

FALL 2019

fresh pickings

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE IOWA FOOD & FAMILY PROJECT

**FALL FUN AT CENTER
GROVE ORCHARD**

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**MEET A PASSIONATE
PIG FARMER**

.....
**DISCOVER DECORAH'S
LOCAL FOOD SCENE**





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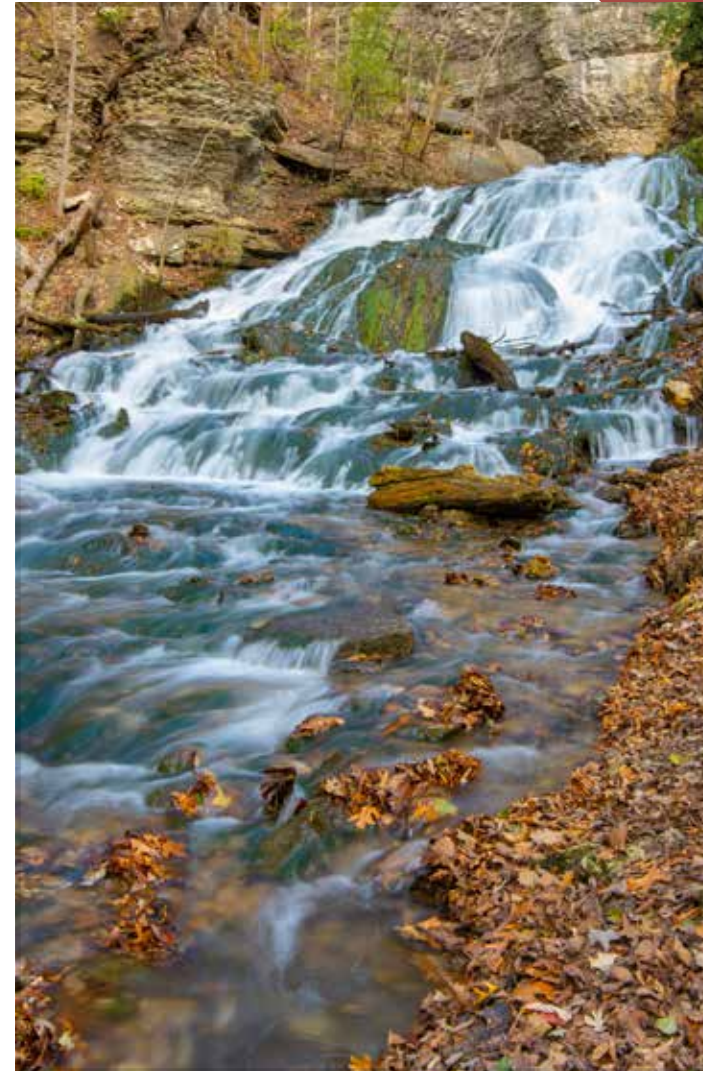
Welcome

IN THE FALL ISSUE OF *FRESH PICKINGS* MAGAZINE,
YOU'LL FIND STORIES THAT CELEBRATE THE
INCREDIBLE FOOD, FARMS AND FAMILIES THAT MAKE
IOWA A SPECIAL PLACE TO LIVE.

THIS QUARTERLY PUBLICATION IS COURTESY OF
THE IOWA FOOD & FAMILY PROJECT – AN INITIATIVE
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RAISED AROUND THE STATE AND MEET THE FARMERS
WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN; 24/7, 365 DAYS A YEAR.

WE NETWORK WITH NEARLY 35 FOOD, FARMING AND
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IOWA'S HOMEGROWN FOODS AND HOMETOWN VALUES.
YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNERS ON PAGE 4.





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fresh pickings

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE IOWA FOOD & FAMILY PROJECT

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Fresh Pickings is published four times a year by: Iowa Soybean Association, 1255 SW Prairie Trail Parkway, Ankeny, Iowa 50023

For advertising information, please contact kvisser@iasoybeans.com.

Advertising space reservations must be made through the above contact information. In consideration of the acceptance of the advertisement, the agency and advertiser must, in respect of the contents of the advertisement, indemnify and save the publisher harmless against any expense arising from claims or actions against the publisher because of the publication of the content of the advertisement.

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A SEASON FOR COMRADERY



According to every strength-finder quiz or personality test, I seek and create harmony. I'm happiest when there's routine and collaboration.

There's no better season than fall to satisfy a craving for collaboration and the comradery that naturally comes with it.

Football stadiums erupt with a collective roar of cheers – or groans – on game day. Families gather around the kitchen table to share “highs and lows” from the day. Neighbors deliver meals to farmers working around-the-clock to harvest this year's crop. Crossing guards don neon vests to safely guide children across the street on their way to school. Even trees are in sync as their leaves turn rich, warm colors.

For a moment, it feels like everyone is on the same page.

One of my favorite things about the Iowa Food & Family Project is our vibrant team of partners. The diverse network – including commodity groups, agribusinesses, restaurants, retailers and health organizations – brings ideas, passions and connections throughout the farm-to-fork chain.

Together, we have a powerful opportunity to showcase farm families and the work they do to feed others and care for their communities. And just as importantly, we have a special opportunity to inspire food-loving consumers to get connected to farmers and feel confident about the food they enjoy.

I hope you feel a sense of togetherness and comradery in this issue of Fresh Pickings. From a family's love for raising pigs to a community's local food scene to a football huddle on college game day, the stories are sure to showcase the collaboration that makes our state shine.

I'd like to extend a special “thank you” to the Iowa Beef Industry Council, Iowa Corn Growers Association, Iowa Soybean Association and MercyOne for choosing to advertise in the first three issues of Fresh Pickings. Their support is an important part of the collaboration that makes this publication possible.

Enjoy the issue,

Kelly Visser



WE WANT TO HEAR WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT *FRESH PICKINGS*! SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AT iowafoodandfamily.com/magazine/feedback

COMFORT FOOD CLASSICS

VIBRANT LANDSCAPES AND COMFORTING FLAVORS SIGNAL FALL IS HERE.

By Cristen Clark



Cristen Clark is a pig farmer, creator of the Food & Swine blog and award-winning baker and cook. She lives on a farm near Runnells with her husband Mike and children Halle and Barrett.

Fall has always been my favorite season. The landscape of our beautiful state is draped in vibrant and warm hues, providing the perfect scenic backdrop for Iowa's corn and soybean harvest. The sweltering heat of summer gives way to crisp nights where headlights from combines and football Friday night lights dot rural horizons.

Harvest time is synonymous with the return of comfort foods in the kitchen. Comfort foods do more than warm a winter chill; they also ooze nostalgia. These foods, often family heirloom recipes scratched onto well-worn recipe cards, evoke many emotions and transport those who enjoy them to a different place and time.

Chicken noodle soup is the ultimate comfort food for me in a literal sense. My mom always whipped up a batch when I was under the weather. When I enjoy a bowl with my children now, I remember the blanket nest mom would swaddle me in. She also never minded when I tipped the soup bowl to my chin to slurp the remaining broth.

In this recipe, you'll find basic chicken noodle soup ingredients with one Iowa staple that elevates the dish from "standard" to "Midwest classic." Sweet corn kernels are added to provide a fresh, sweet note to the warm, savory soup.

The final splash of half-and-half is the perfect finishing touch for this recipe, giving the soup richness and a smooth velvety texture.

Soups and stews always benefit from some extra attention. Place a bundle of herbs in a homemade cheesecloth sachet to prevent unwanted herbaceous additions to your soup like rosemary stems or shards of broken bay leaves. Simply remove and discard the sachet before serving. Try finishing a hearty tomato-based soup with a splash of balsamic vinegar or add red wine in the cooking process to elevate flavors and add brightness and acidity. Elevate condiments like cheese by grating your own off the block for superior melting and creaminess.

This soup recipe is flexible and accommodates plenty of substitutions. In place of the cooked chicken, consider swapping in cooked turkey breast pieces or cooked ground beef or ground pork sausage crumbles.

The bonus recipe you'll find is my husband's favorite comfort food that his mom makes for him. Butter dips are a delicious, biscuit-like, easy-to-make accompaniment to a multitude of entrées. They do an excellent job soaking up soup, and any leftovers can be enjoyed at breakfast, warmed and spread with a bit of strawberry jam or Iowa honey. 🍯

HOMEMADE CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP WITH BUTTER DIPS

SOUP

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon olive or soybean oil
- ½ cup yellow onion, diced
- ½ cup carrots, diced
- 4 stalks celery, diced
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves (or 2 teaspoons dried thyme leaves)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 can (8 ounces) sweet corn kernels, drained of ½ the canning liquid
- 4 cups chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon water
- ½ pound cellentani noodles or egg noodles, cooked and drained
- 2 to 3 cups cooked chicken, diced
- ½ cup half-and-half or whole milk

BUTTER DIPS

- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 5 tablespoons cold butter, cubed
- 1 cup cold milk
- 5 tablespoons butter

For the soup, in a large stockpot melt butter with olive oil; add the onion and sauté until translucent, about 4 minutes. Stir in carrots, celery, thyme, salt and pepper and cook until vegetables are tender, stirring frequently, about 3 minutes. Add corn and chicken stock and bring to a boil.

In a small dish, combine the cornstarch and water to make a paste and whisk into the boiling soup. Boil for 1 minute. Stir in the cooked noodles and chicken and simmer for 2 minutes. Turn off heat, add half-and-half or whole milk and season with additional salt and pepper to taste.

For the butter dips, preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Use a pastry blender or two knives to cut in the 5 tablespoons butter until the butter is pea-sized. Add milk and stir until incorporated.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and pat into an 8x12-inch rectangle. Slice the dough in half lengthwise, then cut crosswise into 2-inch-wide fingers to make 12 biscuits.

Place the remaining 5 tablespoons butter in a 9x13-inch baking dish and place in the preheated oven to melt. Remove pan from the oven and arrange dough fingers on top of melted butter, side by side. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until lightly golden and firm to the touch. Serve warm with soup.

Nutrition per serving of soup: 539 Calories, 15g Total Fat, 145mg Cholesterol, 737mg Sodium, 53g Carbohydrate, 4g Fiber, 48g Protein

Nutrition per butter dip: 107 Calories, 6g Total Fat, 15mg Cholesterol, 197mg Sodium, 13g Carbohydrate, 0.3g Fiber, 2g Protein

Servings: Soup 6, Butter Dips 22



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FIGHTING THE FLU

GET AHEAD OF FLU SEASON WITH THESE FACTS AND PREVENTION TIPS.

Ready or not, flu season is right around the corner! To help you proactively prepare, Nicole Miller, ARNP, at MercyOne Northeast Iowa answers frequently asked questions about the flu shot vaccine.

WHAT IS THE FLU SHOT?

The flu shot is a vaccine that provides immunization to the influenza virus, which can help your body fight the actual virus by helping to build antibodies. There are several different strains of influenza and most are classified as either influenza A or B.

WHEN IS FLU SEASON, AND WHEN SHOULD I GET MY SHOT?

Flu season begins in October or November, peaks December through February and can last until May. Flu vaccinations become available after Labor Day. It's best to get the vaccination prior to the beginning of flu season, but later vaccinations can still be effective.

WHY SHOULD I GET THE FLU SHOT?

The flu can be deadly, especially to children under the age of 5, adults over the age of 65 or those with serious other medical conditions. And even for a healthy person, the flu is just plain unpleasant!

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE STOMACH FLU AND INFLUENZA?

The stomach flu is nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and a stomach ache. Influenza mainly affects the respiratory system. Symptoms include high fever, chills, cough, fatigue, sore throat, muscle aches, runny nose or congestion and headaches.

HOW OLD SHOULD YOU BE TO GET THE SHOT?

The flu shot is recommended for everyone over the age of 6 months.

DO I NEED TO GET THE SHOT EVERY YEAR?

Yes! The flu virus is constantly changing. Every year, the composition of each immunization is reviewed and updated to predict the most predominant viruses for the coming year.

IF I GET THE FLU SHOT, CAN I STILL GET THE FLU?

The flu shot cannot cause the flu. It takes about two weeks before the shot is completely effective. Some people may experience a low-grade fever (less than 99.9 degrees F), body aches and a headache, which may be mistaken for the flu. This is the body's natural response to the inactivated virus in the vaccine.

WHAT KIND OF TREATMENT IS RECOMMENDED IF I GET THE FLU?

Influenza is not treated with antibiotics because it is caused by a virus and not bacteria. That means treatment is mainly focused on controlling symptoms such as nausea and vomiting, congestion, cough and staying hydrated. There are a few antiviral medications, but they do not stop the flu. They can be effective in shortening the course of the virus by a few days.

ORDINARY *to* EXTRAORDINARY

LOCAL ANTIQUE STORES BRING IOWANS A
ONE-OF-A-KIND SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

By Haley Banwart / Photos by Joseph L. Murphy

What's old is new again. Vintage styles in home décor are making a comeback, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs and small business owners to distinguish themselves from mainstream shopping centers.

At Gin + Tarnish, bohemian vintage meets modern farmhouse in the heart of the Midwest. Located along Main Street in Jewell, the shop opened in the fall of 2017 by third-generation collector, Clare Schwager.

"Finding good vintage is in my blood," Schwager says. "I grew up helping my mom, who runs JB Knacker in Gilbert, and I recently learned my grandma ran an antique shop, too."

During her senior year at Iowa State University, Schwager and a friend established Gin + Tarnish, starting small at shows and selling items from the back of her mom's shop.

Inspiration for the name originated from a shared love of gin and tonic cocktails and an old family name, Thanisch. According to Schwager, it was later changed to Tarnish when an ancestor who survived the Black Plague immigrated to the U.S.

"After college, my friend moved to Colorado and I started traveling across the country and living like a nomad, pedaling vintage out of the back of my car," she says. "It was fun, and everywhere I went I acquired vintage goods. My sister and I even traveled in Europe for a bit before I came back to Iowa and took the plunge by opening a permanent shop."

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

Today, the unique items Schwager has collected stateside and abroad are artistically displayed against a sea green backdrop, bay windows and a drop-cloth ceiling. It reminds Schwager of standing in the middle of the Moroccan desert.

The inventory at Gin + Tarnish is a mashup of natural elements and old-world charm. From teapots to Persian rugs, the shop features an eclectic array of oddities with cultural influences from London, Scotland, Madrid and more.

"My style shifts a little depending on the season, but I tend to gravitate toward a mix of Bohemian vintage and Scandanavian farmhouse,"

says Schwager. "I love vintage couches, paintings and natural wood products."

"There's a thrill to the hunt, and I think the slower living movement has inspired people to enjoy having something with a history."

COMMUNITY OVER COMPETITION

The trend toward vintage home goods seems to be growing. Jewell is home to several other antique shops. Rather than viewing one another as rivals, Schwager says the small business community feels like one big family.

"We all opened up in town one after the other, and it's been really helpful having neighbors," she says. "It's like the typical borrow a cup of sugar from next door, except instead of sugar we share tools or packaging materials."

"Because we all have different styles, there's a limited amount of overlap that keeps our customers interested," Schwager adds. "It's turned the community into more of a destination, and it's been exciting being able to share that experience with fellow shop owners." 🌿



Clare Schwager is a third-generation collector that brings a mashup of natural elements and old-world charm to Gin + Tarnish in Jewell.

DON'T TREAT YOUR

SOIL
LIKE
DIRT



DIG DEEPER INTO THIS REMARKABLE WORLD BENEATH YOUR FEET.

By Darcy Dougherty Maulsby | Photos by Joseph L. Murphy

Wonder why your fall garden plants aren't growing well? Curious why your lawn didn't thrive last summer? The root of these challenges may be linked to your soil.

Remember, there's a difference between soil and dirt. Dirt is what you get on your clothes and hands while gardening or farming. Soil is the basis of life, says Elyssa McFarland, a corn and soybean grower from Columbus Junction. "Soil is what grows our food. It's connected to everything we are."

All soil isn't created equal, however. On McFarland's farm in southeast Iowa, the land ranges from sandy, irrigated soils to heavy clay soils that can create drainage issues. Finding ways to maximize the productivity of these soils is important to McFarland, who also focuses on protecting the environment.

"Farmers have been interested in these topics for years, but there were always more questions than answers," says McFarland, an Iowa State University (ISU) agronomy graduate who earned her master's degrees in

agronomy and soil science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Now, we have new technology to answer more of these key questions."

SETTING THE TABLE

Improved understanding of the soil could bring changes to Iowa agriculture in the next 15 years that are as vast as the difference between the landline phone and the smartphone, notes Lee Burras, Ph.D., a professor of agronomy at ISU.



"Iowa is a beautiful place with a fascinating history. Once you understand basic geology and its connection to the soil, you can better understand the Iowa we see today," he says.

Most soils in Iowa formed 10,000 to 14,000 years ago, after the last glacier pushed south into what is now the Des Moines metro, Burras explains.

Iowa's fertile, black, prairie-derived soils are among the most productive in the world. "One of the reasons that 90 percent of Iowa is farmed is because we have incredible natural soils," Burras notes.





Elyssa McFarland embraces practices like soil sampling and cover crops to maximize the productivity of her land.

Protecting this soil is more important than ever, according to David Montgomery, Ph.D., a professor of earth and space sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle and author of “Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations.” When he spoke at the 2019 Iowa Water Conference in Ames, Montgomery explained how his wife, Anne Biklé, transformed an unproductive, barren lot on their property in the Seattle suburbs into a lush garden, thanks to manure from the local zoo and a focus on building soil health.

Montgomery says Biklé’s motto is, “The soil is hungry — let’s feed it,” and he believes it.

This doesn’t mean the farmer or gardener must do all the work. “We just set the table,”

adds Montgomery, who notes the magic lies in the soil food web, which consists of bacteria, fungi, nematodes and millions of other soil microorganisms. “These microorganisms build soil health from the inside out.”

BETTER SOIL HEALTH LEADS TO BETTER FARMING

Enhancing the soil food web involves some key practices, including minimal tillage and growing cover crops such as rye after corn and soybeans have been harvested in the fall. “I like how cover crops help control soil erosion, add organic matter to the soil and suppress weeds,” says McFarland, who began growing cover crops in 2015.

“WE ONLY HAVE ONE EARTH. LET’S CREATE A VISION TO CARE FOR OUR SOIL, CONTINUE TO UNLOCK THE MYSTERIES OF THIS COMPLEX RESOURCE AND LEAVE IT BETTER FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.”

— Elyssa McFarland

Caring for the soil also involves grid soil sampling on McFarland’s farm. Soil samples are collected from 2.5-acre grids across the field. After the samples are analyzed at a soil testing lab, a map is created to show areas of high fertility, adequate fertility and low fertility throughout the field. This allows McFarland to fine-tune fertilizer applications, adding nutrients where they are needed to grow a healthy crop and cutting back where nutrients are not needed. This also helps keep excess nutrients out of Iowa’s water supplies.

“Being able to measure results is a key to better soil health and better farming,” says McFarland, who is also a former development director for the Soil Health Partnership (SHP), a farmer-led research network designed to measure the impacts of implementing soil health practices on farms.

PARTNERSHIPS HOLD A KEY TO SUCCESS

Approximately 220 farms in 15 states across the

Midwest and beyond are involved in SHP, which was formed in 2014. “Farmers want to learn more and find ways to implement new practices that improve soil health,” says Lisa Kubik, an SHP field manager who farms and raises cattle near Traer with her family.

Field days filled with educational sessions and hands-on demonstrations are hosted by SHP. The group relies on partnerships with more than 100 organizations, ranging from the Iowa Corn Growers Association and Iowa Soybean Association to various conservation groups, to connect more farmers with soil health initiatives. “When we come together, we can multiply our efforts,” Kubik says. “It’s all about continuous improvement.”

It’s an exciting time to be a farmer and soil scientist, McFarland adds. “We only have one earth. Let’s create a vision to care for our soil, continue to unlock the mysteries of this complex resource and leave it better for the next generation.”





BUSHEL OF FUN

**AT CENTER GROVE ORCHARD, FAMILY
EXPERIENCES AND APPLE ATTRACTIONS
ARE THE CREAM OF THE CROP.**

By Ann Thelen | Photos by Joseph L. Murphy

Hop aboard a train on the CGO Express. Soak in the laughter of kids playing in a corn-filled pool. Pick a peck of crisp and delicious apples. Enjoy a tasty meal. A trip to Center Grove Orchard in Cambridge is where bushels of fun experiences are grown every fall.

Center Grove – a popular central Iowa attraction – has been in operation for 25 years. Larry and Pat Black and their children planted the first apple trees in 1986. And, it wasn't just a few trees – it was 1,000! They harvested the first fruits of their labor in 1993 and opened for business the next year. Today, 6,000 apple trees of 34 delicious varieties cover 20 acres at the orchard.

Center Grove revolves around the same passion from which it was started – passion for the land, for the community and for offering wholesome, family-friendly fun. As a working farm and apple orchard, Center Grove offers a lively farm atmosphere while providing visitors with an enjoyable, educational experience in a peaceful country setting.

STRONG ROOTS BRANCH OUT

Farming has always been at the core of the Black family's life. Larry spent his career operating his family's hybrid seed corn business, carrying on his parents' legacy who were traditional row crop farmers. Pat was a teacher

and librarian, and growing up, her family had a 10,000-tree orchard in the suburbs of Chicago.

Although Larry passed away in 1999, his children are intentional in carrying his vision forward throughout every aspect of the business. Steve Black, son of Larry and Pat, is Center Grove's owner and operator. In addition to operating Center Grove, Steve farms about 500 acres of corn, soybeans, rye and hay. Every year, Steve's sister Deanna – the self-proclaimed "Director of Fun" – comes from her home in Ohio to work at the orchard. In the summer, she conducts an agriculture learning camp for kids and returns for fall's busy season.



“We’ve created a place where families can spend an entire day and make memories,” Black says. “The orchard is a way to introduce kids and adults to farming. Our activities, such as interacting with farm animals, racing on pedal tractors, jumping on a trampoline or going through a 5-acre corn maze, are things us kids did growing up on the farm. We want to bring those same experiences to this generation and the next.”

Amid the fun attractions, sprinkled throughout the multi-acre farm are aptly named food stands – the Feed Bunk, Apple Jacks, Shucks, the Pumpkin House and the Country Store. Apple-centered goodies – caramel apples, apple nachos, cider donuts and cider slushies – are paired with burgers, hot dogs and street tacos. Inside the Hay Café, sandwiches, chicken pot pie and soups are offered rain or shine. The aromas and tastes of the bakery and coffee shop provide the backdrop for a pure sensory delight.

APPLES – CREAM OF THE CROP

With all the fun and entertainment Center Grove offers, apples are still the cream of the crop and the biggest attraction. While apples may seem like a straightforward crop, production has changed in the past decade. Walking through portions of the orchard, it may feel like a vineyard instead of a traditional orchard.

“Apples are a tough crop to grow in Iowa’s climate – the heat, humidity, hail and strong thunderstorms all create hurdles for us,” Black explains. “Humidity is especially hard on the trees because it makes them more susceptible to diseases, which can quickly wipe out trees.”

Growing some apple varieties on trellises facilitates upward growth of the trees by having a support structure in place. This growing method allows more trees to be planted per acre. Caring for the trees grown this way is also easier. Hand pruning is simpler, fertilizers are different, and there is a more rapid return on investment with trees producing apples sooner than the 5- to 7-year cycle of traditional trees.

“WE’VE CREATED A PLACE WHERE FAMILIES CAN SPEND AN ENTIRE DAY AND MAKE MEMORIES. THE ORCHARD IS A WAY TO INTRODUCE KIDS AND ADULTS TO FARMING.”

— Steve Black



Lindsay Royster and her children, Easton and Emersyn, try their hand at picking apples at Center Grove Orchard. The experience offers a direct farm-to-consumer connection.

BUDDING WITH FLAVOR

At a visit to the orchard, it’s not uncommon to find Brian Schilling, horticulturist for Center Grove, enthusiastically sharing tasty attributes of the apple varieties. The flavor of each apple is distinctive, and Center Grove embraces finding the perfect apples for its customers.

“I love that 100% of our apples are sold right here. We don’t sell in retail stores,” Schilling explains. “As a producer, I enjoy spending the season growing the apples. Then, I see people

picking them off the trees with our U-pick process or buying a bag in the store. It’s a true farm-to-consumer, Iowan-to-Iowan connection.”

With varieties ranging from the most popular of Honeycrisp and Jonathon to the lesser-known hidden jewels of Snow Sweet and Candy Crisp, there is truly an apple for everyone’s eye. Because the apples are sold on-site, up to 20 varieties are typically found at Center Grove that can’t be found in stores. It allows orchard-goers an opportunity to find apples with special flavors and unique

characteristics – both of which make the orchard a destination spot for apple lovers.

Honeycrisp apples are one of the most expensive varieties – primarily because of their popularity and growing conditions.

“Honeycrisp trees are weaker growing and yield fewer apples than many other varieties,” Schilling says. “They are also more susceptible to insects and birds, which are attracted to the sweet flavor of this highly desirable apple.”

Each year, Center Grove cumulatively adds and replaces an average of 700 to 1,000 trees. Next year, 2,000 new trees will be planted. More Evercrisp® apple trees – designed to compete with Honeycrisp – are planned to take root at the orchard in the next few years. Ludacrisp® is another new potentially competing variety that will bear fruit at the orchard in 2 to 3 years.

A CORE FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is at the core of what makes Center Grove a welcoming place and revolves around making the apple trees as healthy as possible. A healthy tree has a strong immune system and can fight off pests and diseases. This year, drip irrigation was installed, which will play an important role in reducing stress on the trees and improving overall health.

In the winter, trees are pruned by hand and the team works to integrate natural methods of pest and insect management with necessary spraying.

“Pest and disease management is mission critical for apple producers,” Schilling says. “Without proper management it would be likely, most years, that we would produce very few marketable apples.”

The most common insect pests are Japanese Beetles and Codling Moths. To combat widespread infestation of Codling Moths, Center Grove uses natural pheromone disruptors, which are strategically placed tags – commonly 20 per acre – that provide the disruption without spraying the insects. While some limited spraying is required because of the enormous insect and disease pressure on apple trees, Center

Grove is successfully mitigating the pests with pheromone-based methods.

While the trees are producing this year’s apple crop, they are also setting the buds that will be next year’s fruit. Pruning and managing the crop load are essential to keeping the proper balance on the tree.

“A common saying among apple growers is – we’re not growing wood; we’re growing apples,” Schilling says. “Each tree must be balanced in weight so that each apple has the ideal amount of nutrients and carbohydrates. The branches are a conduit to the apples’ quality and flavor. If a tree has too many apples on it at a certain time, those apples won’t have maximum flavor.”

Center Grove is truly a destination where family values stem into wholesome and delicious experiences for Iowans of all ages. 🍏



CARAMEL APPLE PIE

CRUST

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup soybean oil
- 4 tablespoons milk

FILLING

- 6 baking apples, peeled and sliced ¼ -inch thick
- 1 cup sugar
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- Pinch of salt

TOPPING

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, room temperature
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ½ cup oats, regular or instant
- ½ cup purchased or homemade caramel sauce

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. For the crust, in a 9-inch pie plate whisk together flour, sugar and salt. Pour oil and milk over dry ingredients and stir with a fork until dough is evenly moistened. Gently press dough evenly over the bottom and up the sides of the pie plate. Press the tines of a fork into the edge of the crust to crimp.

For the filling, gently toss together apples, sugar, flour, cinnamon, lemon juice, lemon zest and salt. Pour into the pastry-lined pie plate.

For the topping, blend flour, butter, brown sugar and oats together with a fork until well mixed. Evenly distribute over the top of the pie.

Bake the pie in preheated oven for 20 minutes. Reduce the heat to 350 degrees F and bake for an additional 40 to 45 minutes or until slow bubbles form in the juices around the pie. If the crust is browning too quickly during baking, cover with a sheet of foil or a foil ring. Remove the pie from oven and let cool at least 4 hours before slicing and serving. Drizzle with half of the caramel sauce, cut into wedges and serve with remaining caramel sauce.

417 Calories, 15g Total Fat, 21mg Cholesterol, 229mg Sodium, 70g Carbohydrate, 4g Fiber, 4g Protein
Source: Cristen Clark | Serves 12



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BEAGLE BRIGADE

Four-legged
friends
deployed to
protect our
food system.

Story and photos by
Joseph L. Murphy



Standing about 16 inches tall, Burnie, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) canine officer, moves from bag to bag while patrolling the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. As travelers navigate the U.S. port of entry, they flash a smile at Burnie and pat him on the head unaware of the vital work he is doing.

Burnie is one of 120 beagles that work side-by-side with agriculture specialists at more than 180 ports to protect the food supply and agricultural industries. They prevent the intentional or unintentional entry of harmful plant pests and animal diseases into the U.S.

Known as the "Beagle Brigade," this important group of four-legged friends is working the frontlines every day. The dogs can scan luggage for smuggled or forgotten fruits and meat products in seconds, compared to the time-consuming process of opening and visually inspecting bags.

"They work at a molecular level," says Tim Lauth, CBP's chief agriculture

specialist for the region. "They are trained on five or six scents when they come out of school, but by the time they end their career they can identify hundreds of scents."

Beagles like Burnie and his Minneapolis partner Scarlett were chosen because of their keen sense of smell, non-threatening size, high food drive and friendly disposition with the public.

"Not much gets through with the beagles working in tandem with their agriculture specialist partners. Together, they are great," Lauth says. "But you still need the human touch."

The beagles are the first wave of inspection in a multi-step process. CBP agriculture specialists have extensive training and experience in biological sciences and agricultural inspection. Several agents in Minneapolis hold Bachelor of Science degrees in agronomy and entomology. Other agents spend their spare time working on the family farm.

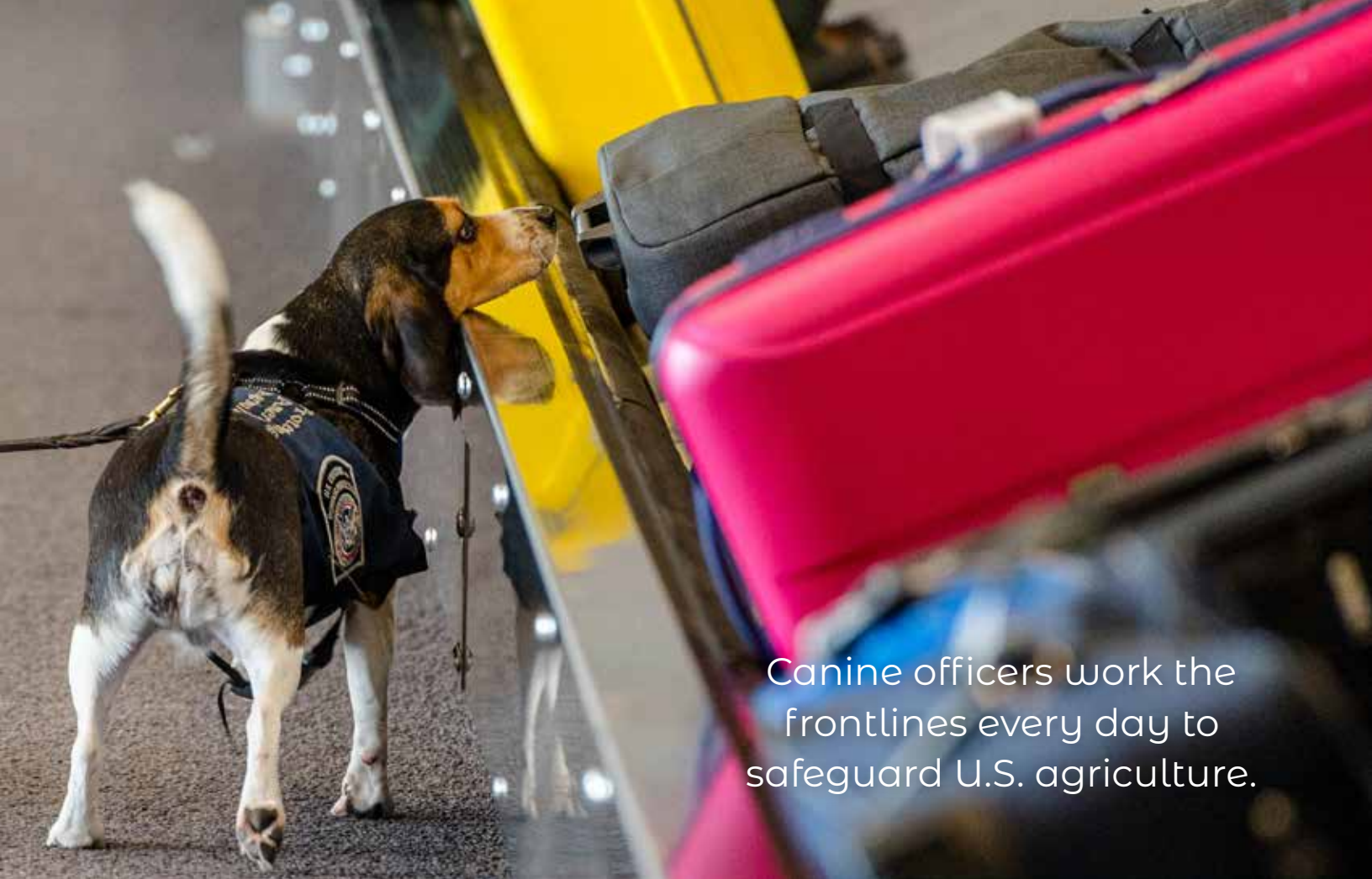
Jeff Powers, a CBP canine agriculture specialist, works with Burnie every day, patrolling the international flights arriving in Minneapolis and transporting thousands of passengers.

"He gets a lot of attention at work," Powers says of his furry partner.

Currently, one of the top threats to U.S. agriculture is African Swine Fever (ASF) – a highly contagious viral disease affecting pigs. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), it is estimated to have already impacted about 40% of China's 450 million pigs and has spread to other countries in Asia and Europe.

The virus causes nearly 100% mortality, and there is no vaccine or treatment at this time. If it were to reach the U.S., it could cause severe damage to the nation's pork industry.

"While pork from pigs with ASF is safe to eat, the ramifications of ASF in the U.S. could be wide-reaching," says Jamee Eggers, producer education director for the Iowa Pork Producers Association.



Canine officers work the frontlines every day to safeguard U.S. agriculture.



The "Beagle Brigade" prevents the intentional or unintentional entry of harmful plant pests and animal diseases into the U.S.

Eggers says if the disease were to make it to the U.S., it could drive pork prices down rapidly and cause a decrease in demand for soybeans and corn, because these crops are key components of pig feed. Currently, pork production in Iowa creates 141,813 jobs and nearly \$37 billion annually in sales, according to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

"Agriculture is so important to Iowa that even if a consumer doesn't think they are related to pork production, they likely know someone, work with someone or have family that could be directly affected by the loss of jobs," Eggers says. "It could have a far-reaching impact on rural Iowa communities."

ASF is only one of a dozen high-priority foreign animal diseases and invasive plant pests that the Beagle Brigade and CBP are working to

keep out of the U.S. Others include the Khapra beetle, nematodes, cottonseed bugs, rust fungus, Newcastle disease, fruit flies and propagative plants.

"You can have something as simple as an orange that has a fruit fly on it or a leaf with an aphid on it. These small pests can wipe out millions of dollars in agricultural goods," Lauth explains.

On a typical day in fiscal year 2018, the CBP processed 1,133,914 passengers and pedestrians. On average, CBP agriculture specialists discovered 319 pests at U.S. ports of entry and 4,452 materials for quarantine each day.

"The Beagle Brigade and their CBP agriculture specialists are a key component of our nation's first line of defense against illegal agriculture products," Eggers says.



DECORAH: FALL IN LOVE WITH LOCAL

RELAX IN THE SCENIC AMBIANCE AND SOAK UP THE VIBRANCY

By Ann Thelen | Photos by Joseph L. Murphy

The roads, gentle valleys and rolling hills leading into Decorah are scenic pathways to a community filled with charm, heritage and splendor. With the Upper Iowa River flowing through the city, Decorah is nestled in the bluffs of this idyllic and Norwegian-inspired Driftless Area. Despite an elevation 900 feet above sea level, the community has the feel of a mountain town.

Rich in tradition and known worldwide for its eagles' nest and webcam, the area is chapter and verse from the writings of Laura Ingalls Wilder, who once lived a stone's throw north of Decorah in Burr Oak. Visitors to the area will find the Laura Ingalls Park & Museum, which offers a step back in time at the beloved author's childhood home.

As part of the Silos & Smokestacks Heritage Area in northeast Iowa – a 37-county, 20,000-mile storybook of the state – this region colorfully and vividly tells the story of agriculture. Voted Iowa's Most Picturesque Town by USA Today, the 8,000 residents who

call Decorah home fuel the town's charisma and captivating spirit.

AUTHENTICITY ABOUNDS

"Decorah is authentic," says Gabriel Eide, marketing coordinator for the Decorah Area Chamber of Commerce. "There is an incredible sense of community. People know and support each other, and we're all working toward maintaining the culture of this area."

In his work, Eide is passionate about facilitating memorable experiences in the Decorah area. He grew up in the town, graduated high school in 2012 and completed his degree at Luther College in 2016. Like many 20-year-olds just graduating from college, the next step in life is often a blank slate waiting to be written. Although Eide worked in Minneapolis and Central America for two years, he chose to return and make Decorah home. He's not alone. Once people are here, it's hard to leave. A brief experience in Decorah leaves visitors craving more of the atmosphere and welcoming vibe.



WALKING ON WATER STREET

Decorah's downtown business district was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. The seven blocks of Water Street are the heartbeat of the community. The district runs from the wooden 1888 Queen Anne Railroad Depot on the east end to the three-story 1877 Arlington House on the west end, which houses part of the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum. It's the largest museum in the U.S. devoted to one single immigrant group.

Architectural masterpieces flank the street, with the buildings adorning the styles of the Italian Renaissance, Roman Era and Greek Revival along with ornate cornices of brackets, medallions and paneled bands.

Historic signs – 32 of them along a 2-mile stretch – tell the history of Decorah. Ed Epperly, a retired professor from Luther College, and Elizabeth Lorentzen, an art teacher at Decorah High School, developed the signs. They include photographs and text explaining the historical and architectural backgrounds of buildings along the street. The signs, placed opposite the buildings being described, give visitors a modern

view. While some buildings look similar, others no longer exist. A pocket guide steps visitors through the walking history lesson.

"The signs were inspired by a walking tour I was on in Natchez, Mississippi," Epperly explains. "Decorah's business district is a gem and our community has worked hard to preserve its legacy."

The vigilant community volunteer credits the area's natural beauty – with trails, the river, streams and limestone bluffs – paired with the residents' genuine interest in their community as the recipe for success.

FLAVORS OF HOSPITALITY

Along Water Street, it's a food lovers' dream. There is a common ingredient in what is served – the pride of local.

Rubaiyat (pronounced Ruby-Yacht), features a seasonal American menu and reflects the owners' – Andy and Kim Bonnet – commitment to using the highest quality food products, in season and local when available. The cadence and rhythm of the restaurant reflect impeccable attention to detail. Exposed brick walls and the original tin ceiling provide a historical ambiance as rich as the flavors on the plates.

The name "Rubaiyat" comes from a collection of poetry written over 1,000 years ago by a Persian gentleman. The poems are a testimony of living life to its fullest with the help of good food and great wine and together, the joy that they can bring to life.

"We work with as many local farmers and artisans as we can and adapt our menus based on the foods that are available," Kim says. "For example, our burgers or filet mignon are paired with seasonal greens – all of which are sourced locally."

Local coffee, beer and wine are always on the menu in Decorah. Two breweries – Toppling Goliath (named Second-Best Brewery in the World by BeerAdvocate) and Pulpit Rock – call Decorah home. PIVO Brewing, another area favorite, is in Calmar, which is just 11 miles south of Decorah.

The economic impact to the region is significant with new beer release events. An economic impact study shows that Toppling Goliath's beer release events bring an estimated \$1 million in revenue to local restaurants, hotels and other businesses.

"It's not uncommon for thousands of people to flock to Decorah for a new beer release," Eide says.

"DECORAH IS AUTHENTIC. THERE IS AN INCREDIBLE SENSE OF COMMUNITY. PEOPLE KNOW AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER, AND WE'RE ALL WORKING TOWARD MAINTAINING THE CULTURE OF THIS AREA."

– Gabriel Eide



Winneshiek County Courthouse



Driftless Area Scenic Byway



Andy and Kim Bonnet work with local farmers and artisans to create a seasonal menu at Rubaiyat.





A banana split and other sweet treats delight customers at Sugar Bowl Ice Cream Company.
Photo courtesy of Brittany Todd.



Murals and history flank Water Street in downtown Decorah.



Dunning's Spring Park, Decorah

DECORAH – TUCKED AWAY IN THE SERENE RIVER BLUFFS – IS TRULY A GEM. IN THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY, VISITORS WON'T FIND ANY PARKING METERS. IT'S PART OF THE SPIRIT OF WANTING VISITORS TO STAY AWHILE, RELAX IN NATURE'S PICTURESQUE AMBIANCE AND SOAK UP THE LOCAL VIBRANCY.

Across the street, Mabe's Pizza is a Decorah icon. Named by The Des Moines Register as one of "The 100 Best Places to Eat in Iowa Before You Die," the pizzeria was founded by Mabel White in 1953. Originally known as Mabel's Lunchroom, pizza wasn't on the menu. Students from Luther College were the most frequent patrons. One day, a student asked if he could make a pizza. Not knowing what pizza was or how to make it, she let the student make the doughy-delight and it would later become the restaurant's specialty.

Mabel's legacy carries on with her family now operating the business, baking up pizzas with made-from-scratch crusts and sauces. Annually serving more than 100,000 pizzas to loyal patrons, a visit to Decorah isn't complete without slices of the cheesy, meaty and saucy pie cut into the famous squares.

Sugar Bowl Ice Cream Company offers a retro experience in an immaculate parlor. Bicycles hanging from the ceiling and vintage signs adorning the walls let visitors know they are in for a special treat.

Behind the traditional glass cases, 24 flavors of ice cream are on display. Popular flavors,

such as "Kitty Kitty Bang Bang" – ice cream mixed with a sweet raspberry ripple, Oreo cookies and soft chocolate chunks or "This Just Got Serious" – an award-winning, smooth salted caramel ice cream brimming with rich sea salt fudge and salted cashews, offer scoops of deliciousness. Area dairies provide milk for the frozen delicacies.

A baseball scholarship to Luther College initially brought Nathan Todd, owner of the Sugar Bowl, to Decorah. While later in grad school at Western Governors University, writing a paper led him to research the changes that may happen if someone were to buy the Sugar Bowl. The more he learned, the more it seemed to fit his family's plan. Nathan and his wife Brittany bought the Sugar Bowl in 2017. A professional photographer with her studio right across the street from the Sugar Bowl, Brittany is often seen snapping shots of waffle cone nachos or donut sundaes.

"We have three young sons, and we love everything about Decorah," Nathan says. "The businesses are supportive and want one another to thrive. When customers come into the Sugar Bowl, we want it to be an experience, and that's what we're always working toward."

SUSTAINABILITY IS ALWAYS ON THE MENU

Sustainability is a major emphasis at Luther College, and the Center for Sustainable Communities coordinates all sustainability initiatives at the college, working to be a catalyst for change on campus and in the region.

Luther College produces locally grown, organic food throughout the year for its Dining Services locations on campus. The one-acre farm gives Luther students the opportunity to plant, weed and harvest a variety of products through sustainable practices in cooperation with Luther's Dining Services provider, Sodexo.

The college's Cafeteria to Community Program works to ensure food makes it onto the plates of those who need it. Through this program, student coordinators work in close collaboration with dining services staff to package food into quart-sized containers that are delivered to the Decorah Community Food Pantry twice weekly.

Decorah – tucked away in the serene river bluffs – is truly a gem. In the heart of the community, visitors won't find any parking meters. It's part of the spirit of wanting visitors to stay awhile, relax in nature's picturesque ambiance and soak up the local vibrancy. 🌿

FOOTBALL

+

FARMING

FARM LIFE OFFERS WELCOME RETREAT FROM BIG 10 HUSTLE AND BUSTLE.

By Aaron Putze, APR

Living a dream by accomplishing goals is something we all aspire to achieve. Visiting with someone who has done just that is fun and inspirational. That's especially true when that person is humble, motivated and willing to put in the work to make the most of an opportunity to play big-time college football.

Meet Cole Banwart of Ottosen (population 26), a farm community nestled just inside Humboldt County in north central Iowa and whose residents once claimed to have spotted a bigfoot roaming the neighborhood.

The Algona High School graduate is a University of Iowa redshirt junior. He currently takes the field in Kinnick Stadium with lunch bucket in hand as an offensive guard, donning No. 61.

But whenever he can, Cole retreats from the hustle and bustle of Iowa City and the spotlight that comes with a team appearing in three consecutive bowls games to the family farm operated by his parents Craig and Tina. He considers it a privilege to put on a helmet featuring the America Needs Farmers (ANF) decal when on the field and when off the turf, to be planting and harvesting corn and soybean fields.

Before the start of this year's college football campaign, the Iowa Food & Family Project caught up with Cole. We chatted about his passion for farming, game days in Iowa City and his love of food, family and Iowa.

WHEN DID YOU KNOW YOU HAD WHAT IT TAKES TO PLAY COLLEGE FOOTBALL?

Mom says it was in eighth grade when people began mentioning that maybe I had a future in sports given my size and stature at that age. But it got real shortly after my sophomore year in high school. That's when I began participating in university football camps in Iowa City, Ames and Lincoln, Nebraska.

WHEN DID THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA OFFER YOU A SCHOLARSHIP, AND WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING?

It was the summer before my senior season at Algona High School. I gladly accepted! I'm majoring in exercise science with a minor in enterprise leadership.

TELL US ABOUT THE FAMILY FARM.

Banwart Farms is a busy place, and there's always a lot going on. We grow soybeans and corn and operate logistic and trucking companies.



Above photo courtesy of Tina Banwart.



Cole Banwart thrives on both football and farm fields.
Photo courtesy of Aaron Putze, APR.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT FARM LIFE?

I'm a quiet guy and like being secluded a bit. I'm comfortable here on the farm. I don't like driving in the city and love small communities and our way of life. Everyone knows everyone, and there's peace and comfort in that.

IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE ALSO A BIG FAN OF SMALL TOWNS.

I am. People think there's nothing to do in a small town. But there are always places to go and things that need to be done. You don't need tee times to golf. The hunting is nearby and always good. Bowling is just 30 minutes away, and there are always people to hang out with. What more do you need?

WHAT'S A MISPERCEPTION PEOPLE HAVE ABOUT FARMING?

That we're all about the money; we're not. But that said, you must focus on cash flow. But it's not from a possessive standpoint. Like any business, it takes cash flow to make a farm work. It would be nice if it didn't take so much capital, but things like seed, fertilizer, land and equipment are expensive. You must focus on the financial side of farming or you won't be farming for long.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WEAR THE ANF DECAL?

It's a real honor because it stands for so much. Coach Hayden Fry started it in 1985, and Coach Ferentz has kept the tradition. Farmers are the backbone of America, and the decal raises awareness of agriculture. Guys who've played high school football out east have heard of ANF and something about farming. They like to come to Iowa City and then get out and see the countryside.

HOW MANY ARE ON THE IOWA ROSTER?

One-hundred. Seven of those are farm kids who live and work in rural Iowa.

TELL US ABOUT GAME DAY.

There's nothing like it. If it's an evening game at Kinnick, we're up around 8 a.m. Breakfast usually consists of oatmeal and fruit followed by team and position meetings, then lunch at The Hotel at Kirkwood Center in Cedar Rapids. After lunch, we have about four hours in the hotel to watch football on TV and play cards before getting on the bus for Iowa City. When we arrive, we get dressed and take the Hawk Walk to the field for pre-game drills. Coach Ferentz gathers us in the locker room just before kickoff, says a few words, and then we swarm the field. It's incredible.

"I'D LIKE TO GIVE THE NFL A TRY, BUT FARMING IS WHAT I WANT TO DO LONG TERM."

— Cole Banwart

WHAT DO YOU LISTEN TO ON GAME DAY?

The coach likes the locker room quiet leading up to taking the field, but I like to listen privately to some good rock music. Favorites include Three Days Grace, Shinedown, Greta Van Fleet and stuff like that.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE MEAL?

Anything mom makes or something off the grill! When in Iowa City, Graze caters some great food on game days, including chicken curry in large roasters with broccoli and all kinds of fixings. Their vegetables and fish are also really good!

TELLS US WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ON SCHOLARSHIP AS A FOOTBALL PLAYER.

There's a perception that everything we need at school is paid for. That's not true. Many of us are working full-time jobs. Playing football is a year-round commitment that includes strength and conditioning training, skills and drills, team building, public appearances, practice, team meetings and watching film. Then, you put your studies on top of that and try to work in some time with friends and family and you have a full schedule.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU - FOOTBALL OR FARMING?

I want to make the most of the opportunity as a football player for the University of Iowa. Scouts are at practices and games. They are always watching so you must always give your best. I'd like to give the NFL (National Football League) a try, but farming is what I want to do long term.

HOW HAS THE GAME OF FOOTBALL CHANGED AS A LINEMAN?

The athleticism. You have to be strong to move guys but also possess the quickness to get out in front of a play to block and open holes. The added quickness and agility really hold true for every position and are the biggest changes in football the past 15 to 20 years.

TELL US ABOUT COACH FERENTZ.

He can get emotional. Coach will tear up when we play well and win big games. The Outback Bowl was one of those times. We all executed our assignments. It was just a great team win, and the coach likes when we play and win as a team. Those are special moments. 🌿





RAISING PIGS, CROPS AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

TRENT THIELE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT RAISING HEALTHY PIGS, SHARING FAMILY VALUES AND GIVING BACK TO HIS COMMUNITY.

By Ann Thelen | Photos by Joseph L. Murphy

When Trent Thiele describes what he is passionate about, the conversation is a flawless intersection of family, farming and giving back to others. No matter the topic, there is always a common thread in the discussion. It's about feeling privileged to be asked to serve, doing the best he can and paying it forward.

Trent and his wife Kristina, along with their three children – Clayton, Mackenzie and Toni – live in Elma, a small town in northeast Iowa. Along with five business partners in KMAX Farms, the Thieles annually farm 1,400 acres of soybeans, 3,200 acres of corn and finish 70,000 pigs to market weight. They also have a small cattle operation.

"I grew up on a dairy farm just a couple of miles from where we live now," Trent says. "When I was younger, my parents had pigs and dairy cows in addition to row crops. Low prices forced us out of that business in the late 1990s."

The opportunity to get back into farming came when Trent was working for the local cooperative. Max Schmidt, a local farmer, was ready to retire but

wanted his farming business to live on. He gave several individuals the opportunity to work for him and created KMAX Farms, LLC. to let them buy him out of the business.

"It's a privilege because these opportunities don't always come along," Trent explains. "Max has a lot of experience and equity behind him, which he is transferring to the six of us."



Schmidt is also a past president of the Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA) and encouraged Trent to be involved with the organization. Formed in 1968, IPPA promotes, educates and provides a leading voice for a sustainable, socially responsible and globally competitive pork industry. Trent is serving as the organization's 2019 board president.

"I'm thankful Max inspired me to get involved. I've met a tremendous number of people who are incredible farmers and leaders," Trent says. "The openness and willingness to share best practices with fellow producers is unbelievable."

PASSIONATE ABOUT CARE

On the farm, the Thieles are passionate about raising healthy pigs. Trent's philosophy is – every pig, every day.



In addition to raising pigs, the Thiele family works together to raise soybeans, corn and beef cattle.

BIOSECURITY IS A PRIORITY

Trent and his business partners work hard to maintain the highest standards for biosecurity in their pig buildings. There are some diseases that could shut down a livestock farm. It helps that everyone specializes in certain aspects of the operation.

“We buy our pigs from one location in Missouri. Years ago, we bought pigs from several locations, which increased the risk of animal health consequences. Buying from one farm allows for better control,” Trent says. “Biosecurity is constantly changing. We’re always working hard to learn, adapt and stay ahead of potential challenges.”

Piglets come to KMAX Farms when they are 21 to 28 days old and weigh about 14 pounds. They immediately go into a nursery, where specialized care is provided. After six weeks, the pigs weigh about 50 pounds and are moved to the finishing barns, where Trent focuses on care. They stay in those barns for about 140 days, until they reach market weight, which is approximately 290 pounds.

A CIRCLE OF SUSTAINABILITY

In the eight years the Thieles have been involved with KMAX Farms, the pig operation has doubled in size and about 20% more crops are grown, much of which are used for pig feed. One thing that hasn’t changed is the strong emphasis on sustainability.

“We use the pig manure for crop nutrients. Then we grow the crops to feed the pigs,” Trent explains. “Anytime you can make a continuous circle like this and have little-to-no waste, it’s a good definition of sustainability. It also has to be economically sound so that you can continue the processes.”

As part of the farm’s environmental stewardship, a cover crop trial with the Iowa Soybean Association (ISA) is in its fifth year. The goal is to see what impact cover crops have on soil health and what works best. Every other 60 feet, one strip of the field has cover crops, and the next strip doesn’t have cover crops. This format is across the farm. The nutrient values in each strip are analyzed by ISA to help the Thieles make decisions based on science.

"WE'RE ALWAYS STRIVING TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT AND IS BEST FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, OUR HEALTH AND FAMILY."

— Trent Thiele

“In the barns, I look at every pig every single day to make sure each pig is healthy,” he explains. “I’m not just quickly glancing. I’m taking time to carefully look at the pigs and watch their behavior. Our number one priority is the well-being of the pigs we raise.”

Trent is not exaggerating when he explains the importance of this task. In a location with 5,000 pigs, he’ll spend four hours each day just looking at those pigs.

Pigs thrive when the environment is managed to their optimal needs and KMAX Farms places a high priority on climate controls as part of its overall animal care regimen.

“In the middle of winter, it’s 70 degrees F in the barns. I don’t rush through chores because it’s bitterly cold outside. In the summer, when I go into the barns it’s still 70 to 80 degrees F in there and very comfortable,” Trent says.

Beyond a computer controlling the temperature 24/7, 365 days a year, fans are often running. Fresh air is continuously pulled into the barns

with existing air circulated out. Ventilation systems are crucial in providing optimum living conditions for pigs.

The farm has two types of barns – one type has curtains located on the side of a barn. The other type has tunnel ventilation, where large fans in an enclosed facility act like pumps to move air through outlets. When curtains are on a barn, they can be raised and lowered to help control the climate and facilitate air movement.

The curtain-sided barns are cheaper to operate in the summer and use about 50% of the electricity because fans aren’t always running. However, the newer barns will all be tunnel ventilated. Although they are more expensive to operate, they offer the ability to control environmental conditions for the pigs more precisely.

Because pigs cannot sweat to stay cool, automatic misters gently spray cool water across them. Water and feed are automated based on the pigs’ needs.



“I like using cover crops. There are a lot of risks, but that’s another challenge I like to solve,” Trent says. “The risk is in the complexity and cost. You need the right cover crops to grow at the right time and aid in keeping the valuable nutrients in the soil.”

He adds they are very conscientious about nitrogen applications on the fields – only applying exactly what’s needed, where it’s needed. It’s part of the farm’s ongoing commitment to environmental responsibility and financial sustainability.

FAMILY VALUES AND PAYING IT FORWARD

Trent doesn’t hesitate when he’s asked what he loves most about farming.

“It gave me back my family life,” he says. “My wife and kids often do the chores with me. If the kids

have a music program or sporting event during the day, I have the flexibility to be involved and adjust when the chores are done.”

Not only are Trent and Kristina parents to three children, but they are also foster parents and host foreign exchange students. So far, they have fostered six children and provided respite care to many others. A foreign exchange student from Switzerland was with the family until May, and in August a student from the Netherlands joined the Thiele family for the school year.

“We believe in giving back where we can and want to help others,” Trent says.

The Thiele’s philosophy of giving back doesn’t stop there. In addition to helping on the farm, Kristina works as a preschool paraeducator and is a 4-H leader and Sunday School teacher. Beyond his involvement with IPPA, Trent is active with the church council.



Pictured from left, Toni, Mackenzie and Clayton Thiele show off their skating skills at the roller rink their family manages in Elma.



The couple also manages the roller-skating rink at the Memorial Hall in Elma from Thanksgiving to Easter.

“We like that the rink gives the kids something to do in the winter. Plus, the parents gather and socialize while their kids are skating,” Trent says. “We feel fortunate that we can do this for the community.”

When it comes to what Trent wants people to ultimately know about his farm, it’s straightforward.

“I want consumers to know we’re feeding the pork we raise to our family,” Trent says. “We’re always striving to do what’s right and is best for the environment, our health and family.”

PUT PORK ON YOUR FORK!

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HARVEST BBQ PULLED PORK SANDWICHES

2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 tablespoon smoked paprika
1½ teaspoons salt
1½ teaspoons cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon mustard powder
1 (4- to 5-pound) boneless pork butt roast
1 can (14.5 ounces) beef broth
½ cup coffee
1½ tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1 bottle (16 ounces) barbecue sauce
Kaiser rolls
Additional barbecue sauce for serving

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. In a small bowl, combine brown sugar, paprika, salt, cayenne, garlic powder and mustard powder. Rub the spice mixture all over pork roast.

Pour the broth, coffee and Worcestershire into a large Dutch oven. Place the pork roast in the pot, cover the pot with foil and then the lid. Braise the pork until it’s fork-tender and shreds easily, about 4 hours; baste with the braising juices about every hour.

Remove the lid and foil and let the roast stand until it’s cool enough to handle. Shred pork and toss with barbecue sauce. Serve pork on Kaiser rolls with additional sauce on the side.

430 Calories, 9g Total Fat, 95mg Cholesterol, 1,200mg Sodium, 46g Carbohydrate, 2g Fiber, 38g Protein

Source: Julie Kenney

Serves 12

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

WHILE ROAD TRIP DESTINATIONS ENTERTAIN, IOWA SUSTAINS

Story and photos by Aaron Putze, APR



Aaron Putze, APR, serves as communications director for the Iowa Soybean Association. He was raised on a farm near West Bend and lives in Waukee with his wife Crystal and children Garrett, Grant and Jaelyn.

The Putze family was in good company this year as we joined more than 150 million Americans in hitting the road for a summer vacation.

The scenery on our 3,300-plus-mile trek through the south and southwest U.S. to experience some of our nation's most beautiful natural parks was stunning! But it was our return to the beautiful, lush and vibrant countryside of Iowa that made the greatest impression.

It seems like just yesterday when, in mid-July, Crystal and I packed the family SUV to the rooftop and rolled out of Waukee for the much-anticipated adventure with our children Garrett, 15; Grant, 13; and Jaelyn, 10.

In just seven days, we traversed our way through nine states (Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma,

Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Colorado and Nebraska). Along the way, we:

- Visited eight national parks and overnights in five locations;
- Made stops in Plains and Liberal, Kansas, to see the world's widest main street and Dorothy's House and the Land of Oz;
- Were mesmerized by the splendor of Petroglyph National Monument and El Malpais National Monument (both in New Mexico) and Canyon de Chelly located near Chinle, Arizona;
- Marveled at the beauty of Petrified Forest National Park, enjoyed the splendor and the pine-scented fragrances of the Grand Canyon and daydreamed in the quiet, open spaces provided by the Navajo National Monument (also in Arizona);

- Traveled historic Route 66 through Texas and New Mexico, overnights just blocks away from the Museum Wildfire as it charred thousands of acres near Flagstaff, Arizona;
- Dodged mudslides and falling rocks along I-70 in Colorado; and
- Sampled some awesome food at local, family-owned restaurants that greeted us along the way.

It was a family trip that provided memories that will last a lifetime.

But it was perhaps our entrance into Iowa on our return to Waukee via I-80/Council Bluffs that triggered the greatest emotional response.

We clapped, whooped, hollered and cheered as the sign proclaiming, "The People of Iowa Welcome You" came into view on the west side of the Missouri River.

They say there's no place like home. After all, what's not to be excited about when it comes to having a little elbow room, your own bed to sleep in, a home-

cooked meal to enjoy and TV where you know the channels by heart?

But more than that, it was the vistas of Iowa and the presence of agriculture that spoke the loudest.

Put another way, some places entertain. Others sustain.

And there's beauty in both.



Iowa indeed stands out. But not for its rugged coastlines, towering pines, 5,000-foot-deep crevices or sandstone cliffs.

It makes an impression because of the endless sea of green interrupted only by friendly hometowns and farms, both small and large.

As we traveled the final 124 miles of

our excursion (from Council Bluffs to Waukee), I was reminded of how blessed we are to live in a state that's home to six inches of topsoil that, when adequately watered by Mother Nature, produces an abundance of soybeans and corn.

The oilseed and grain (we rank No. 2 nationally in soybeans and

No. 1 in corn) are the foundation of America's food supply. Both are key ingredients in the feed that nourishes pigs, poultry, cattle and dairy cows. They in turn provide commodities like beef, pork, milk, eggs and turkey, which then provide food that sustains millions of people here at home and around the world reliably and economically.

Upon making your way through the wide-open places and spaces of America, one quickly realizes just how precious Iowa is and the natural resources that power it.

Our summer vacation was the perfect getaway. We grew closer together as a family. And we grew in our love, respect and appreciation for Iowa, too. 🌿

Fall 2019

JOIN THE NETWORK OF IOWA FOOD & FAMILY PROJECT
PARTNERS IN CELEBRATING THE BEST OF FOOD, FARMING
AND HEALTHY LIVING AT THESE COMMUNITY EVENTS.

ANNUAL PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

Earl May Nursery & Garden Centers

OCTOBER 5 & OCTOBER 12

Celebrate fall fun with pumpkin painting, kid games, photo opportunities and more! The event will be held October 5 for Cedar Rapids and Iowa City locations, and October 12 for all other locations. Visit earlmay.com/events for details.

PIGSKIN PORK PICK TAILGATE COMPETITION

Iowa State University

**AUGUST 27 -
NOVEMBER 23**

Iowa Pork and Cyclone Fanatic are teaming up to find an incredible Pork Pick Tailgater at each Iowa State University home football game this season. Enter your tailgate into the competition at iowapork.org.

FALL FITNESS DAY/HEALTHIEST STATE WALK

Live Healthy Iowa

OCTOBER 2

Live Healthy Iowa and the Healthiest State Initiative are teaming up to encourage students, employees and community members statewide to take a 30-minute lunchtime stroll. Register your walk at iowahealthieststate.com.

FAMILY HALLOWEEN

Living History Farms

**OCTOBER 17 - 20
OCTOBER 24 - 27**

Families are welcome to trick-or-treat through the historic Walnut Hill neighborhood, play games and take a horse-drawn carriage ride through Living History Farms. Find details at lhf.org/event.

VETERAN'S DAY BREAKFAST

Ankeny Prairie Trail Hy-Vee

NOVEMBER 11

Veterans and their families are invited for a free breakfast at the Ankeny Prairie Trail Hy-Vee.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS

Living History Farms

DECEMBER 7

Join in a day of historic Midwestern holiday traditions and Christmas cheer at The Flynn Mansion in Living History Farms. Find details at lhf.org/event/family-christmas.

10 WEEK WELLNESS CHALLENGE

Live Healthy Iowa

JANUARY 13 - MARCH 20

Get motivated to get moving all winter long with the 10-week challenge hosted by Live Healthy Iowa. Registration begins December 9 at livehealthyiowa.org/10-challenge.

OUR LIVESTOCK. OUR ATHLETES. OUR ECONOMY.

ALL ARE CORN FED.



CORN GROWS IOWA.



Here in Iowa, corn is more than our livelihood. It's our way of life. We use it to feed our livestock, and to make clean burning fuel. You might think Iowa grows corn. But the truth is, Corn Grows Iowa. To learn more about the importance of corn in our state go to www.iowacorn.org

