PRESS RELEASE



Molly Powell from Neal's Yard Dairy wins Young Cheesemonger of the Year 2026

Molly Powell from Neal's Yard Dairy in London was named Young Cheesemonger of the Year on Thursday 12 November, following a live 3-hour final at the Andalucía Gusto del Sur International Cheese Festival 2026, in Córdoba, Spain, which also hosted this year's World Cheese Awards.

Organised by the Academy of Cheese, this year's competition saw an expanded line-up of eight finalists take the stage, following a record-breaking number of entries from up-and-coming cheesemongers across the world. Competitors from Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, the UK and the USA all took part, with the runner-up prize going to Sarah Simiele from The Curd Nerd in New York, who was put forward by Cheese State University in Wisconsin.

Currently working as a Training & Wholesale Cheesemonger, this year's champion, Molly has gained extensive experience across retail, wholesale and cheesemaking during her career in cheese, developing a strong passion for sharing knowledge and supporting the wider cheese community. Following university, Molly started out at Mons Cheesemongers in 2018, before joining the Neal's Yard Dairy team in 2025, where she now supports wholesale customers across the UK through training and development sessions.

Molly Powell commented: "It's a real honour to be named Young Cheesemonger of the Year 2026. The standard of competition was incredibly high, and I couldn't have anticipated the result, especially among such talented finalists! Preparing for the competition, including completing the Academy of Cheese Level 1, was hugely enriching and deepened my knowledge of the industry. The competition itself was a fantastic opportunity to showcase our skills and learn from one another. I'm excited to bring this experience into my role as Training & Wholesale Cheesemonger, offering more specialised support to customers across the UK. I'm passionate about cheese education and hope to make cheesemongering an accessible and successful skill for businesses of all kinds."

Tracey Colley, Founding Director of the Academy of Cheese, said: "The standard of our finalists this year was truly astonishing, with all eight of them impressing in every single round. They should be incredibly proud of how well they represented the next generation of cheesemongers on a world stage, and hats off to Molly for rising to the top against such stiff competition. Supported by Chiswick Cheese Market, Peter's Yard and the Guild of Fine Food, Young Cheesemonger of the Year continues to grow and develop year-on-year, playing its part in helping to celebrate and develop cheese talent across the globe. This year's edition in Córdoba has been the best yet, and we can't wait to bring the competition back to London for 2027."

Sponsored by Peter's Yard, Chiswick Cheese Market and the Guild of Fine Food, Young Cheesemonger of the Year is a celebration of talent, a chance to learn, and a platform to launch the future leaders of the international cheese community, putting the skills, knowledge and passion of its competitors on the cheese world's biggest stage. The live final consisted of five rounds of judging, with challenges including cutting and wrapping, cheese identification, pairing with Peter's Yard crackers, and finally the 'MasterRind' quiz.

This year's field of finalists also featured Jorian Torn Broers from Kaashandel Torn Broers in Ede, Netherlands; Harrison Marsland-Quinn from Stockport Provisions in the UK; Mauro Garcia Monllor from La Despensa de Andrés in Alicante, Spain; Chanel Johnson from Cheese at Boatshed Market in Cottesloe, Western Australia; Vicente Alfaro Norton from La Fromagerie in London; and Ophélie Beill from Crémerie du Faubourg in Montpellier, who was selected by La Fédération des Fromagers de France.

Competitors were assessed by judges including; broadcaster and cheesemonger, Morgan McGlynn Carr from Cheeses of Muswell Hill in London; author and cheese expert, Hero Hirsh from The Cheese Bar; Svein-Erik Backlund of Oluf Lorentzen AS in Norway; and Nick Bayne of The Fine Cheese Co. in Bath, who previously won the Cheesemonger Invitational 2015 in New York and secured a bronze medal at the 2023 Concours Mondial du Meilleur Fromager in Tours, France.

As winner of Young Cheesemonger of the Year, Molly will now receive the coveted Young Cheesemonger of the Year 2026 trophy, a Boska Pro Cheese Tools Kit, a feature in Fine Food Digest magazine, a place on the Academy of Cheese Level Two certification course, and an invitation to judge at the World Cheese Awards 2027.

For images or more information, please contact Sam Brice at Freshly Ground PR on +44 (0) 7961 635960 or email sam@freshlygroundpr.co.uk.

Picture caption: Young Cheesemonger of the Year 2026, Molly Powell from Neal's Yard Dairy, with Tracey Colley, Founding Director of the Academy of Cheese.

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Notes to editor

Academy of Cheese

The Academy of Cheese is an impartial, not for profit organisation, created in 2016 to establish an industry supported, recognised and certified development programme to promote cheese knowledge, cheese education and careers in cheese. Academy courses educate both consumers and professionals through four levels of certification culminating in the highly anticipated accolade of Master of Cheese.

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