

Woolworths Mature Gouda named South African Dairy Product of the Year 2024

A 10-month-old mature gouda, made especially for Woolworths by Lactalis South Africa, was crowned the Dairy Product of the Year at the recent South African Dairy Awards.



Image supplied

The winning Woolworths Mature Gouda 10 months was one of a record number of 1,029 dairy products from 78 producers, including 12 first-time entrants, that vied for the attention of the judges, a team of 82 representing 52 companies.

From the high number of entries, 110 products were selected as SA Champions, standing out as winners in each championships class. Thirty products were awarded with the esteemed Qualité mark of excellence, the only mark of excellence in the South African dairy industry.

"Every dairy producer's dream is to have their product selected as Product of the Year in a competition like this," says chief judge and dairy expert Graham Sutherland.

"The Woolworths 10-month mature Gouda has established a legacy for exceptional quality over a period of time. What makes it so unique is the combination of taste and texture, which produces a flavourful and satisfying tasting experience. The producer has put all the necessary measures in place to ensure that the quality of this cheese is maintained to the highest standard, and the competency of the cheesemaker is incredibly high. With this product, they have discovered an extremely potent winning formula."

Herman Janse van Rensburg, general manager for Lactalis South Africa, says his team is thrilled about claiming the 2024 Product of the Year award.

"We are excited that the top dairy award has gone to team Lactalis South Africa for an incredible sixth time in the past eight years. This is an incredible achievement. Thank you to all our dedicated teams who work incredibly hard and always strive to maintain the high-quality standards our consumers expect from us as a company. Also, thank you to Agri-Expo for providing this opportunity to showcase South Africa's dairy expertise."

This year's event marked the 191st edition of the SA Dairy Championships, the biggest and oldest dairy competition in Africa.

Breyton Milford, general manager of Agri-Expo, the host of the event since 1834, says the championships underscores the diversity and extensive array of products the industry manufactures, but it also shines a spotlight on the significant contribution the dairy sector makes to the South African economy.

The inaugural Hollard Game Changer Award

Agri-Expo honoured 34-year-old Clement October, head cheesemaker at Klein River Cheese, with the inaugural Hollard Game Changer Award along with a cash prize of R50,000. October has been part of the award-winning Klein River Cheese team for 15 years, with the last three years at the helm.

According to Milford, this new accolade for the SA Dairy Championships is dedicated to honouring young individuals who have already made significant strides in the dairy industry. "It should serve as both recognition of their achievements and encouragement to continue their pursuit of excellence."

Promoting innovation and quality

"This year's record number of entries and excellent results testify to an innovative industry with healthy competition between bigger manufacturers and smaller entrepreneurs," says Milford.

"Congratulations to Fairview for winning six Qualité awards; Fair Cape Dairies for claiming five; Belnori Boutique Cheesery, who took home four; Lactalis South Africa, who won three; Fairfield, Lancewood, and Polar Ice Cream Company who were each awarded two Qualité's; as well as all the other winners."

For the full list of winners, go to <https://cheesesa.co.za/>