

Independence, Iowa

# Bagge Strawberries

*"On our farm is it important that every member of the family can be involved."*



# Strawberry Season in Northeast Iowa is short, but oh so sweet.



Each year, for only about 4 weeks, the Bagge Strawberry Farm near Independence is bursting with bright, red berries. Their locally-grown, summer sensation draws customers from far across the state of Iowa. These berries are grown for flavor, not for cross-country travel, which means flavor is far superior to the strawberries in the grocery store. Whether you are eating them fresh, freezing them for later or baking pies for the neighbors - you can be sure that this strawberry farm offers the best!

John and Shelly Bagge started with only two acres of strawberries when their children were 2, 4 and 6. Now, fourteen years later, the berry fields have been expanded to more than ten times their original size. (Since the Bagge family also has maintained a corn, bean and livestock operation, it is fair to say that summer is a busy time!) Each strawberry acre is hand-planted, requires five miles of irrigation line and 400 bales of corn stalk mulch, and is harvested by individuals. During picking time, the Baggés are joined by over 40 hired hands - many are local Amish youth - to help with the voluminous harvest. It takes a big team to harvest the 1500 quarts of berries each day!

Five strawberry varieties are grown by the Baggés, each one ripening at a different time to allow for the longest picking season possible. The Jewel variety is the crowd favorite, but the Wendy, Honeoye, Winona, and AC Valley Sunset have loyal followings as well. "When people taste our strawberries, they can't believe how much better they are than the store-bought," says John.

John and Shelly are proud of their community and proud of their strawberries. They believe in marketing their own berries, and can be found selling berries at an area market every day of the week. They participate in the Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, and Independence Farmers Markets. Their berries are also available at several smaller roadside stands. During the season, strawberries can be purchased at the Wapsipinicon Mill every day from "the lady in the strawberry red truck." Berries are available in one and two quart quantities at the markets and large flats at their farm.

They have a presence in local retail locations, such as Hansen's Farm Fresh Dairy in Waterloo and have recently begun providing the strawberries for the Independence School System. For a real sweet adventure, consider picking your own. The price is less and the satisfaction deeper. Families with children are welcome! The Bagge Strawberry Farm is located at 2029 170th Street, Independence, Iowa 50644. For questions contact John and Shelly at 563-920-8671.