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California Cheeses Win Big at 2024 Caputo Cup in Naples, Italy

Top Three American Division Pizzas Feature California-Made Mozzarella as Key Topping

Tracy, Calif. – July 12, 2024 – The top 3 championship pizzaiolos in the Traditional American Division at the 2024 Trofeo Caputo, aka the Caputo Cup, shared a strong California connection: all three chefs used California-made Mozzarella in their winning pizzas.

The overall American Division winner, Siler Chapman, is a co-owner with his wife Amber of King of Fire in Fort Mill, SC. Lars Smith, owner of State of Mind Public House & Pizzeria in Los Altos, Calif., earned second place, and Leah Scurto of PizzaLeah in Windsor, Calif., came in third. Scurto, who was sponsored by the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) for winning the Real California Pizza Contest Tournament of Champions cook-off in October 2023, used two California-made cheeses on her winning pizza.

“A winning pizza needs a winning cheese. We’re so proud of all of the pizza makers and thrilled that the three best pizzas in the American division were topped with Real California Mozzarella, a testament to the cheesemakers and the quality milk from our California dairy farm families” said Mike Gallagher, Business and Market Development Consultant for the CMAB.

In the American category winner, Chapman took home the prize with his “Honey 2.0” pizza, which included California-made whole milk Mozzarella, sauce, pepperoni, bacon, red pepper

flakes and honey. He said that he has been competing in pizza cook-offs since 2003 and had never won a major competition, “I previously won three world championship in acrobatic dough tossing, but to win in the pizza competition in Naples is the biggest accomplishment of my life ... next to my family, of course! It really meant the world to me.”

He added that the winning trophy was a validation of a major business decision that he made earlier this year when he decided to switch cheese suppliers, to source a California-made Mozzarella.

Smith made a “California-style” pizza to impress the judges and earn second place. The key ingredients on his winning pie were all California-made: Whole-milk Mozzarella, tomato sauce and extra virgin olive oil.

“Competing in the city that gave the world pizza was a dream come true. I really wanted to show off what we do every day in our restaurants, using the same ingredients and techniques,” Smith said. “I believe the best Mozzarella in the world comes from California and I think I proved my point.”

Smith also earned second place with a Roman-style pizza in the Pinsa, Metro & Pala division, which are styles of long pizzas made on wooden peels.

Scurto’s award-winning pizza was a three-cheese pie with garlic. “It’s a personal favorite of mine since I was a child,” she said. The pizza included two California-made cheeses: Fresh Mozzarella and an Asiago-style cheese.

“I was absolutely thrilled to be the CMAB’s representative. As a native Californian, I’m very proud of showcasing all things California around the world,” Scurto said. “Winning the CMAB’s Tournament of Champions allowed me the opportunity to do just that.”

Besides sharing their love of California Mozzarella, the three chefs maintain a close friendship and were strongly pulling for each other at the Caputo Cup. “The camaraderie was the fun part, as it elevates all of us to be better,” said Chapman.

Smith added, “The win was being there with so many friends and family celebrating our love for pizza. Getting to share the podium with two of my close friends, Leah and Siler, made it even more special.”

“The CMAB, California’s dairy farmers and cheesemakers want to say thank you to the three chefs for letting us be a small part of their accomplishments at the 2024 Caputo Cup,” said Mike Gallagher. “And of course we are especially proud to sponsor Chef Leah Scurto, who helped to shine the light on California dairy!”

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

powered by quality milk from California dairy farm families who are focused on a sustainable future.

Information, tools, and tips for foodservice operators are available at realcaliforniamilk.com/foodservice.

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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 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), businessdevelopment@cmab.net or [RCM Foodservice Website](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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