

Restaurant, deli and bakery focus on quality, handmade food.



On-Farm Restaurant Boosts Profits

Four generations of Hagermans farmed and sold vegetables off the family farm before fifth-generation daughter Jennifer McCaw decided to start serving up the farm's produce on plates. Her Farmhouse Eats bakery, deli, and lunchtime restaurant share a building with Hagermans' produce-selling operation.

"My original plan was to sell jams and pies I made in our kitchen at our farm stand," says McCaw, a food service veteran

who started working in a local restaurant at 14. "Within a year and a half, I had outgrown the kitchen, and my dad built the building we're in now."

The half that's the farm's storefront, kitchen, and storeroom fills up with hungry customers from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. each day. Lunches feature Field to Fryer Potatoes - according to one online review, "Fries were the best we've had lately. Burgers were right up there as well. Don't get me started on the

bake shop!"

McCaw started as a 1-woman show. Now in her 13th season, she has a staff of seven, plus her mother Heather. She gives credit for the initial growth to the family's farmstand and its reputation for quality produce.

"I built my business off of my dad's business," says McCaw. "I lured his customers in, and they've become mine."

McCaw acknowledges that the first few years were difficult. She advises others considering following her footsteps not to think it'll be easy.

"We put a lot of time and effort into it, and we already had people coming to the farm," she says. "When COVID hit, we did a takeout window with baked goods. We have big, beautiful windows to show what we have. When people can't see the item, it's a hard sell."

In 2022, she reopened the doors. Business returned, in particular the tourists. Local people used to be the backbone of her business. That's changed with the growth of wineries and breweries in the area and an increase in population as people moved out of the city.

"People from the city often seem to know less about how to bake and cook for themselves," says McCaw. "That's extended my season, as more people look for quality, handmade food, and that's what we sell."

McCaw and her husband, who works off the farm, have four school-age children. They're the main reason she's closed on



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Sundays and Mondays. "Typically, we close about November, but last year we started a Christmas market on weekends."

McCaw isn't sure how the business will evolve when her children are all in school.

One thing that won't change is using what her family grows. "I always start cooking and baking with what is being grown on our farm," she says. "Then I turn to other local farms and branch out from there."

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Company Searches The Globe For Agricultural Bearings



EZ Bearing specializes in hard-to-find ag bearings.

To satisfy the market for agricultural bearings, Darrell Zimmerman took it upon himself to establish worldwide suppliers for nearly every bearing a farmer could ever need.

"No one was specializing in bearings for the ag industry," Zimmerman says. "Agriculture has unique bearings not used in other industries, so we gathered information and studied applications to build our specialty lines."

The result of this effort is EZ Bearing LLC, a primarily wholesale bearing supply house targeting farm and repair shops servicing the farming community.

The business maintains a physical warehouse with extensive inventory but much of its work involves sourcing bearings from all corners of the globe. Many products are manufactured overseas but not distributed in North America. EZ Bearing focuses on premium brands for higher quality and longevity in the field.

"We do our best to find what our customers need in Europe, Australia, or wherever they might be, and then bring the right products in," Zimmerman says.

EZ Bearing is currently working on getting its data streamlined to where it can deliver structured e-commerce for its current

customers.

"We've morphed into a full-blown ag business, and I always joke that we don't even have time to build a website," Zimmerman says.

In cases where they must source unusually hard-to-locate bearings, they evaluate the need for them, and if great enough, they use their vendor connections to modify bearings for the special features that might not be available.

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Heroes To Hives Is A Thriving Business For Veterans

Adam Ingrao's unfortunate military injury led him to develop a business idea that's created a worldwide army of beekeepers, 10,000 people strong. Ingrao was proud to be the fourth generation of his family to serve in the Army, but when he got injured, he went looking for another way to serve his country.

"I always liked agriculture, so with help from the GI Bill, I finished a degree in plant science," Ingrao says. He was recruited to Michigan State University (MSU) to work on his Ph.D. and to study beneficial insects. That's when the bees discovered him. With that newfound fascination coupled with a passion for serving tied to a life-long interest in the military, Ingrao soon co-developed with his wife Lacey a beekeeping program specifically designed for service members and their families.

Today, that 9-month online introduction to beekeeping called "Heroes to Hives" is free for all service members and up to three family members. It helps many transitioning veterans reinvent themselves. Heroes to Hives has become a worldwide phenomenon that many recognize as helping support food supply and food security. By the end of 2023, the program

will have trained 10,000 people from around the world.

The program took off with support from people like Ana Heck, a resident bee expert at MSU Extension. Heck represents the broader focus of the University while working with farmers and other Universities to build communities of people in the stewardship of pollinators. Heck says, "I'm especially proud of the supportive farming community that's so interested in turning marginal land into bee habitat."

One of the colleges in Heck's network is the University of Minnesota, which will host the inaugural Heroes to Hives national conference at their Minnesota Landscape Arboretum Apiary in July 2024.

After an incubation period at MSU, Heroes to Hives became part of Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS), which handles registration and course management. The Heroes to Hives staff consists of just one person, Dr. Adam Ingrao. Through persistence and dedication, he's reached a vast number of veterans by running numerous programs and raising considerable funds to provide an amazing level of service.

"Most of my day-to-day job is networking," Ingrao says. "I work with individuals,

veteran's groups, the VA, and anyone and everyone I can." The VA is discovering what Ingrao and others already knew: that beekeeping is an excellent treatment for PTSD and anxiety. It's also a way for returning veterans to reconnect with each other and the land they helped defend.

Ingrao says most of the course participants are hobbyists, yet many are inspired and grab onto his passion for bees. Gary Brown is a good example. Brown was ready to retire when he decided to manage a few hives for the honey. He attended Heroes to Hives and eventually became a master beekeeper. He went on to become the first veteran to teach hands-on beekeeping at his Michigan VFW post. Brown says, "I'm now in my fourth year of teaching and reaching out to all the other VFW posts promoting this program as one of the best ways to help with PTSD."

Nick & Nicole Kaminski started Hickory Tree Farm Apiaries after Nick's Marine Corps service. Their goal is to grow toward the commercial size of 400 hives. The Kaminski's also believe in paying it forward and have taken the Heroes to Hives training to help others. "The biggest threat to bees is the lack of beekeeper training," Nick says. "Beekeepers need to know proper



Heroes to Hives network has trained over 10,000 people in their online introduction to beekeeping courses.

husbandry, pest and disease control, and good management practices."

The vast Heroes to Hives network is proving vital to our pollinators, our veterans, and our food supply.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Heroes to Hives (www.miffs.org/heroestohives).