

Highlighting Choose Iowa Veteran-Owned Members for Veterans Day

This Veterans Day, **Choose Iowa** proudly recognizes and celebrates the Iowa farmers, food producers, and entrepreneurs who have served our country in uniform — and who continue to serve their communities as Iowa farmers, processors and retailers of Iowa grown, raised and made products.

We're honored to feature these **veteran-owned Choose Iowa businesses** whose passion for agriculture and commitment to community reflect the very best:

The Ardent Apiary (Lake Mills, IA)

The Ardent Apiary nurtures bees and produces delicious raw, local honey with a focus on sustainability and education. They also grow lavender that they craft into amazing lavender products.

The Big Apple Orchard (Mount Vernon, Iowa)

The Big Apple Orchard, owned by the Marti family, is home to 2,200 apple trees of 20+ varieties. They welcome families each fall to celebrate Iowa's harvest with apples, cider, and agritourism fun. The orchard has become a community staple, combining family-friendly entertainment with agricultural education.

Clear Creek Orchard Inc. (Collins, Iowa)

After 56 years of combined military service, Martin and Teresa made a life-changing decision one Thanksgiving — to take over Martin's uncle's family business, Clear Creek Orchard, and continue crafting their beloved "Too Good to Be Jam." The move from military life to farming gave them the freedom to focus on family and preserve a legacy of hard work and community. For them, being veteran farmers means more than running a business — it's about service, purpose, and creating something lasting, one jar of jam at a time.

Early Morning Harvest & That Iowa Girl (Panora, Iowa)

Facing the farm crisis of the 1980s, Jeff Hafner turned to the military as a path to education and opportunity, serving 35 years in the U.S. Army Reserve. Today, the veteran farmer leads Early Morning Harvest and That Iowa Girl, growing organic grains and hydroponic produce while connecting Iowans with locally made, responsibly grown foods — continuing his lifelong commitment to service.

Ebert Honey LLC (Lynnvile, Iowa)

Phil Ebert began Ebert Honey in 1980 with only about ten colonies in the backyard of his Fairfield, IA home. At the time, one five gallon bucket of honey seemed like a large amount. Today, they produce thousands of pounds of honey per year as well as offers package bees and nucs to people just getting started in their bee keeping journey.

Edge of the Woods Raspberry Farm (Indianola, Iowa)

Edge of the Woods started growing red raspberries in 2005 for our own use with 40 plants in a new space along our hay field. Each year more plants were added including other varieties - black raspberries, lots of blackberries and blueberries

The reason was simple. Edge of the Woods wants to provide flavorful, fresh fruit that customers know where it came from, how it was grown and how it was harvested.

Farmer Sarge's (Algona, IA)

Farmer Sarge's Orchard represents the culmination of Brad Thill's journey from combat veteran to agricultural entrepreneur. What began with a desire to heal from PTSD through farming, transformed his family's century old land into a thriving orchard and value-added operation.

Grate View Farms (Maquoketa, Iowa)

Grate View Farms is a family owned and operated business by a second and fifth generation farmer. Ben and Amber Selman both new from an early age that dairy was going to be in their future. After meeting at Iowa State University, the journey began to start farming together. While they focus on dairy cattle, dairy cattle play a huge role in meat sales in the United States. Thus we are focused on growing dairy and dairy cross animals

for a high-quality meat for consumers.

[Lillie Mae Chocolates \(Marshalltown, IA\)](#)

If you want to see candy made daily right in front of you, you can head to Lillie Mae Chocolates. Find their locations in Marshalltown and Clear Lake to pick from gourmet popcorn, caramels, chocolate and more! Crafted in small batches using real Iowa cream and butter, locally sourced ingredients, and European-style chocolates and old-fashioned recipes, these sweet treats are a celebration of place, tradition, and the people who make it home.

[L&R's Mini Farm LLC \(Anamosa, IA\)](#)

After 17 years of service in the Iowa Air National Guard — including two overseas deployments — Jeff Williams and his wife, Hannah, decided to trade city life for the quiet fields of Jones County. What began as a dream from Jeff's childhood, helping on family farms, became a reality in 2023 when they launched L & R's Mini Farm, named for their daughters Langley and Remee. Jeff says the best part of being a veteran farmer is the camaraderie — "the bonds you make with fellow service members who become your mentors." Their farm is a true family effort, built on passion, service, and a love of knowing exactly where their food comes from.

[Our Family Homestead \(Fort Dodge, Iowa\)](#)

Our Family Homestead is based out of Fort Dodge, Iowa, and offers farm fresh eggs, seasonal fruits and vegetables, home canned goods and more! They are an integral part of the Fort Dodge Farmers Market.

[Rose Farm \(Norwalk, Iowa\)](#)

Travel just 20 minutes outside the city center of Des Moines and be greeted by the beauty of Rose Farm, family-owned and lovingly-managed by Flower Farmers Karri and Patrick Rose. With 25 acres of sprawling ground, you will find yourself immediately transplanted to a place of tranquility. The white farmhouse set against the backdrop of deep rolling hills, and the charming, idyllic barn housing The Shoppe at Rose Farm, are neatly nestled on the property.

[Silver Creek Farm \(Cedar Rapids, Iowa\)](#)

A new operation based out of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Silver Creek Farm will begin offering products in the coming year.

[Tiefenthaler Quality Meats \(Holstein, IA\)](#)

John and Shelly Tiefenthaler are the current owners of Tiefenthaler Quality Meats (formerly known as Food Locker Service) which is located north of Holstein, Iowa on Highway 59. Tiefenthaler is a Specialty Retail Meat store that processes and makes meat products for the store. Also custom butchering is available.

[YT Cattle Company \(Carlisle, IA\)](#)

After serving in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2001 to 2005, including a deployment to Afghanistan, Aaron White traded his machine gun for a tractor — but kept the same grit and sense of purpose. What began as a return to his roots after years of teaching has grown into a diversified family operation raising corn, soybeans, hay, and cattle. For him, being a veteran farmer means continuing to serve — this time by caring for the land, his animals, and his family. "The discipline and purpose I learned in the Marines now go into building something lasting for the next generation," Aaron White says.

Continuing a Legacy of Service

Each of these veteran-owned businesses represents more than a livelihood — they're living legacies of service, community, and perseverance. This Veterans Day, we thank them not only for their military service but also for their ongoing contributions to Iowa's farms, food systems, and local economies.

From all of us at **Choose Iowa**, thank you to our veterans — past and present — for your dedication to our country and to Iowa agriculture.

Stay tuned for deep dives into many of these businesses in future installments of our blog!

.VETERANS.

Day

