

How do you Choose Iowa?

How do you Choose Iowa? Finding and buying local foods just became easier with the launch of Choose Iowa.

Choose Iowa is a state brand which promotes food, beverages and other agricultural products that are grown, raised or made within Iowa.

"Choose Iowa will help build demand for high quality Iowa grown, raised and made products," said Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig. "With persistent inflation and supply chain disruptions, consumers are looking for ways to buy local. Choose Iowa will enhance the visibility and availability of Iowa meat, dairy, produce, and many other products. Whether you're at the grocery store, a restaurant, your local farmers market, or working directly with a farmer, you can look for the Choose Iowa logo and feel confident that you are choosing to help support Iowa farmers and our communities."

Definitions of "local food" can vary. But, for Choose Iowa, local means within the State of Iowa. Foods must meet or exceed minimum criteria to proudly wear the Choose Iowa logo on their package or label.

"I think Choose Iowa is great because it can spotlight native Iowa farmers," said Heather Scar of Meadowlark Farm LLC in Adair, Iowa. "This is really important to our consumers who want to know their meat is grown and raised right here, right next to home. We are investing in the whole life of our pigs when we raise them from farrowing to finish."

While many states have developed a state brand, Choose Iowa is unique in that it also seeks to provide grants to support farmers and businesses in their efforts to increase the quantity of Iowa products. In the first two years, over 40 grants have been awarded in support of projects totaling more than \$2.2 million. Twisted River Farm near Mitchell, Iowa received Choose Iowa grant funding and they are constructing an on-farm store.

"There's a growing demand in Iowa to experience going to a farm and seeing where our food is produced," says Steve Strasheim, owner of Twisted River Farm. "The great thing about the Choose Iowa grant is it allows us to test our theories for what the market is actually asking for by adding our own on-farm store to meet this growing segment and double-fold benefit to customers to come see where their food is produced up close and personal, not just read about it on social media. There's lots of risk in making investments like this and this gives people in our rural area access to locally grown produce. The Choose Iowa grant fast forwards our progress and enhances the fabric of our community."

Finding local Iowa foods, supporting our neighboring farms and investing in our local communities are core values for Choose Iowa. Learn more at www.Chooselowa.com.



Caption: Consumers can purchase local Iowa foods with confidence when they look for the Choose Iowa brand. Iowa food farms, businesses, restaurants and companies including producers, food processors, retailers, wholesalers, distributors may become Choose Iowa members and use the Choose Iowa logo on food packaging and labels which meet or exceed minimum criteria.



Twisted River Farm near Mitchell, Iowa, is utilizing Choose Iowa grant funding to construct a new on-farm store so customers can visit in person to pick up locally raised fresh produce. Photo courtesy of Twisted River Farm.



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