



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ILLINOIS PRODUCTS EXPO TO CELEBRATE 20 DELICIOUS YEARS

Annual 'Taste of Illinois Agriculture' to take place March 3-4

SPRINGFIELD, IL – This year, the annual Illinois Products Expo celebrates 20 delicious years of introducing Illinois products to the public. Dozens of Illinois food companies, wineries and agricultural associations will take part in this agricultural showcase on the Illinois State Fairgrounds, March 3-4, 2018.

This 'Taste of Illinois Agriculture' will allow visitors to sample and purchase all of what Illinois has to offer. Food offerings include fresh meat products, pizza, sauces, homemade jellies and jams, ice cream, and gourmet seasonings all produced, packaged or processed in Illinois. There will also be non-food items, such as soy candles and agricultural-based soaps and lotions on display and available for purchase. A complete list of participating vendors can be found on the Expo website,

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Assistance/TradeShows/IllinoisProductsExpo/Pages/default.aspx>.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture Bureau of Marketing, Promotion and Grants aims to assist small to medium size Illinois agri-businesses enter the marketplace through export assistance, branding/marketing campaigns and buyer introductions. This year, more than 20 buyers from grocery and specialty stores will be visiting with Expo vendors as they search for new products to line their store shelves.

Illinois agriculture extends well beyond the crops you see in the fields. Illinois ranks first in the nation for food processing sales (\$186 billion), and it is one of our state's top manufacturing activities. The 2,372 food processing companies in Illinois support more than 71,000 jobs.

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“Illinois is home to a host of transportation options, which allows businesses to efficiently and effectively move products locally and beyond,” said Ag Director Raymond Poe. “Never before has it been easier for people to purchase products that have been produced, processed, packaged or manufactured in Illinois. The Products Expo is an excellent way for you to learn more about and support small agribusinesses in our state.”

Another way you can support agribusinesses in our state is by taking the Buy Illinois Challenge. It’s a simple pledge for the 4.7 million households in our state. If each Illinois household dedicates \$10 of their existing weekly budget to the purchase of Illinois products, we would generate an additional **\$47 million each week** for the Illinois economy. To find an agribusiness or Illinois product near you, visit our website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Consumers/BuyIllinoisChallenge/Pages/default.aspx>.

The Illinois Products Expo will be open on Saturday, March 3rd from 10:00am-5:00pm and Sunday, March 4th from 10:00am-3:00pm in the Orr Building at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. Admission is \$5 per person. Children 10 and younger will be admitted free of charge. While food sampling will be free, the beverage tastings are offered at a small cost. Five dollars will get you five tastings and your own wine glass to take home.

New this year, as a way to celebrate the Expo’s 20th anniversary and Illinois’ Bicentennial, we will hold FREE hourly drawings for a chance for attendees to win \$20 or \$200 in Expo Cash. This money can only be spent on Illinois products at the Expo the day of the drawing.

Here are a few of the participating vendors scheduled to attend the 2018 Illinois Products Expo:

Butch’s Pizza	Country Lights Soy Candles
Creekstone Kettle Works	Engrained Brewing Company
Golden Prairie Popcorn	Oakland Noodle Company
Reinneck Ranch	Meatsmack
Homestead Bakery	Serious Lip Balm
Cousins Dog Biscuit Company	Uncle Joe’s Sauces
Sasse’s Apiary	Two Fat Guys Gourmet Sauces
Homestead Bakery	Zillion’s Chili
Toohill Seed & Beef Services	ReMARKable Caramels
Turasky Meats	

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Flat Branch Soap

Shelley's Salsa

SS Backwards Longhorn

Kelley's Gourmet

Nuthatch Hill BBQ

Four Score and Seven Ribs Ago BBQ

Safeco Donuts & Bakery (new)

Jimmy Sticks (new)

Cahokia Rice (new)

Willow City Farm (new)

IL Pork Producers Assoc.

August Hill Winery

Hill Prairie Winery

Spirit Knob Winery

Lasata Wines

Berryville Vineyards

Vahling Vineyards

Riegler Quality Beef

Ropp Cheese

Family Kettle Corn

Pasta Alley

Hilltop Bee Emporium

Hapburgers Signature Seasonings

Gordon Heat (new)

Ludwig Farmstead Creamery (new)

Hot Sauce by Goss

Umland Natural Foods (new)

Jones Boys Market

Fox Creek Vineyards

Hopewell Winery

West of Wise

Kite Hill Vineyard

Creekside Vineyards

Willow Ridge Winery

More Illinois food companies are expected to join this growing list in the days leading up to the Expo. If an Illinois food company would like to learn more about participating in the Illinois Products Expo or any of the other programs offered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture, they can contact the Illinois Department of Agriculture Bureau of Marketing, Promotion and Grants at (217) 557-5897.

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