Grow. Eat. Play. Cedar Valley & the Cedar Valley Local Food Guide

A Marketing Campaign to Advance/Support Local Food in the Cedar Valley Led by the UNI Local Food Program

The UNI Local Food Program works to develop a local and regional food system that positively impacts consumers, farmers, and communities through education, collaboration, and economic development. We work with our valued partners to develop a diverse array of tools, education, experiences, and programs with the overarching goal of making food production and local food consumption accessible to everyone.

We support farmers and food businesses in Black Hawk County and nearby counties by helping them reach wholesale buyers—like food hubs, restaurants, grocery stores, caterers, and schools—and by connecting them directly with individual customers.

The Grow. Eat. Play. campaign is a flexible, region-specific marketing initiative designed to boost the reach and success of our region's local food producers, with a strong focus on supporting direct-to-consumer markets.

Grow.Eat.Play. is about coming together to support local food in our communities. We invite you to become a member, help strengthen this work, and enjoy a few perks as a member.

Since replacing the Buy Fresh Buy Local brand in 2020, Grow. Eat. Play. has been embraced across multiple Iowa regions, driving a shift toward a thriving culture of local food. Grow.Eat.Play. is more than a campaign; it's a celebration of local culture, a community effort, and powerful step toward a resilient food future.

Our goals are to:

Empowers Eaters to Embrace Local

Grow. Eat. Play. fosters a culture that values local food, creating a community-wide understanding of its importance, benefits, and unique qualities.

Expand Your Reach

This campaign is for everyone—not just foodies. We aim to bring everyone into the local food movement, making it accessible, engaging, and impactful for every eater.

Celebrate Local Food Diversity

Iowa offers an extraordinary range of local foods, from fresh produce and pasture raised meats to handcrafted goods and unique dishes from small, passionate eateries. Grow. Eat. Play. highlights this diversity to inspire and connect with more consumers.

Equip Producers with Tools for Success

We support farmers and local food entrepreneurs by providing targeted tools and guidance that strengthen customer relationships, build brand presence, and help them grow within the local food movement.

GROW.EAT.PLAY
cedar valley

Criteria

Grow.Eat.Play. members must be a local producer or business that meets one of the following:

- Produces, processes, prepares or sells a food(s) or beverage(s) in Iowa that meet or exceed the minimum product criteria.
- Buys at least two or more foods or beverages in Iowa that meet or exceed the minimum product criteria below.
- A farmers market in Black Hawk County or a surrounding county.
- A Community Garden in Black Hawk County or a surrounding county.
- An organization in Black Hawk County or a surrounding county that supports local foods.
- Be in good standing with and currently reside or conduct business in the state of Iowa.

Cedar Valley Grow.Eat.Play Product Criteria

- Fresh produce must be 100 percent grown or raised in Iowa.
- Baked goods must include at least one ingredient from Iowa that originates as an Iowa agricultural product such as eggs, butter, milk, cream, or grains, excluding water.
- Meat and meat products must be derived from animals born, raised and finished in Iowa.
- Dairy products must be from animals in Iowa and processing must take place in a state-inspected plant located in the state of Iowa.
- Eggs must be from animals in Iowa.
- Apicultural products produced by honeybees, including honey, wax, pollen and propolis must be 100 percent of Iowa origin.
- Beer, Cider, and Spirits must be produced in Iowa and contain at least one Iowa agricultural product, excluding water.
- Wine must contain a minimum of 75 percent Iowa grapes.

LOCAL FOOD PROGRAM

UNI University of Northern Iowa. Center for Energy & Environmental Education

GROW.EAT.PLAY
cedar valley

Membership Benefits

1 Membership Visibility

- The printed guide was distributed to over 2,500 people and businesses—with expanded outreach planned for 2027.
- At least one individualized social media post in 2027 highlighting your business on our UNI Local Food Program social media.
- The printed guide and Grow.Eat.Play. members are featured in our newsletter reaching over 500 participants.

2 Promotion

- Promotion of your local food events
- Promotion to wholesale buyers (restaurants, grocery stores, caterers, schools)
- Promotion directly to individual customers through community events and distribution of the Local Food Guide.

3 Discounts

Grow.Eat.Play. members will receive $25 off their Choose Iowa Membership. Coupon code valid Nov. 1, 2026 to April 30, 2027

4 Branding & Marketing Tools

- Access to the Grow.Eat.Play. toolkit, including digital graphics, logos, and the full branding kit for your marketing.
- Grow.Eat.Play. window cling
- 4x6, 5x7, and 8x10 Grow.Eat.Play. signage

5 Regional Support

We work directly with farmers and food businesses in Black Hawk County and surrounding counties to strengthen local food connections and increase visibility.

LOCAL FOOD PROGRAM | UNI University of Northern Iowa. Center for Energy & Environmental Education