



*Open air judging of new artisans*

## Hungarian Craft Revival

During Hungary's Communist era, quality cheese was in short supply. Some hobby cheesemakers made it at home, but it was prohibited for sale at markets, where fewer than a dozen commercial varieties were available. In an effort to revive the tradition of the artisan (házi) craft, a cheesemaker from Körösladány, a village on the eastern Hungarian prairie, established the Hungarian Cheesemaker's Guild in 2009.

The guild, which began with five members, promotes quality and tradition and provides education. This past summer, after training five new potential members for about a year, the guild held its first public entrance exam. On tables erected under tents in the garden behind a local museum dedicated to village life and history, examinees prepared cheeses and butter in the open air under the watchful

eyes of the judges. Participants had already been tested on their theoretical knowledge and the samples they had brought from home had been judged. But equally important, explained Narciz Mircz, a cheesemaker from Debrecen and a member of the guild, was for the judges to observe how they worked toward the end product. At the end of the day, after all the cream had been separated, butter churned, curds and whey separated, and cheeses kneaded and rolled, all examinees passed and were admitted to the guild. Two higher-level training courses remain, each lasting about a year. Now that the guild has doubled its membership, organizers are hopeful that Hungary's artisan cheese revival will flourish.

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