

# *Washington Cheese*

## Challenges and Opportunities in Making and Selling Sustainable and Delicious Cheese FoodWISE stories and science: Cultivating customers



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WASCA  
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Journalist, writer

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Food  
Movement craeter, author,  
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EMT



# Sheep



Use **whole** food.

Remove Watermark



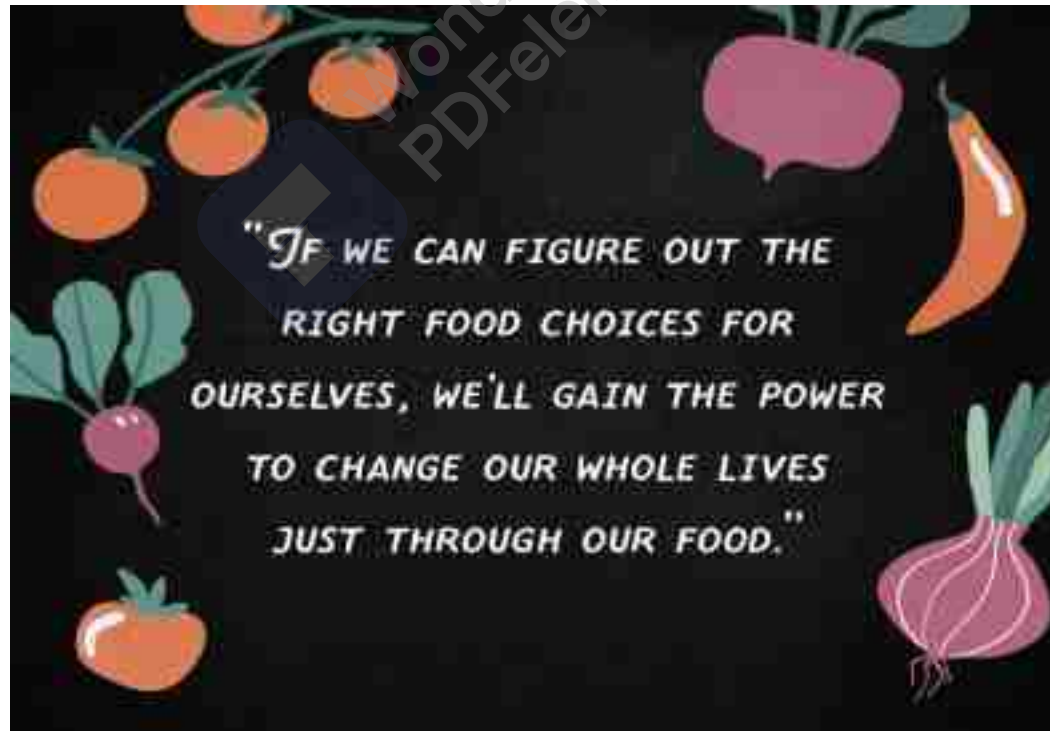
Wondershare  
PDFelement

Become **informed** about your food.

Choose sustainably-produced food and support **sustainable** farming (and fishing).

And, gain **experience** with foods and use it in making your decisions.

That's the basis for my little acronym, WISE.



# Challenges and Opportunities in Making and Selling Sustainable and Delicious Cheese

America's Artisan Cheese Industry Is Struggling to Survive Without Restaurants

<https://www.eater.com/2020/4/23/21225210/coronavirus-restaurants-artisan-cheese-industry-sales>

Threat: Loss of market, increased competition, price point struggles

Threat: Food beliefs—about quality, about cost & value

Ideas: See the threats as opportunities/and

Increase resilience by building adaptive capacity

How: Telling stories, questioning food beliefs and the science behind them



# I myself had to tell a different story

From

<https://wp.wvu.edu/gigiberardi/>

/

“books, writings, blogs”

To

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL82mQZ2YjdrqxrjC76uccZkBmupoKjyrE>

**FoodWISE and resilience**

**287 videos/updated 3 days**

**ago**

<https://gigiberardi.com/>

*Food “Wise”* stands

for: **Whole, Informed, Sustainable and Experience d-based thinking**. Berardi avoids prescribing what we should and should not eat and the book does not home in on “beneficial” foods or nutrients. Instead, she invites readers to think holistically about how we can procure and produce incredible meals, and draw deep nourishment from the foods we prepare and consume. *FoodWISE* is both scholarly and scientific (with over 250 references) and accessible to all interested in our personal and shared worlds of food and food choices.

FOODWISE

CONNECT

AUTHOR





Telling stories (with consumers, for me, it's often students) is creating experiences



Obviously, story-telling can help guide your production and marketing of cheese.

Just look here: [WASCA, Local Cheesemakers, Featured in Culture Magazine Article](#)  
[Press](#)

....three of WASCA's Licensed Cheesemaker Members are finalists in the 2021 Good Food Awards.

Source: <http://www.washingtoncheese.org/news-press>





The reason is that, obviously, there is a little dance perpetually going on between producers and consumers.

Producers produce what they think consumers will buy, we develop markets.

Consumers buy what producers make available...



...but consumers also give feedback to the producers about what they want – most directly through what they purchase, but also in lots of other ways such as advocacy.

What consumers want is, in turn, influenced by many factors, especially...



# Food Beliefs

Come from...

- Ideas around foods we ate growing up (Valveeta)
- What advertising drums into our heads (fat is bad)
- What our friends say and do (a lot of cheese, in pizza, burritos, etc.)
- Fad diets and diet gurus (anti-dairy, fat)
- Nutritional science (low-fat, new recommendations:  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/dietary-guidelines-americans>

Visit [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/dietary-guidelines-americans)



- Reports on farming, hunger, environmental problems (animal wastes, “eating-cheese-is-killing-babies”)—what my students are concerned with...

# “Fierce Food Beliefs”

- Once we believe we like or don't like some food, we often don't question or change that belief. And those beliefs determine what we eat.
- Influences: Advertising/Personal cultural background/Available information, whether actual factual science or “fake” science (“health” websites) or fads such as diet systems/government guidelines



# Beliefs

- The point for us now is that these beliefs are shaped heavily by what are essentially stories. For example, People are vegetarian or not because they've convinced themselves of a story to justify that position.
- Consumers buy into the Mediterranean diet or the Paleo diet because there's a good story behind it.



What began as *one man's dream to be a dairy farmer*, grew into a *multi-generational passion for farming and cheesemaking*. *The journey wasn't easy and had many ups and downs but was worth the hard work*. Appel Farms now produces an eclectic variety of cheese...



- Sharing lessons on local food: not just a commodity
- Telling stories about the food is important in marketing it (Seed-to-cheese and Italian-style cheeses, or inspired by twin girls and creating a family operation to produce a real Whatcom Blue, and others)
- Telling stories about how good the food is, and where it came from, and the people who produced it.
- Writing stories that are authentic and consistent and plausible.
- Conveying stories that tap into the beliefs of the consumers.



# “Experience” is part of the story

There’s been lots of talk in business management circles for a number of years now that we’re in an “experience economy.”\*

No longer an industrial economy, no longer a service economy.

To the extent that may be true, the **experience** of buying local food can be part of the story told in marketing the food.

I emphasize in *FoodWISE* the importance of the consumer’s personal experience in guiding their decisions.

That experience can be gained first-hand by growing food or cooking it,

Or by getting to know local cheesemakers and becoming familiar with their farms or sources,

Or even second-hand, by reading, hearing, seeing stories about cheese – in all aspects.

\*B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, 2011. [The Experience Economy](#) (updated edition).  
Harvard Business Review Press, Boston. (first edition 1999)

I'm not going to go into detail, but here a few examples of research findings (again, perhaps what many of you already know):



Consumers who buy locally-produced cheese are not merely filling their grocery needs but are motivated by additional reasons—a big one being the story of the food itself



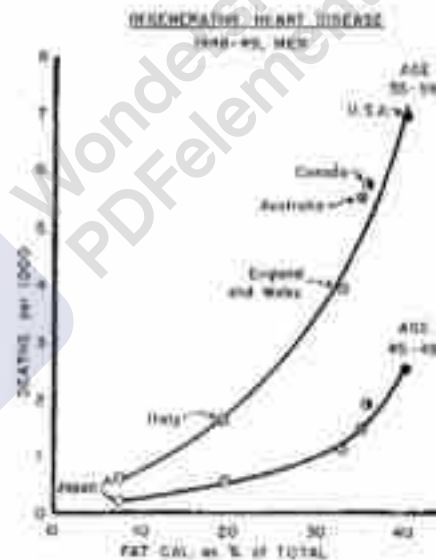
Consumers who buy locally-produced food do so partly because they perceive it as being of higher quality.

Consumers' conceptions of "higher quality" include both characteristics of the food itself (like freshness, or absence of pesticides), but also what it is not: not produced by an industrial-scale operation.

Part of the task is understanding the  
 behind the story we are selling: Challenges  
 made worse by fraudulent or popular science,  
 e.g., classic work on fat and heart disease (Ansel  
 Keys)

- Cherry-picked data from 7, not the 22 countries that he studied
- Correlation not strong, over all 22 countries

What Keys Submitted as Evidence



What Keys Didn't Submit

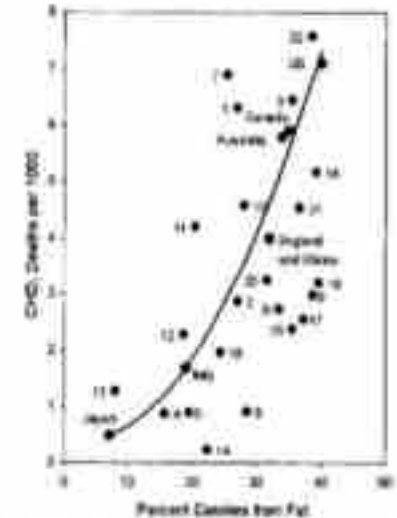


Figure 10 - an 11x11 grid of countries whose data were omitted from the submitted evidence. The countries are: 1) Australia, 2) Italy, 3) Canada, 4) France, 5) Japan, 6) India, 7) England and Wales, 8) United States (1955-59), 9) Rest of World (1955-59), 10) U.S.A. (1960-65), 11) U.S.A. (1955-59). Data from Wondershare PDFelement.

# Diet Wars

- Science-data-beliefs-social construction of science-diet



Vs.

Fear of  
fat, Love  
of sugar:





# Storytelling: Processed fats vs “whole” fats/margarine vs. butter



Roles: cardiovascular function (metabolism of cholesterol, catabolism of Vitamin D and other fat-soluble nutrients) [Fat, in general, is implicated in central nervous system function, protection of organs, thermal regulation, more]

Sources: Animal products, meat and dairy (although dairy is higher)



# From Ton Barr's research at the University of Kassel: Omega 6/Omega 3 ratios (lectures in Switzerland, with summer students)



Ever the student, and story-teller... In Europe, so many stories...



*Thank you*



Wondershare  
PDFelement

Best “cheesy” moment of 2020: A “hard jack,” no pressing, no cheese cave, using the fridge crisper and moist towels!

