when they propose to enforce standards for which there is no scientific justification. Artisan cheese advocacy can lead to a new system of regulation that is grounded in science and simultaneously supports food safety and promotes our precious rural working landscapes in the U.S. and across the globe.

The three most important milestones in my scientific career:

1. 1983-Earned a Ph.D. in Food Science from North Carolina State University under the direction of Dr. Todd Klaenhammer
2. 1983-2021 Conducted research on the bacterial pathogen *Listeria monocytogenes*
3. 2004-2016 Served as co-director of the Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese at UVM

I'm looking forward to the scientific conference on raw milk products because raw milk cheeses require scientific advocacy!