**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**August 6, 2014**

**Contact:**

**Noreen Rueckert**

**Green County Cheese Days  
608.328.1838**

**cheesedays@tds.net**

**GREEN COUNTY CHEESE DAYS CELEBRATES 100 YEARS**

***Right away you’ll sense the cheesy vibe…***

Welcome to Wisconsin’s Green County – home to the granddaddy of Midwestern food fests – Green County Cheese Days in Monroe. September 19-21, 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the festival that celebrates the cheesemaking, dairy farming, and Swiss traditions that continue to this day.

**Herd to curd.**

Cheesemaking first began in Green County in 1846 when Swiss immigrants purchased a few dozen dairy cows and herded them from Ohio to New Glarus, Wisconsin. By 1873, the locals were churning out wedges, blocks and wheels of American, Limburger and Swiss cheese. Today you’ll find more than fifty different varieties, with many available for sampling in the Cheese Tent at the festival.

**Thank goodness for sauerkraut!**

The idea for the festival dates back to 1914, when some aspiring entrepreneurs in downtown Monroe were looking for a way to attract visitors and boost business. After a visit to Sauerkraut Day in Forreston, Illinois – they came home inspired, with visions of cheese curds dancing in their heads. “If Forreston can have a festival based on sauerkraut, we can certainly do something better with cheese,” one of them likely said, and the first Cheese Day was planned in less than a month. Despite the lack of Twitter, Facebook and text messaging, nearly 4,000 people arrived by train, horse-drawn rig, and roadster. More than 13,000 cheese sandwiches were served and the program included vaudeville entertainment and political speeches. According to the local newspaper, “merrymakers danced in the street to band music all afternoon.”

**A celebration too good to end.**

After some stops and starts (War! Great Depression! Ten-Year Hiatus!) the festival settled into the pattern of a three-day, every-other year event in 1970. Today, more than 100,000 revelers descend on Monroe to polka and yodel, play alphorns, eat cheese by the truckload, and party – literally – ‘til the cows go home.

**Cheesy is what we strive for.**

Right away you’ll sense the cheesy vibe: old time copper kettle cheesemaking demonstrations, cheese pairings, and cheese sampling galore. On the menu: gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches, the best deep-fried cheese curds in the nation, cheesecake on a stick, and Limburger “sliders.” And in honor of the 100th anniversary – a “Procession of Cheesemakers” with a cheesemaker from each of the dozen factories proudly bearing their signature cheese to lend pomp and circumstance to the festival’s opening ceremony.

**Send in the cows.**

The best of the area’s bovines (Brown Swiss, Jersey, Guernsey, Holstein, Red & White Holstein, Ayrshire, and Milking Shorthorn) make the trip to the “big city” to play starring roles in the wildly popular Cow Milking Contest. For many, the highlight of the weekend is The Swiss Colony Cheese Days Parade, led by a herd of Brown Swiss cows sporting clanging bells and floral wreaths. “Alpabfahrt” is the Swiss-German word for the centuries-old tradition of herdsmen bringing the cattle down from the Alps at the end of the grazing season – following a summer nibbling pastures of tall grass and tasty herbs – ideal for crafting delicious Alpine cheeses.

**Hundreds of ways to share the fun.**

To mark this special anniversary, more than 100 accordion players will play the official Cheese Days Song (of course there is a song!) with the Monroe City Band. In keeping with the theme of 100, dairy farm tours will showcase two family farms where multiple generations have tilled the land and milked the cows for more than a century. Cheese Days also features three entertainment stages with everything from Swiss alphorns and yodeling to rock-n-roll party bands. Also on the schedule – arts and crafts, brewery and distillery tours, activities for kids and antique tractors. In fact, there are more fun things to do at Cheese Days than there are holes in a giant wheel of Swiss cheese!

**Green County Cheese Days in Monroe, Wisconsin**

**September 19 – 21, 2014**

***“Old World Tradition…Out-of-this-World Celebration!”***

**cheesedays.com, facebook.com/cheesedays**

**Noreen Rueckert, Coordinator (cheesedays@tds.net, 608.328.1838)**

**SIDEBAR – LIMBURGER QUEEN**

Chalet Cheese Company near Monroe, Wisconsin, stands as the lone remaining domestic producer of Limburger cheese in America. Deemed “stinkiest cheese in the world,” this aromatic favorite is served up in style with onion and mustard on rye bread; a mint on the side. Wisconsin Secretary of Tourism Stephanie Klett loves Limburger so much that she will be honored as the “Official Limburger Queen” of the 2014 Cheese Days Festival!

###