

# Family Living



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Comfortable pigs, quality  
 pork ..... 05

Sweet peas from the field  
 to your freezer .....11

It's pumpkin season!....08

Celebrating Food & Family

# Family Living

Volume 32  
Number 5

A publication of the Iowa Farm  
Bureau for ag-supporting members.

## EDITORIAL STAFF

**Editor:** Teresa Bjork

**Photographer:** Conrad Schmidt

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 Editor's letter

04 Member benefits

Visit [www.iowafarmbureau.com](http://www.iowafarmbureau.com) for exclusive member savings and local news.

05 Appetite for Iowa

Quality farm animal care equals quality pork.

08 Growing local

Northeast Iowa couple grows pumpkins, fall produce and more for their community.

11 A Birds Eye view

Those Birds Eye sweet peas in your freezer may have been grown right here in Iowa.

## On the cover

Clayton County Farm Bureau members and young farmers Brandon and Margo Friedlein grow fall squash and produce in recycled tractor treads on their farm in Guttenberg. They plan to sell pumpkins this fall at the Guttenberg Farmers Market.



08



05



## EDITOR'S LETTER

# Growing pigs, pumpkins and peas – all here in Iowa

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.....  
**I wish everyone could see how much livestock farming has changed for the good. Farmers are focused on farm animal well-being, which in turn helps improve the safety, nutrition and quality of the pork we serve our families.**

**W**henever I visit a modern pig barn, I'm amazed by how comfortable the indoor environment is for not only the animals but also the farmers and caretakers.

It's a big contrast from when I was a kid growing up on a farm in the 1980s. My family raised pigs and piglets in tin huts on a muddy pasture behind our house.

During heatwaves, my dad would have to water down the pigs with a garden hose or sprinkler to keep the pigs cool, because – he told me – pigs don't sweat. (Pigs can sunburn, too.)

I think some people have an idealized view that the “good ol' days” are always better.

However, I wish everyone could see how much livestock farming has changed for the good. Farmers are focused on farm animal well-being, which in turn helps improve the safety, nutrition and quality of the pork we serve our families.

In this issue of Family Living, we talk to a pig health and well-being expert about how Iowa farmers are continually learning and

adapting to ensure their animals receive the best care possible.

Of course, we can't let a fall issue pass by without visiting a pumpkin farm. Meet a young Iowa farm family that is diversifying their farm income by growing summer produce and pumpkins for local farmers markets.

And we don't just grow pumpkins and corn here in Iowa. Local farmers also grow peas for the frozen food aisle. Learn about how sweet peas are grown and how frozen foods can help you save at the grocery store.

In addition, keep checking [www.iowafarmbureau.com](http://www.iowafarmbureau.com) this month for your chance to enter our upcoming giveaway. You could win University of Iowa football tickets and Hawkeye gear for the America Needs Farm (ANF) Game Day Oct. 1 versus Michigan at Kinnick Stadium. Hope to see you there!

*Teresa Bjork*

**Teresa Bjork**  
 Editor, Family Living

## MEMBER BENEFITS

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Download the FB Benefits app to have your membership card, insurance card and member benefit information at your fingertips! Look for the FB Benefits app with the FB logo from Farm Bureau Management Corp, select your state and enter your membership number and zip code to activate.

### Archived Publications

Do you remember reading in Family Living about an apple orchard, winery or agritourism site you'd like to visit in the future? More than five years of past issues are archived on our website so you can search or read articles you missed.

### Member Buy/Sell/Exchange Ads

Whether you're looking to buy hay, goats or a used vehicle, you can view exchange ads statewide at [www.iowafarmbureau.com](http://www.iowafarmbureau.com) when logged in as a member. Scroll to the bottom of the home page or search for exchange ads. Filter the ads by county, category or key words to narrow your search.


If you have items to sell, click on "Place Ad" to submit your ad, which can include up to three photos. You'll receive an email confirmation once the ad is approved and placed in queue to appear on the website and in the printed Spokesman publication. Ads run for two weeks at a time. Contact your county Farm Bureau office with questions.

### County Farm Bureau News

Check out what's happening in your local county under **News/Spokesman/County-News**. Select your county from the drop-down menu. County news also includes information on local programs and benefits.

### The Iowa Dish and Recipes

For readers interested in food, The Iowa Dish serves up quick bites on how food safety, nutrition and foodie trends as well as information on food is grown and raised. Read articles online or subscribe to the monthly e-newsletter at [www.iowaFarmBureau.com/news/the-iowa-dish](http://www.iowaFarmBureau.com/news/the-iowa-dish). You'll also find delicious recipes shared by our members in the newsletter and online.



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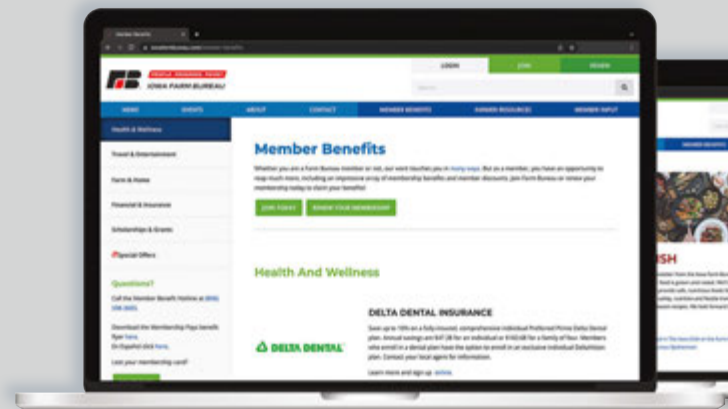


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## APPETITE FOR IOWA

# Quality care *equals* quality pork

**W**hen I'm shopping the meat case, I'm continually impressed by the quality of the pork chops on display, especially how uniform the pork is in color and size. This makes cooking faster and easier for weeknight meals.

Admittedly, it's easy to take for granted how much work farmers do to ensure the quality, nutrition and safety of the pork I serve my family.

Genetic selection has a lot to do with the

Left: Jennie Greene works as the health and welfare specialist at Eichelberger Farms, a pork farm based in Wayland.

quality of today's pork. For example, pigs today are much leaner than they were back in my grandparents' time, in response to consumer demand for lean meats.

However, Iowa farmers also understand that keeping pigs comfortable and as stress free as possible impacts overall pork quality, explains Jennie Greene, health and welfare specialist at Eichelberger Farms, a pork farm based in Wayland.

"For farmers, pigs are their livelihood, and they care about the pigs a lot," Greene says.

*Continued on page 6*



Written by

**Teresa Bjork**

Photos courtesy of

**Eichelberger Farms**

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*Continued from page 5*

“It’s not just a farmer raising a pig; there are a lot of checks and balances (in pork farming). There are many steps in place and so much we do to keep pigs healthy,” Greene says.

At Eichelberger Farms, Greene visits the hog barns regularly to ensure pigs receive the best care possible.

She walks through each barn to conduct what’s known as the common swine industry audit.

The audit, created by animal well-being experts and adopted by pork farmers and processors, confirms that caretakers are following the recommended best management practices to ensure pigs are healthy, comfortable and less stressed.

For the audit, Greene inspects the cleanliness of the barns and pigs. She also checks the overall environment (ventilation, temperature, access to food and water) in the barns.

“If pigs aren’t kept at a comfortable temperature, if it’s too hot or too cold, they won’t eat or drink normally. So we want to keep a comfortable environment,” Greene says.

The barns at Eichelberger Farms are equipped with automated systems that control the temperature, ventilation and feeders, Greene explains.

If there’s a problem in the barn, the automated system will send an alarm to the caretaker’s phone.

Also during the on-farm audit, Greene inspects the pigs to make sure they are healthy, injury-free and well-fed.

All caretakers at Eichelberger Farms are Pork Quality Assurance (PQA) certified and receive regular training on the latest recommended animal health and well-being best practices.

To help ensure food safety, farmers and animal caretakers keep records to track any medications given and the proper withdrawal times (or the length of time when medicine leaves the pig’s body) before the pigs can be marketed.

Farmers work closely with veterinarians to ensure they are following approved dosage and withdrawal guidelines when treating sick animals.

If a farm animal is given antibiotics, federal law requires that the animal must undergo a withdrawal period before it can be marketed.

“All pork is antibiotic-free, no matter the (food packaging) label,” Greene says.

Iowa farmers remain committed to continuous improvement and adopting the latest technology to make sure pigs are safe, comfortable and less stressed.

“Farmers are focused on how well the animal is treated, and consumers are driving this trend. They want to know that we (farmers) are doing our job, that we are caring about the well-being of animals,” Greene says.

To learn more about how Iowa farmers work to ensure meat quality, food safety and animal well-being, visit [www.realfarmersrealfoodrealmeat.com](http://www.realfarmersrealfoodrealmeat.com).

## Continuous improvement on the farm

Iowa farmers work everyday to ensure food safety and provide the best possible care for farm animals.

The vast majority of U.S. livestock farmers – including cattle, pig and dairy farmers – voluntarily participate in quality assurance programs.

These continuing education programs provide the latest training for farmers and their employees on food safety, animal well-being, environmental stewardship, workplace safety, public health and community relations.

The Pork Quality Assurance (PQA) program, launched more than 30 years ago by U.S. pig farmers, offers training and on-site assessments for farms of all types and sizes – whether it’s a 4-H student with one show pig or a conventional pig farm.

More than 71,000 U.S. pig farmers have achieved PQA certification, according to the National Pork Board in Clive.

In total, about 85% of U.S. pigs are raised on PQA certified farms.

Farmers and their employees must renew their PQA certification every three years. The PQA curriculum is continuously updated as needed if a new food safety or animal health issue arises.

**USDA**

LOWERED THE COOKING TEMPERATURE

FROM 160 °F TO:

**145 °F**

+ WAIT THREE MIN.

## Tips for tasty, tender pork chops

Today's pork is safer than ever before thanks to modern hog farming practices.

There's good news for those of us who love a perfectly cooked pork chop. You no longer have to cook lean cuts of pork beyond the point of tenderness. Cooked pork that is a little pink may still be safe to eat.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has lowered the recommended safe cooking temperature for whole pork cuts from 160 degrees Fahrenheit to 145 degrees with the addition of a 3-minute rest time.

Modern farming practices, including indoor housing, strict biosecurity on the farm and keeping pigs separate from wildlife, have

improved overall pork safety.

The USDA says the lower 145 degree internal temperature with a 3-minute rest will result in pork that is both safe and at its best quality – juicy and tender.

The rest time is the amount of time after you remove the meat from a heat source, but before slicing, the USDA explains.

During the 3-minute rest, the meat's internal temperature will remain consistent or continue to rise, which destroys any potential harmful bacteria, the USDA says.



All dental and vision plans are not alike.

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FEATURE

# Growing local



Story by  
Lindsey Giardino

Photography by  
Conrad Schmidt

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## Northeast Iowa farm couple grows pumpkins for community.

“

.....  
**Back when Brandon Friedlein was in high school, he put on a successful Pumpkin Days event. So when locals caught wind he was growing pumpkins again, they got excited.**

**W**hen young farmers are just starting out, they often need to get creative to expand their business and earn a steady on-farm income.

Farm Bureau members Brandon and Margo Friedlein both work full-time jobs off the farm, in addition to helping with their family's row-crop farm.

They also started Friedlein Produce, selling pumpkins, summer squash, tomatoes and so much more, all grown on their Clayton County farm.

The past few years, the Friedleins sold their produce and baked goods at the Guttenberg Farmers Market every Saturday during growing season.

However, because of their crazy busy schedules, the young couple decided to narrow their focus this year to planting and growing fall produce for the market.

They've since added 3 acres of pumpkins, gourds and squash and also have a smaller greenhouse they use for learning purposes, giving the extra produce to family and friends.

Brandon was the first to get into produce. He grew up on the family farm, and for an FFA project in high school, he decided to diversify into vegetable production. That's when he initially started selling at the Guttenberg Farmers Market.

He constructed a greenhouse on the farm, where he grew vegetables and experimented. Then Brandon took a pause when he headed off to college, where he met Margo.

Eventually, the couple married and got back into growing produce. Margo didn't grow up on a farm, but her mom did have a garden. She's been learning as she goes.

Margo also is a baker and started her own business, Delights by Margo, selling cinnamon rolls, bars and muffins. She now does custom orders only for small events like weddings and birthday parties.

The couple has a small apple orchard on the farm, so Margo uses fresh apples for some of the treats she whips up.



The Friedleins will once again set up at the Guttenberg Farmers Market this fall when their pumpkins are ready, as well as sell wholesale to a nearby greenhouse operation.

The community loves having locally grown pumpkins and fall produce to choose from.

Back when Brandon was in high school, he put on a successful Pumpkin Days event. So when locals caught wind he and Margo would be growing pumpkins, they got excited.

Even with his prior knowledge, growing pumpkins remains a challenge in northeast Iowa. One issue is finding enough land to grow them. Pumpkins require a two to five year rotation. As young farmers, it was difficult finding available land to grow pumpkins.

They eventually decided to try growing pumpkins in an unused patch of timber on their family's Century farm. And the pumpkins are thriving there this summer.

*Continued on page 10*

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For Brandon, the best part of what he does is talking about the produce with others.

*Continued from page 9*

The couple has found ways to overcome the growing hurdles, however, and thoroughly enjoys providing locally grown pumpkins and fall produce to their community.

For Brandon, the best part of what he does is talking about the produce with others.

“My favorite part is customer interaction,” he says.

Margo adds that her enjoyment comes from the delayed gratification of seeing the end product as well as the creativity of it all.

“It’s always really fun to see what you get at the end,” she says.

Because the couple leads busy lives – outside of their farm work, Brandon works at a bank in Elkader and Margo is an elementary teacher – they know how and where they sell their produce will evolve over time, but they will continue looking forward to being a source of locally grown fall produce, pumpkins and vegetables.

*Giardino is a freelance writer from Polk City.*



FEATURE

# A BIRDS EYE VIEW

Those Birds Eye sweet peas in your freezer may have been grown in Iowa.

Story by Terri Queck-Matzie      Photography by Conrad Schmidt

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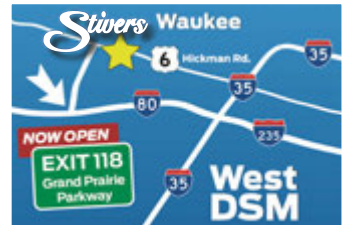
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**F**rozen produce company Birds Eye contracts with Iowa farmers to grow sweet peas, an extra crop for participating farmers.

The sweet peas are planted in late March or early April and are harvested 62 to 63 days later, leaving time to plant soybeans behind them. That means extra dollars in the farmers' pockets, and Iowa freshness for the consumer.

Birds Eye became a major player in the world vegetable market after company founder Clarence Birdseye invented the flash freezing process in the 1920s, following a trip to the Arctic where he witnessed native populations freezing food to preserve it through the winter.

The peas are flash frozen just off the farm to preserve the fresh taste of the Iowa growing conditions. Birds Eye prides itself on its product quality and environmentally sustainable practices, just as Iowa farmers do.

"It's been a good fit," says Brian Young, a Farm Bureau member who farms in Hamilton County.

Young says he and others in the area started growing sweet corn for Birds Eye several years ago. The effort then expanded to peas. Now several growers are on board, producing vegetables for the Birds Eye Waseca, Minnesota, plant.

Young is in his seventh year and has 115 acres committed to peas. The rest of his 1,500 acres of cropland support traditional

crops of corn, soybeans and hay.

In Boone County, Farm Bureau member Greg Rinehart is in his ninth season growing with Birds Eye.

His family farm also grows sweet corn, asparagus, tomatoes and more. The Rineharts host a drive-in farmers market on their farm, northeast of Ogden, on Saturday mornings during the growing season.

Growing sweet peas requires some preparation and planning.

Birds Eye requires a five-year crop rotation for disease prevention.

"The rotation helps break the cycle and reduces the disease pressure on the other crops," Rinehart says.

Few pests are an issue in the early growing season.

The crop is fertilized much like corn, and the peas like well-drained soils.

Birds Eye does the planting, coming in with its equipment and crew, traveling from farm to farm to plant the peas and roll the field smooth.

"Then we just watch them grow," says Young. "They're beautiful when they're sprouting in early spring."

*Continued on page 14*

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The peas are flash frozen just off the farm to preserve the fresh taste of the Iowa growing conditions.



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photo by Les Houser, Wright County Monitor

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*Continued from page 12*



Approximately eight weeks after planting, Birds Eye returns to harvest the peas, running two crews in 12-hour shifts for 24 hours of work.

"The only downside," says Young, "is when they come to harvest, they harvest. Even in the pouring rain."

Another benefit is that peas can help prevent erosion, acting as a cover crop to hold soil in place.

Financially, the peas are a benefit for participating farmers. Birds Eye currently guarantees a minimum price of \$400 to \$600 per acre.

"Each year is different," says Young. "Last year

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**Left: Greg Rinehart grows sweet peas for Birds Eye frozen foods on his farm in Boone County. Rinehart says one of the benefits of growing the peas is he can taste-test them. He confirms that this year's crop is a good one.**

that was my highest grossing field."

He adds, of course, like any crop, it is a gamble with potential for loss. Crop insurance is now available for the vegetable crops, but can be cost prohibitive.

"It's still worth doing," says Young. "We can always use more diversification."

Iowa holds an edge on the Minnesota growers in being able to plant soybeans or late sweet corn behind the peas.

The Iowa-grown peas are also high quality and often end up as a microwavable frozen product.

"I enjoy learning about a new crop, and it's neat to watch the peas grow and then see them in the store," says Young, proud to produce yet another crop for Iowa and U.S. consumers.

*Queck-Matzie is a freelance writer from Greenfield.*

We're all guilty of throwing away soggy broccoli or wilted lettuce because we forgot it in the back of the fridge or we didn't have time to cook.

Unfortunately, food waste can impact our budgets, especially with the current high food prices.

On average, U.S. households waste \$370 worth of food per person annually, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). That equals about \$1,500 each year for a family of four.

If you're looking to save money and to reduce food waste, then shop the frozen food aisles.

Nutrition experts stress that frozen fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh. That's because the produce is frozen immediately after harvest to retain its flavor and quality.

And as a side benefit, reducing food waste is good for the environment.

Food waste accounts for about 30% to 40% of the U.S. food supply, the USDA reports.

Food waste is the single largest category of material placed in U.S. landfills, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Food waste in landfills emits methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

**Iowa State University Extension and Outreach recommends the following steps to help reduce food waste, and save money, at home:**

- + PLAN.** Plan your meals and snacks for the week, make a grocery list, check for food items already in your cupboards and plan meals around leftovers.
- + SHOP.** Only buy what you need. If you do buy extra items on sale, have a plan for how you are going to use it.
- + COOK.** Freeze too ripe fruit for smoothies or vegetables for soup; mix leftover meat with vegetables, rice or pasta or use in a soup.

**For more meal planning tips, visit [www.spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu).**

## Waste less, spend less

Demand for frozen foods continues to rise from pre-pandemic levels, as consumers look to save money at the grocery store.



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