

Cheese Curling is an event you have to see to believe!

Some call it bizarre. Others just shake their head and walk away, not knowing what to think.

We call it "The International Cheese Curling Championships," and you will find it only at the Arthur Amish Country Cheese Festival.

This year's 23rd annual event, fully sanctioned by the International Cheese Curling Association, is set for 12:30 p.m. Saturday at the intersection of Vine and Illinois streets.

The competition sounds simple: Deliver a four-pound wheel of cheese down a smooth nylon playing surface ("rink") so the cheese stops on a four-part bullseye. Delivery can be made by sliding, rolling, or tossing the wheel.

In reality the results can be astonishing.

Cheese wheels aren't always perfectly round, possibly due to the late summer heat that softens the packaged contents. Therefore, some of the best rolling wheels can veer off course and miss the target.

Cheese wheels don't often slide the full distance, creating moments of anxiety for the "curler," the one delivering the cheese wheel.

And tossing the wheel at the bullseye often leads to unpredictable results as the wheel sometimes lands with a thud and stops, lands on a side and hops or rolls in an unpredictable manner, or lands way off course, scattering participants and spectators who crowd the "rink" to see just what is go-

ing on.

Nevertheless, "curls" that reach and land on the target receive points based on 4 points for the center bullseye, 3 for the next ring out from the bullseye, 2 points for the next ring, and one point for the outer ring. Attempts missing the target receive no points.

Competitors form teams of four players. Three of the players have two opportunities each to "curl" (slide, roll, or throw) a "stone" (cheese wheel) towards the target while the fourth team member precedes the "stone" down the court and uses a broom to keep the "stone" on target.

To put the degree of difficulty in perspective, a team could possibly score 24 points (six curls reaching dead center at four points each). However, in the contest's history, point totals realistically average eight per team.

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Four-person teams compete in cheese curling. One team member is the broomer, or sweeper, who guides the "stone," a four-pound cheese wheel toward the target with a broom.

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Cheese curling is based loosely on
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