

Bartlett's News Briefs

January 27, 2020

Cheese the day!

Get ready to unrind at the 5th Annual
PACIFICA JACK CHEESE CONTEST

BY JEAN BARTLETT



Jean Bartlett photo, April 6, 2019

A number of cows – Elsie, Tom and Lucy – were photobombed by the spirited ghost of Mrs. Mori, far right, at the 4th Annual Pacifica Jack Cheese Contest. Rumor has it that they all gave nom de plumes and their real names are: Carol Fregly, Marv Morganti, Robby Bancroft and Robine Runneals.

On the first day of March, 2019, the unthinkable happened. Longtime Pacifican and San Francisco Chronicle reader Marv Morganti, slammed down – unfinished – his favorite homemade Pacifica Jack cheese sandwich.

"Cheesegate," he cried as he poured through the last words of Nick Rahaim's very engaging Chronicle article: "The competing legends of Monterey Jack."

Morganti, a longtime member of the Pacifica Historical Society (PHS), pointed out there was a Swiss-size hole in the carefully crafted story. The feature investigated the multi-layered, California storied past of this "semisoft white cheese," where the legends of its origins travel such diverse milky roads as Spain, Mexico, Portugal and even Ancient Rome. At least one of these roads leads to (19th century) Monterey Peninsula landowner David Jacks, a.k.a. David Jack. This fellow was so unpopular with the locals of his time – because of his land-theft-but-no-clearly-broken-law tactics – that many Montereyans thought a noose was too good for him. He traveled with bodyguards.

But this is the part of the Chronicle story that had many Pacificans shouting "How Dairy!" for there was no mention of the cheese-lined trail that led straight from a Pacifica fromager into the kitchen of David Jacks. Here's that tale, sliced from my own many pennings on this proud Pacifica matter.

In 2015, Pacifican Kathleen Manning, owner of Manning's Prints Old & Rare and then president of the PHS, came across a first edition, 1937, of "Eating Around San Francisco" by Ruth Thompson and Chef Louis Hanges. The book features local "best" eateries, some still familiar today such as the Palace Hotel, the Beach Chalet and Fisherman's Grotto. Others are favorites now gone and they include: Mission Dolores Grill, Frank's Place at Moss Beach and Ray Mori's Place at Mori's Point, located in today's Pacifica. It is at the latter locale where Pacifica Jack was not only created but stolen.

The authors wrote: "In a rambling, old-fashioned but comfortable 21-room farmhouse, high over the cliffs brooding over the waters of the Pacific, just 11 miles south of San Francisco, Ray Mori and his wife, Marie, live on 10 of the original 19 acres which Stefano Mori bought on his arrival from Italy in 1888."

Thompson and Hanges went on to list the assets of the country-style hotel and restaurant, which included: the wooden back porch that leads into the bar; the kitchen brimming with the aromas of "cooking sauces, soups and meats;" the beautiful storeroom filled with cheeses and "salami hung from the ceiling."

But it is on page 285 where readers discover the Pacifica Jack cheese evidentiary paragraph.

"Returning to the bar room to talk with the Mori's before dinner was served," one of the author's noted, "I was interested to discover that it was Stefano Mori who first made what we today call Monterey cheese. Having been born and brought up in Italy, Stefano and his wife learned how to make cheese. They made it on their Mori Point property, getting their rennet from the stomach of a freshly killed calf. The cheese was very good. An Italian named Baldocchi was a friend of the family. He learned how to make the cheese and went to Monterey and manufactured it on a commercial scale. As he was on the Jack Ranch (owned by notorious scoundrel David Jacks), the cheese is now known as Jack or Monterey Cheese."

The ever-resourceful Manning also found Stefano Mori's original recipe and since 2015, Pacifica Jack has been made for the PHS by a professional cheesemaker. It sells for \$8 a pound and is available at the Pacifica Coastside Museum. To date, more than two tons have been sold.

Shortly after the Rahaim story ran, San Francisco Chronicle Editor-in-Chief Audrey Cooper was written explaining the local meltdown. She in turn dispatched legendary columnist Leah Garchik to set Pacifica minds at cheese. "**NOTHING CHEESY ABOUT THE PROUD CHEESE-LOVERS OF PACIFICA,**" Garchik's April 10, 2019 story began.

As always, Pacificans stand by their cheese and are ready to show the world, once again, what makes Pacifica grate.



Jean Bartlett photo

Pacifica Jack, California's original jack cheese.

The 5th Annual Pacifica Jack Cheese Contest sponsored by the Pacifica Historical Society, Saturday, April 4, Pacifica Moose Lodge, 776 Bradford Way, Pacifica. Contestants arrive: 2:30 p.m. Judging: 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Cheese party and awards: 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. \$10 admission. (*Contestant application deadline is March 28. Contest entry fee: \$20 per entry. See next page for event details and application.*) No host beverages accompanied by bite-size samples of each contestant's mouth-watering entry. Cheese the day!



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco.

5th Annual

PACIFICA JACK CHEESE CONTEST

APRIL 4, 2020



Sponsored by the Pacifica Historical Society

Moose Lodge

776 Bradford Way, Pacifica

2:30 PM	contestants arrive
3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	judging
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM	CHEESE PARTY + awards
	\$10 admission no host beverages



CONTEST RULES

- contest entry fee: \$20 per entry
- contestants may submit a maximum of 2 entries (\$20 per entry)
- each entry must indicate one category for judging
- each entry will receive 2 lb. of Pacifica Jack Cheese prior to competition
- each entry must use both pounds of cheese + provide "bite size" samples
- contestant to provide entry recipe for Pacifica Jack Cheese cookbook
- all entries will served by contestants & devoured by party attendees.

APPLICATION deadline: March 28, 2020

name: _____ assistant's name: _____

address: _____

phone: _____

email: _____

category: hors d'oevres | dessert - *special awards: creative use, people's choice + contestant's choice*

mail application and \$20 entry fee per entry to:

Pacifica Historical Society 580 M Crespi Drive Pacifica, CA 94044

Kathleen (650) 359-5462 - kathleen@pacificahistory.org

Linda (650) 438-4848 - linda@pacificahistory.org