

Hereford Family Dinner

States bring signature dishes to the first official night of junior nationals.

by *Grace Jacobson*

Food brings people together. No matter who you are or where you are from, a shared meal can make friends out of strangers. That is what made the state tailgate at the 2021 VitaFirm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) so special.

Fourteen state junior associations set up tents in front of the American Royal facility and provided their state's favorites to kick off the week. The food showed off either household name companies or foods created in their respected states.

Fresh squeaky cheese

Wisconsin's booth workers donned their signature cheesehead hats.

The Wisconsin booth served cups of fresh cheese curds. The curds are

called "squeaky cheese" because the freshness and the cheesemaking process cause the cheese to squeak when it is eaten.

"Everyone in Wisconsin loves dairy products," a booth worker said.

Others prefer to eat this Wisconsin staple either breaded and fried or served with sausage and crackers.

Alabama sweets

The Alabama booth sat right next to Wisconsin. It included three girls just as sweet as the pecan treats they served. There were mini-pecan pies and pecans in a key lime coating. Alabama is one of the top U.S. pecan producers annually.

The booth workers believe that the treats are great for a snack or for dessert.

Southern feast

Mississippi was one of the most popular booths to visit at the state tailgate. With fried catfish, Mississippi mud pie and homemade

blueberry lemonade, there was something for everyone.

Kathryn Johnson, Ruth, Miss., served the blueberry lemonade to a long line of JNHE participants. "The lemonade goes best with a hot summer day," she said.

More cookies

South Dakota helped kick off the week with classic cookies and cream ice cream from the South Dakota State University (SDSU) dairy store.

"We thought it was important to bring the ice cream and express that this ice cream is one of our favorite things," said Jacee Dvork, Lake Andes, S.D.

The ice cream also makes a mean milkshake, best whipped up by the SDSU dairy store. Dvork's favorite side dish for SDSU's cookies and cream ice cream is more cookies.

Corn and beans

The Oklahoma juniors decided to keep it simple and traditional with cowboy beans and cornbread.



“Cornbread is a staple in all Oklahoma families,” according to one parent.

Juniors used cornbread mix from Shawnee Mills, which was established in Oklahoma and where it maintains its headquarters.



Ginger ale and cheese dip

A fan favorite was the Kentucky booth serving Ale-8-1 and cheese dip. Ale-8-1, a ginger ale, is a popular drink produced and sold solely in Kentucky.

While the cheese dip complemented the ginger ale well, the dip has endless uses. “This cheese dip goes best with crackers or pretzels,” a Kentucky junior member said. “You can also use it as the cheese on a cheeseburger.”



Indiana

Indiana served up a sugar-coated treat straight from Amish country. The bite-sized donut holes were a big hit with attendees, and even reminded some people of a favorite Hoosier pastime.

One of the booth workers commented how the donut holes looked like basketballs, so they had to be popular in the Hoosier state.

Country cuisine

It’s hard to mess up a ham sandwich, but Virginia elevated this simple staple. The state shared country ham sandwiches at the tailgate.

“Country ham originated in Virginia, and Smithfield is from Virginia,” a parent says. “They are one of the biggest names you would find.”

Country ham sandwiches are a great option for any event. “Racing is big in some parts of the state, and you will find a lot of those tailgates serving these since they are easy to grab,” another booth worker said. “They are also very popular at weddings or family get-togethers.”

Minnesota

Minnesota shared their love for a local food and meat processing company. Hormel Foods pepperoni and cheese sticks were served to all those who visited the Minnesota booth.

Even though a cheese stick was included with the pepperoni, the three boys working the booth also recommended trying them with melted cheese. One even went as far as to recommend dipping the pepperoni in ranch.



Other tailgating

Iowa served corn on the cob and pork loin.

Kansas provided Yoder Amish cheese and Hereford shaped cookies.

Texas brought in a snow cone truck for everyone to enjoy.

Other states prepared walking tacos and other delicious foods.

The American Hereford Association staff capped off the night by serving Certified Hereford Beef® tri-tip sandwiches. The tailgate was filled with music from a DJ stationed in the middle of the event, as well as conversations of people reconnecting with friends who haven’t seen each other since the last JNHE. **HW**