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**BY COURTNEY HUNT-MUNTHNER**



*Eureka Co-op Cheese Manager Matt Vick stocks rounds of Cypress Grove Chevre on Friday. The store sold out of Cypress Grove's newest cheese, Truffle Tremor, on Thursday and had four of the cheeses gone within an hour of replacing them on the shelves Friday. Daniel Solomon/The Eureka Reporter*

**ARCATA FROMAGERIE WINS BIG AGAIN** — Add another notch to Cypress Grove's belt. The Arcata-based goat cheese company won top honors at the International Fancy Food & Confection Show in New York City earlier this month for the best product line out of 2,400 exhibitors.

Cypress Grove was given the coveted "Outstanding Product Line 2007" award after judges sampled an assortment of the company's distinctive cheeses, which included popular soft-ripened and aged selections like Purple Haze, Lamb Chopper, Midnight Moon and Bermuda Triangle cheeses. More than 140,000 different types of food and beverage products from companies in 70 countries competed in the annual IFFCS — a show considered by many to be among the most competitive in the industry.

Owner Mary Keehn, who attended the show with General Manager Pamela Dressler and Sales and Marketing Manager Bob McCall, was thrilled to take home the best product line award after having been named a finalist in previous years.

In a news release issued by Cypress Grove last week, Keehn was quoted as saying, "To me, it's about more than cheese. It's a validation of quality in all we do, presented at one of the most widely respected shows in the industry."

Ron Tanner, vice president of communications and education for the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, agreed, explaining

that the award speaks to the overall quality of a company since it takes many cheeses into consideration as opposed to just one for individual awards.

"The Product Line category is one of the most prestigious awards because it says that everything that a company sells is outstanding," Tanner said. "Cypress Grove's artisan approach to cheese making and the unique variety in their line of cheeses set them apart from the competition."

Previously, Cypress Grove has been honored with various accolades for its cheeses, including first-place prizes for Midnight Moon (Best New Product) and Humboldt Fog (Best Dairy Product) at the 2002 New York IFFCS, and has been selected as a finalist for the Best Product Line, but never has the company won the prestigious award outright.

More than 300 judges handpicked the finalists, finally settling on Cypress Grove after sampling hundreds of other product lines from companies throughout the country.

What makes the award unique is that Cypress Grove not only beat out other cheeses, the company won best product line out of all the foods and confections entered into the show. Cypress Grove's cheeses were compared to chocolates, charcuterie, breads, crackers and candies, as well as cheeses of all types.

Though Keehn was unavailable for comment regarding the company's most recent honor at the New York show, she remarked on the significance of Cypress Grove's achievements in an interview after last year's competition.

"It's a pretty big deal because there's products from all over the world (at the show)," Keehn said. And, she continued, the competition is fierce because cheeses are just one of the many competitors.

And while Cypress Grove's signature goat cheese, Humboldt Fog, typically takes the cake at big shows, this time it was a rookie that garnered the praises of judges. The newly unveiled Truffle Tremor goat cheese was labeled "incredible" by one critic and drew repeat tasters to the Cypress Grove booth at the New York show.

"Mary tries to unveil a new cheese once a year, but (Truffle Tremor) is special," McCall said. "This one has been in the back of her mind for a long time."

For a cheese that hasn't even been listed on Cypress Grove's Web site — it was released in select Humboldt County grocery stores about a month ago — Truffle Tremor is certainly causing a stir among cheese aficionados — both locally and on a national level.

John Clickner, assistant store manager of the Eureka Co-op, said the grocery store began fielding questions about Truffle Tremor two weeks ago, and at Wildberries Marketplace, people lined up to be the first to sample the Italian truffle-infused goat cheese last week.

Tellingly, McCall returned from the show to 17 media requests concerning the cheese, which isn't scheduled to be released nationally until Aug. 6.

"We've really had a great response to it," McCall said.

By Courtney Hunt-Munther

**CYPRESS GROVE CHEVRE**