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**REAL CALIFORNIA MILK'S GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH FOODSERVICE
CONTEST WINNERS CELEBRATE ICONIC COMFORT FOOD WITH A
CALIFORNIA TWIST**

*Triple Jack Club and Chile Relleno Grilled Cheese Sandwiches
Earn Top Honors in Virtual Competition*

Tracy, Calif. (April 10, 2026) – The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) today announced the winners of the Real California Milk Grilled Cheese Sandwich Contest, a national online foodservice competition challenging professional chefs and culinary students to develop innovative dishes using California dairy products.

Chef Doug Hildreth from Spofford, N.H. was the winner in the California Classic category with the **Triple Jack Club Sandwich** recipe, which showcased three flavored Real California Monterey Jack cheeses for exceptional melt, flavor and texture. Chef Jason Triail from Orange, Calif., took home the prize in the California Freestyle category with his **Chile Relleno Grilled Cheese Sandwich** recipe, a bold, flavor-forward concept blending three Real California cheeses with peppers and salsa.

Hosted by the CMAB, the contest challenged chefs from across the country to elevate one of the most recognizable menu staples using California cheeses and dairy products.

The result was a lineup of eight inventive grilled cheese concepts that demonstrate how high-quality California dairy can transform a familiar favorite into a standout menu item. Using global-inspired flavors and carefully layered cheese combinations designed for optimal melt and

performance, finalists highlighted the versatility and culinary impact of cheeses made with milk from California family dairy farms.

“This contest underscores how Real California cheeses inspire chefs to reimagine classic comfort foods with creativity and premium ingredients,” said Katie Cameron, Director of Foodservice for the CMAB. “The chefs demonstrated how the quality, performance, and flavor of California dairy can elevate a simple grilled cheese into a memorable menu experience.”

The results of the Real California Milk Grilled Cheese Sandwich Contest are as follows:

California Classic Category

- **CATEGORY WINNER: Triple Jack Club Sandwich** – *Chef Doug Hildreth, Chef & Foodservice Director at Camp Spofford Camps & Conference Center, Spofford, N.H.*
 - A sophisticated take on a classic format, this club-style grilled cheese layers Real California Hatch Chile, Truffle Jack, and Garlic & Herb Creamy Jack cheeses. Finished on the griddle, the sandwich delivers a crisp exterior and a perfectly melted interior. The combination of flavored Jack cheeses creates depth, aroma, and a luxuriously creamy texture while maintaining the nostalgic appeal that makes grilled cheese a consistent top performer on restaurant menus.
- **Cali Triple Threat** – *Chef Mark Zabrowski, Owner & Chef, Much Ado About Pizza, Pleasanton, Calif.*
 - A rustic yet refined interpretation featuring Real California Sharp Cheddar, nutty California Gouda, and creamy California Monterey Jack on hearty rye bread. A Gouda-mayo crust creates a crisp, golden exterior, adding texture and richness to this balanced, flavor-layered sandwich. It’s classic grilled cheese with just the right amount of richness and depth.
- **California Griddle Lock** – *Chef Jacqueline Seavey, Executive Sous Chef, Island View Casino Resort, Gulfport, Miss.*
 - This bakery-style sandwich layers Real California Habanero Jack, Pesto Jack, and bandaged-wrapped Cheddar cheeses into a sealed, golden-crisp creation. A cornstarch slurry seals the edges, locking in a molten, flavor-packed cheese interior with notes of spice, herbs, and sharp, nutty complexity.
- **Toastie Coastie** – *Chef Amy Medina, Co-owner & Chef, Hella Pie Pizza, Tracy, Calif.*
 - An indulgent, flavor-forward grilled cheese balancing heat, richness, and aromatic spice on crispy sourdough bread. Real California Habanero Jack, aged Gouda, and Triple Cream cheeses combine for a luscious, creamy interior with subtle heat and depth.

California Freestyle Category

- **CATEGORY WINNER: Chile Relleno Grilled Cheese Sandwich** – *Chef Jason Triail, Director, Culinary Innovation, Habit Burger Grill, Orange, Calif.*
 - Inspired by a Mexican restaurant classic, this sandwich layers Real California Jack, Habanero Cheddar, and Cheddar cheeses with roasted poblano chiles and house-made ranchera salsa. The result is a rich, melty base complemented by smoky heat and bright acidity. The blend of cheeses provides the stretch and

creamy texture that chefs look for in a grilled cheese, while allowing the bold flavors of the peppers and salsa to shine.

- **California Cobb Grilled Cheese** – *Chef Doug Hildreth, Chef & Foodservice Director at Camp Spofford Camps & Conference Center, Spofford, N.H.*
 - A creative twist on the classic Cobb salad, this flatbread sandwich combines Real California Sharp Cheddar and Blue cheeses with grilled chicken, crispy bacon, and traditional Cobb elements. Finished with California butter, it delivers a rich, savory profile with balanced brightness.
- **Mushroom Gremolata Grilled Cheese** – *Chef Justin Ward, Culinary Director, Mad Dog Restaurant Group, San Antonio, Texas*
 - A refined, bistro-style sandwich featuring Real California Fontina and Provolone cheeses melted over earthy mushrooms and bright gremolata. The result is a deeply savory, herbaceous grilled cheese with balanced richness and acidity.
- **Wine Country Melt** – *Chef Mark Zabrowski, Co-owner & Chef, Much Ado About Pizza, Pleasanton, Calif.*
 - Inspired by California wine country, this sandwich blends Real California Brie, Cheddar, and Gouda cheeses with a Chardonnay-infused paste on rye bread. Layers of avocado, tomato, and bacon add texture and freshness, while a Dijon-mayo crust delivers a crisp, savory finish.

Finalist chefs each received \$1,000 for their entries, and category winners earned an additional \$1,000 each. A digital recipe book with detailed recipes is available on the CMAB Foodservice website: [Home - CMAB Grilled Cheese Sandwich Contest](#).

Restaurant operators and chefs seeking to refresh menus or introduce new concepts can explore the full lineup of Real California contest recipe books on the CMAB Foodservice website while discovering how Real California cheese delivers the flavor, melt, and performance chefs rely on in professional kitchens.

California is a reliable, consistent source of sustainable dairy products used by chefs throughout the world. As the nation's largest dairy state, California boasts an impressive lineup of award-winning cheesemakers and dairy processors, that help drive dining innovation nationwide.

California is the leading producer of fluid milk, butter, and ice cream as well as Mozzarella and Monterey Jack cheeses. California milk and dairy foods can be identified by the Real California Milk seal, which means they are made with sustainably sourced milk from the state's dairy farm families.

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About Real California Milk / The California Milk Advisory Board

The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), an instrumentality of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, is funded by the state's dairy farm families who lead the nation in sustainable dairy farming practices. With a vision to nourish the world with the wholesome goodness of Real California Milk, the CMAB's programs focus on increasing demand for

California's sustainable dairy products in the state, across the U.S., and around the world through advertising, public relations, research, and retail and foodservice promotional programs.

The Foodservice Division of the CMAB supports foodservice operators and distributors that use Real California dairy products. The CMAB offers marketing and promotional support for foodservice operators that purchase dairy products with the Real California Milk seal, which means they are made with milk from California's family dairy farms, using some of the most sustainable dairy practices in the nation.

For more information on sourcing cheese from California, contact the foodservice team at 209.883.6455 (MILK), email businessdevelopment@cmab.net, or visit RealCaliforniaMilkFoodservice.com, [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).