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● OCTOBER 2021

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Heat pump options
for your home**

**Electric cooperatives
support industrial
site development**

Flavorful pork recipes

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ON THE COVER

Congratulations to Marty Hulsebos, an Access Energy Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying the cover image for this month's issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. See Page 14 for details on submitting cover images.

WE'RE PROUD OF OUR COOPERATIVE HERITAGE

BY CHUCK SODERBERG



You probably noticed that this magazine has a new name and a new look this month! It is my pleasure to introduce you to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*,

the magazine for member-consumers of Iowa's electric cooperatives. The content and local co-op news you've come to appreciate in the pages of *Living with Energy in Iowa* remain the same, but we've updated our name to incorporate our cooperative heritage.

When we were planning the debut of our rebrand, it seemed most appropriate to time it with National Co-op Month in October. As we strategized on a new title, it was important to include "cooperative" in the name because it's essential to who we are and what we do. Electric cooperatives are proud to be owned and governed by the local members we serve.

Core values remain constant

Our cooperative values are core to our existence and legacy. Many electric cooperatives were formed across the Midwest in the 1930s and 40s because investor-owned utilities at that time saw no profit in building infrastructure into rural areas to serve sparse populations. So, farmers and ranchers decided to form their own locally owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives so they could gain access to safe, affordable and reliable power. And we're still here more than 80 years later delivering on that original mission to improve the quality of life for our members.

In fact, cooperative organizations around the world adhere to the same set of core principles and values. These seven cooperative principles are a key reason why electric

cooperatives operate differently from other types of electric utilities. We put the needs of our members first.

Information and education guides success

One of our key cooperative principles – Education, Training and Information – really explains why your local electric cooperative invests in this magazine. It's important to educate and train our cooperative members, elected directors and co-op employees so they can effectively contribute to the development and success of the cooperative. We believe informed members like you make better decisions.

Thank you for taking time every month to read this publication. We make it a priority to keep you

informed on regional electric cooperative news, the latest trends in the electric industry, energy efficiency tips that can save you money and safety information to protect your family. We also enjoy sharing member photos and member recipes with you each month. Make sure to bookmark our updated website at www.ieclmagazine.com where you can enter our monthly Editor's Choice Contest for a chance to win a great prize!

We believe our new name and updated design will help us connect with our greatest cooperative asset – our members.

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win an Instant Pot!

This Instant Pot Pro is a pressure cooker, sous-vide cooker, slow cooker, rice cooker, food warmer, yogurt maker, cake maker, sauté pan and steamer. The generous 8-quart capacity cooks up to eight portions – ideal for families, meal prep and batch cooking. An essential machine for every kitchen, this Instant Pot has an upgraded steam release switch with a noise-diffusing cover plus easy-grip handles on the inner pot, a large LCD screen and an auto-sealing lid.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Oct. 31, 2021. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Breville Panini Press from the August issue was Melvin & Kay Hauf from Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



COPPER THIEVES CAUSE EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO NIPCO SUBSTATIONS

Copper theft is a serious crime. These thefts can cause power surges, outages, fires, explosions and injuries to co-op workers or innocent people coming into contact with tampered equipment.

On Saturday, Aug. 21, Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO) control center operators received alarms at four distribution substations and one high-voltage transmission switching station. Local authorities received calls from passersby stating active electrical arcing and fire was evident at two sites and that substation fencing and gates had been cut at all sub and switch locations. The five stations are owned and operated by NIPCO and serve members of Western Iowa Power Cooperative (WIPCO).


While electric power was re-routed to prevent or minimize outages to

member-consumers, all sites required extensive repair to restore normal operations. Two substation sites received major damage to their transformers and were de-energized for several days to allow electric cooperative crews more time to assess and repair the damage.

No personal injuries to any member of the public, NIPCO or WIPCO crews occurred, and minimal power outages were reported by member-consumers of WIPCO.

In the days following the incident, two suspects were identified, apprehended and charged. Initial cost estimates to repair damaged infrastructure because of the vandalism is expected to be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Content courtesy of Angela Catton, NIPCO.



The stripping of copper grounding wire caused the electric equipment to start an electric arc through its own steel shell into the concrete. It burned so hot that a hole was burned into the concrete, turning it to glass.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"We are very grateful to the local authorities in Monona County and the surrounding area with assisting Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO) and Western Iowa Power Cooperative crews to secure a dangerous situation. It's hard to comprehend how these individuals would put themselves and others in harm's way for such little value. These thefts put the NIPCO team and its member cooperatives in danger. There is no value worth the risk of bodily harm."

Matt Washburn, executive vice president and general manager of NIPCO, referring to recent copper thefts and electric utility system vandalism



**YOU CAN HELP PREVENT
COPPER
THEFT!**

If you see suspicious activities, please call. Together, we can cut down on copper theft and other crimes that impact utility bills!

CRIME STOPPERS
800-452-1111

 Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives
* A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE STAFF MEMBERS NAMED TO GOVERNOR'S CARBON SEQUESTRATION ENERGY WORKING GROUP

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds recently announced members of the Agriculture and Energy Working Groups of the Carbon Sequestration Task Force. During the summer, Governor Reynolds signed Executive Order 9, launching a task force to explore carbon sequestration and the opportunities it presents for further economic development in the state of Iowa.



Serving on the working group are two electric cooperative staff members: Regi Goodale, director of regulatory affairs, Iowa Association of Electric

Cooperatives, and Jed Skogerboe, manager of business and community development, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative.

"Iowa is a recognized leader in renewable fuel and food production, making us a natural place to capitalize



on the growing nationwide demand for a more carbon free economy," Gov. Reynolds says. "I'm proud to expand our carbon sequestration task force with

additional members centered around two main working groups. I know they will hit the ground running and I look forward to working alongside them to drive economic growth and sustainability in energy and agriculture production."

The Carbon Sequestration Task Force, chaired by Gov. Reynolds, will be supported by two working groups focused on Agriculture and Energy. Members of the working groups are comprised of diverse subject matter experts and stakeholders representing industries and interests integral to the carbon sequestration supply chain in the state of Iowa.

Energy Working Group Members

- Chaz Allen, Iowa Utility Association
- Kelcey Brown, MidAmerican Energy Company
- Elizabeth Burns-Thompson, Navigator CO2
- Troy DeJoode, Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities
- Regi Goodale, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives
- Anne Kimber, Iowa State University
- Terry Kouba, Alliant Energy
- Dan Nickey, University of Northern Iowa
- Jolene Riessen, LeeCorr, Inc.
- Matt Russell, Iowa Interfaith Power & Light
- Troy Shaner, Valero Renewable Fuels
- Jed Skogerboe, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
- Charles Stanier, University of Iowa
- Troy Van Beek, Ideal Energy, Inc.
- Shirley Welte, Black Hills Energy

MIDWEST CO-OPS' CHARGE EV NETWORK SET TO DOUBLE IN SIZE

A regional electric vehicle (EV) charging network in the Midwest is opening up new opportunities for electric cooperatives to serve consumer-members while enhancing the bottom line.

The CHARGE EV network is the creation of more than 31 cooperatives spread across Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota. The network has deployed more than 50 Level 2 and Level 3 charging stations. The addition of more distribution and generation and transmission cooperatives is expected to raise that number to more than 75 this year.

"We want to create a national EV-charging network that's powered by electric cooperatives," CHARGE EV Board Chair



and Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services President and CEO Nate Boettcher says. "That's as simple as it gets."

Users can locate charging stations on an interactive map at the CHARGE EV website (charge.coop) and eventually on smartphone apps, such as PlugShare.

The initiative grew out of discussions among a group of Dairyland Power Cooperative members studying the effect of new energy innovations on cooperatives. A regional network could help alleviate member-consumers "range anxiety." EV drivers – particularly in rural areas – can't count on finding a charger outside of urban areas and interstate highways.

WHICH HEAT PUMP OPTION IS RIGHT FOR MY HOME?

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

Heat pumps can be a good alternative for heating homes. The technology has improved a lot over the past 10-20 years and is likely to be at least 20% more efficient than traditional home heating systems. In the summer, heat pumps can also cool your home, which is a bonus!

There are a variety of home heat pump options on the market today. Newer models of heat pumps can operate effectively in sub-zero weather, but sometimes they do so by switching to electric resistance mode, which is much less efficient. In a colder climate, it may be worth investing in a dual fuel system where propane or another fuel provides supplemental heat on extremely cold days.



A homeowner shows off his energy-efficient ductless heat pump.

The condenser for a mini-split is often mounted on an exterior wall.

Photos: Marcela Gara, Resource Media

Here are a few situations where you might use the different types of air-source heat pumps.

1 Ducted heat pump

If your home has a forced-air furnace, a centralized air-source heat pump can work well. A compressor outside your home that looks like an A/C unit is connected to your home's existing duct system. Like your furnace, the temperature is controlled through one main thermostat. This is a solid solution if your system has quality ductwork that heats and cools every room evenly, which is rare.

The ductwork in most homes is not designed to heat or cool every room evenly. Long supply runs provide little air to some rooms, and it's typical for some rooms to lack return air registers. Also, ductwork is often leaky, which creates comfort issues. If leaky ducts are in unheated areas such as crawl spaces or attics, it will increase your heating and cooling costs. Poor ductwork will render any kind of central heating or cooling system much less effective. Some HVAC contractors can repair ductwork problems if the ductwork is accessible.

2 Mini-split heat pump

If your home does not have ductwork or the ductwork is poorly designed or leaky, a ductless mini-split heat pump might be your best bet.

With a mini-split heat pump, tubes connected to the outside compressor carry refrigerant to one or more air handlers, which are mounted high on a wall to distribute air. Thermostats regulate each air handler, providing control of different zones in the home.

In climates that don't experience extreme cold, a ductless heat pump could supply all the heating and cooling in a small home. They are often used in combination with a central heating and cooling system. Ductless mini-splits are an excellent option if you don't have central air ducts, your ducts are leaking, or you only want the new ductless heat pump to heat or cool part of the home.

3 Geothermal (or ground-source) heat pump

Several feet underground, the temperature remains constant year-round, typically between 45-75 degrees F, depending on latitude. Heat is transferred into or out of the ground by pipes buried in a loop 10 feet underground or drilled up to 400 feet into the earth. The pipes carry water to a compressor, which uses a refrigerant to transfer the heat to or from your home's ducts.

A geothermal heat pump system is extremely energy efficient since the earth's temperature is warmer than the outside air in the winter and cooler than the outside air in the summer.

But this efficiency comes with a high price tag, which is the initial cost to install the pipe loop or drill the hole for a vertical pipe.

Heat pump efficiency basics

Heat pumps vary in efficiency, and this is measured in two ways. The Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) rating measures heating efficiency and the Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) rating measures cooling efficiency. The minimum ratings for a new heat pump are HSPF 8.2 and SEER 14. Heat pumps with the ENERGY STAR® rating are significantly more efficient than the minimum standard. The quality of the installation also matters, and some contractors will have more experience and training than others.

This information is a good starting point for research of heat pumps, but it is also important to check with a local electric co-op for additional information and guidance. If you have a qualified energy auditor in your area, an audit could be a great next step, especially if it includes a duct leakage test. The next step is to reach out to contractors and request a few quotes.

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



This trench shows where pipes will be buried to utilize the constant temperature of the earth for a ground-source heat pump.



★
Flavorful
PORK
★
RECIPES

SEASONED PORK LOIN

- 1 cup brown sugar, divided
- ½ cup and 2 teaspoons salt, divided
- 8 cups water, divided
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 handful peppercorns
- 1 4-5-pound pork loin
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- liquid smoke

Combine ½ cup brown sugar and ½ cup salt in 6 cups water, bring to a boil. Stir until dissolved and then add bay leaves and peppercorns. Lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Turn off heat and allow brine to cool completely to room temperature. Add pork loin and brine to a zip-top bag, squeeze out as much air as possible and seal. Put sealed bag into a large pot or bowl and refrigerate for at least 12 hours, up to 24 hours. Mix ½ cup brown sugar, 2 teaspoons salt, smoked paprika, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, black pepper and cayenne pepper to create a pork rub. Remove pork loin from brine and generously apply rub to all sides of the loin. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. Remove from fridge and remove plastic wrap. Place on a wire rack over a sheet pan with sides. Place 2 cups water and liquid smoke in the pan. Bake at 400 degrees F for 45 minutes, then turn down to 250 degrees F for 7 hours or until internal temperature is 190 degrees F. Turn off the oven and let pork rest in the oven for 1 hour. For pulled pork, shred after removing from the oven or for pork loin slices, wrap in foil and slice the next day.

Lisa Stuck • Dows • Prairie Energy Cooperative

ZESTY PORK LOIN

- 1 4-pound pork loin roast
- 1 package Hidden Valley Ranch mix
- 1 package au jus mix
- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- 1 16-ounce jar sliced pepperoncini, drained

Trim excess fat from pork loin and place roast in slow cooker. Sprinkle ranch mix on roast and then sprinkle au jus on top. Cut butter into pieces and place on top. Put pepperoncini on last. Cook on low for 5 hours. Serves 8

Donna Faga • Adair
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

PORK CHOP BAKE

- 4 pork chops
- 4 potatoes, sliced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ can milk (use soup can)
- cheese, grated

Layer ingredients in baking dish in order listed, top with cheese. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 2 hours. Serves 4-6

Connie Hoffman • Carroll
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

PINEAPPLE PORK TACOS

- 1 white onion, thickly sliced
- ½ fresh pineapple, cut into chunks (about 2 cups)
- 1 pound pork tenderloin, thinly sliced crosswise
- 8 corn tortillas, warmed
- ½ cup cilantro, roughly chopped
- lime wedges

Arrange oven rack about 6 inches from the heating element and preheat broiler. Arrange onion and pineapple on a large foil-lined baking sheet and broil 6-8 minutes, stirring once or twice, until softened and browned in parts; transfer to a platter and keep warm. Arrange pork on the same baking sheet and broil 6-8 minutes, stirring once or twice, until cooked through and golden brown; transfer to platter with pineapple and onion and toss gently. Spoon onto tortillas, top with cilantro and serve with lime wedges on the side.

Jamie Zomermaand • Maurice
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

BARBECUED PORK ROAST

- 3½ pound pork roast
- 1½ cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- salt and pepper, to taste
- onion, to taste

Brown roast and put in slow cooker. Mix remaining ingredients and pour over roast. Cook on low all day. Leftovers make good sandwiches. Adjust the ingredients down for a smaller roast.

Janice Schneidermann • Little Rock
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

BRUNCH HOT DISH

- 2½ cups herbed croutons
- 2 cups American cheese, shredded
- 1½ pounds pork sausage, browned and drained
- 4 large eggs
- 3 cups milk, divided
- ¾ teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can mushrooms, drained (optional)

Place croutons in a sprayed 8x12-inch baking dish. Top with cheese and then sausage. Beat eggs together with 2½ cups milk and mustard. Pour egg mixture over cheese and sausage. Let set in refrigerator overnight. Before baking, dilute mushroom soup with ½ cup milk and pour over top of hot dish. Sprinkle on mushrooms if desired. Bake at 300 degrees F for 1.5 hours. Serves 8

DeeAnn Paulsrud • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

PORK CHOPS AND CREAMY RICE

- 1½ cup instant rice
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ cup milk
- 1 envelope dry onion soup mix
- 4 pork chops

Heat the canned soups and milk, then stir in rice. Place rice mixture in the bottom of a greased 9x13-inch casserole dish. Lay pork chops on top of rice and sprinkle with onion soup mix. Cover and bake at 325 degrees F for 1.5-2 hours. No need to brown chops first.

Ruth Van Zandbergen • Orange City
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SWEET AND SOUR PORK RIBS

- 1 pound pork ribs
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- ½ cup ketchup
- ½ cup water
- 2 teaspoons vinegar
- sliced pineapple (optional)

Fry ribs until brown. Mix all other ingredients in a bowl, then coat ribs with sauce mixture. Simmer for one hour. Serves 4-6

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

WANTED:

DATE NIGHT AT HOME



THE REWARD:

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Deadline is Oct. 31, 2021

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. Also provide the number of servings per recipe.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES SUPPORT INDUSTRIAL SITE DEVELOPMENT

BY KAY SNYDER

A theme for this year's National Co-op Month is "By the Community, For the Community." Developing industrial property to support business growth and job creation is a perfect example of this in practice.

For three and a half decades, Iowa's electric cooperatives have supported the development of **95 industrial parks** totaling more than **7,250 acres** of property. Why is this important? Industrial parks are instruments for attracting business investment and for creating jobs. Established industrial parks generate comparative and competitive advantages that attract innovative businesses, leading to more jobs and a larger tax base.

Serving a growing number of commercial and industrial customers

In 1985, Iowa rural electric cooperatives established Iowa Area Development Group as their economic development organization to lead a concerted effort to grow the business and industrial base in Iowa. The number of commercial & industrial (C&I) customers the cooperatives

are serving is an indicator of this initiative's success.

Here is a snapshot of progress over the last 35 years:

- Large C&I members have grown from 67 in 1985 to 321 in 2020.
- Small C&I members have grown from 4,590 in 1985 to 28,713 in 2020.
- In 1985, C&I sales were 14% of total sales; in 2020 they were 54%.

- In 1985, C&I revenues were 12.6% percent of total revenues; in 2020 they were 45%.

Industrial parks bring unique benefits to the communities and regions in which they are located. Here are three examples from across the state.

Stanton Technology Park

Stanton recently broke ground on the 22-acre **Stanton Technology Park** located on the city's northeast side at the intersection of U.S. Highway



Stanton Technology Park

34 and Halland Avenue. Farmers Mutual Telephone Company (FMTC) will provide robust technology and connectivity capabilities to the park, which is necessary to attract high-tech companies looking to locate in a rural area. The Stanton Child Resource Center will be the first business to locate in the park. Onsite day care is a perfect amenity to attract companies to the park. Both **Southwest Iowa REC** and **FMTC** have provided financial support and will serve the park's electric power and technology needs.

Calhoun County Business Park

In early June, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to recognize the start of construction on the **Calhoun County Business Park**. This is the county's first business park and is strategically located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 20 and Highway 4 north of Rockwell City. The 16.5-acre first phase is currently under development. When all four phases are complete, the park will provide 115 acres of industrial space. Top prospects for the park include cold storage, warehouse, distribution and logistics companies. **Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association** and **Corn Belt Power Cooperative** are partners in the park and are joined by **Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative** and **Butler County REC** in providing financial support for development.

Butler Logistics Park

The **Butler Logistics Park** is a prime example of the significant

development that can happen as a result of available industrial space. Since the creation of the 92-acre first phase in 2014, the park has seen phenomenal expansion and success. Phase one is now home to **POET** ethanol plant, **American Colloid** and **Zinpro**, as well as a rail classification yard serving up to 150 cars for **Iowa Northern Railway**.

In 2019, the 230-acre second phase was quickly purchased by **TrinityRail**, a \$60 million facility for rail repairs, maintenance and modifications. This project created approximately 250 jobs. Also in 2019, **Valor Victoria**, **Iowa Northern Railway Company (IANR)**, **Watco Companies** and **Union Pacific (UNP)**, launched an internationally focused intermodal service through the newly developed **Butler Intermodal Terminal** at the **Butler Logistics Park**. This service provides an alternative to larger Midwest rail hubs and provides shippers with a cost-competitive solution that reduces long-haul trucking miles.

"Iowa Northern is thrilled to be part of this remarkable new service product for Iowa industries seeking strategic solutions to maintain a competitive global presence in the marketplace," says **Daniel Sabin**, president of **Iowa Northern Railway**.

In 2021, **Shell Rock Soy Processing**, a new start-up venture, purchased approximately 100 acres in the park's third phase to construct a soy processing facility. Scheduled to open

in 2022, this facility will employ 50-60 workers and is expected to crush 38.5 million bushels of soybeans annually.

Currently, 60 acres are available on the south side of the park for additional development. This is truly a "build it, and they will come" story made possible through important partnerships between **Butler County REC**, local, regional, state and federal partners.

Additional industrial and business parks in various stages of development are located across Iowa, including **LeMars**, **Estherville**, **Algona**, **Humboldt**, **Marion** and more. Visit www.IADG.com/sites-buildings to view available properties.

By the community, for the community

Electric cooperatives' active community involvement ensures a firsthand understanding of local priorities and enables them to make informed decisions on long-term investments.

While the theme "By the Community, For the Community" can take on a variety of meanings, it applies perfectly when recognizing the contributions electric cooperatives have made in generating business and industrial growth, which then create jobs and wages that support the people and communities they serve.

Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the Iowa Area Development Group.



Calhoun County Business Park



Butler Logistics Park

THE PROS AND CONS OF APP-ENABLED LIGHTING

BY MARIA KANEVSKY

Smart light bulbs are available in a variety of colors and dimming options that can help to set different themes or moods for the room, from an exciting bright white to a calming dim light.

Photo Credit: Cree

Out of all the smart home technologies available on the market, smart lighting is one of the easiest and most affordable technologies to integrate into your home.

Photo Credit: Philips

Out of all the smart home technologies available on the market, smart lighting is one of the easiest technologies to integrate into your home. Smart lighting can be controlled by voice command, through your smartphone or a smart home hub (like Amazon Alexa), making it relatively easy to control. It is also among the most affordable smart home devices, starting at about \$10 per bulb.

Remote control, scheduling benefits

One of the most useful aspects of smart lighting is the ability to control the lighting while you're away from home. For example, if you leave for work and forget to turn off the lights at home, you can easily turn them off with a few taps on a smartphone app.

Similarly, many smart lights offer the option for a customizable schedule. Users can schedule lighting to turn on or off at certain times of the day, depending on their preferences. For instance, turning off all the lights at home just before bedtime, or scheduling lights to turn on just before returning home from work.

Many smart light bulbs have motion-detection technology that can sense if a person is in the room or nearby to increase safety at home. This feature can be programmed to send an alert to your phone when the smart lighting detects an unexpected motion, either inside or outside the home.

Color customization adds fun

Beyond the more practical applications, smart lighting can simply be fun to use. Bulbs are available in various colors and dimming options that can help set different themes or moods for the room, from an exciting bright white to a calming dim light.

Various color temperatures can create different moods and also potentially help with winding down at night and improving sleep quality. Blue light, which mimics daylight, prevents the release of melatonin, an important hormone to feel sleepy. Setting smart lights to warmer-colored lights at night can help release melatonin, leading to a better night's sleep.

Potential issues to note

Some smart light bulbs may have

minor technical issues, such as not correctly responding to a voice command. However, sticking with reputable brands should ensure a well-functioning light bulb.

Another factor to consider is that not all smart lighting options are compatible with dimmers since smart bulbs have built-in dimming mechanisms. This could lead to inconsistent lighting between smart and regular bulbs and could cause smart lights to flicker if they clash with the existing dimmer switch. To prevent this, avoid placing smart light bulbs in fixtures that already have a dimmer switch.

Before making any purchases, research which smart lighting options work best for your home. Read several reviews to ensure your purchase is reliable during the entirety of its life span. Choosing the best option will help you make the most of it!

Maria Kanevsky writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

EXPLORE IOWA THIS FALL AND WINTER WITH THE IOWA FARM & FUN PASSPORT

The Iowa Tourism Office has launched the Iowa Farm & Fun Passport, which provides travelers the opportunity to discover farm experiences and family fun across the state while earning the chance to win prizes. The fall/winter edition of the Iowa Travel Guide is also now available for travelers who want to learn more about exploring Iowa.

“Iowa is fortunate to have four seasons of travel,” says Amy Zeigler, state tourism manager for the Iowa Tourism Office. “Our research shows that fall accounts for nearly 30% of visitors. Both the Iowa Farm & Fun Passport and Fall/Winter Iowa Travel Guide provide an abundance of ideas to inspire travel and offer activities over the next several months.”

The Iowa Farm & Fun Passport features two trail options:

1 The **Iowa Dairy Trail** includes homemade ice cream, cheese and all things dairy. Each check-in on the Dairy Trail earns travelers one entry into a monthly sweepstakes drawing through December, courtesy of Midwest Dairy. Prizes include an ice cream maker, smoothie maker, espresso machine and an artisan pizza oven.

Destinations

- Cinnamon Ridge Country Cupboard - Donahue
- Country View Dairy - Hawkeye
- Frisian Farms Cheese House - Leighton
- Hansen's Farm Fresh Dairy - Hudson
- Hinterland Dairy - Donnellson
- Iowa State University Creamery - Ames
- Iowa's Dairy Center - Calmar
- Milton Creamery LLC - Milton
- New Day Dairy GuestBarn - Clarksville
- Picket Fence Creamery - Woodward
- Wells Visitor Center & Ice Cream Parlor - Le Mars
- WW Homestead Dairy LLC - Waukon

2 The **Fall Fun Trail** features pick-your-own apple orchards and pumpkin patches giving travelers the chance to redeem family deals and discounts. The new passport joins existing programs for state parks, scenic byways, wine and beer. All passports are available at traveliowa.com/passport.

Destinations

- Bloomsbury Farm - Atkins
- Center Grove Orchard - Cambridge
- Colony Pumpkin Patch - North Liberty
- Enchanted Acres - Sheffield
- Flatrack Farms Pumpkin Patch - Garner
- Harvestville Farm - Donnellson
- Howells Greenhouse and Pumpkin Patch - Cumming
- Little Sioux Orchard - Okoboji
- Seed Savers Exchange Historic Orchard - Decorah

The free 140-page Fall/Winter Iowa Travel Guide can be ordered online at traveliowa.com, by phone at 800-345-IOWA or picked up at any of Iowa's 13 Welcome Centers. An online version is also available.

Editor's Note: Many of these destinations feature businesses served by Iowa's electric cooperatives. Because Iowa's electric co-ops serve member-consumers in all of Iowa's 99 counties, you'll also be traveling through several cooperative-served communities when visiting the dairy trail and fall fun trail.

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IT'S TIME TO SAVE ENERGY!

Heating season will arrive soon, making it a great time to plan to save energy.

No matter what kind of heating system you have in your house, you can save money and increase your comfort by properly maintaining and upgrading your equipment. But remember, an energy-efficient furnace alone will not have as great an impact on your energy bills as using the whole-house approach. By combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save about 30% on your energy bill while reducing environmental emissions.

7 Heating Tips

- Set your programmable thermostat as low as is comfortable in the winter and lower the setpoint when you're sleeping or away from home.
- Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as recommended.
- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting or drapes.
- Eliminate trapped air from hot-water radiators once or twice a season; if unsure about how
- to perform this task, contact a professional.
- Place heat-resistant radiator reflectors between exterior walls and the radiators.
- Turn off kitchen, bath and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing. When replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.
- During the winter, keep the draperies and shades on your south-facing windows open during the day to allow the sunlight to enter your home and closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.

Source: energy.gov

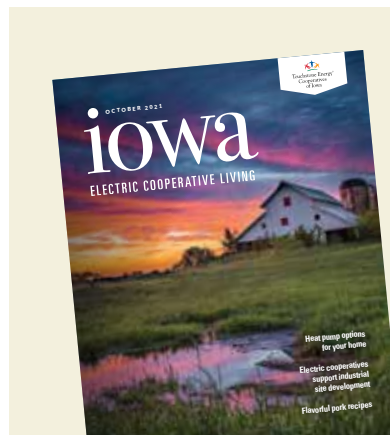


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ADVENTURES IN BULK BUYING

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

Iowa has a plethora of bulk grocery stores, many of them operated by the Amish or the Mennonites. There are the more established stores in Kalona and Hazleton, with newer ones popping up in the Albia, Troy and Chariton areas. Each has its own vibe and offerings.

I have long been an avid purveyor at bulk stores. No, that's an understatement. I need to admit my weakness – buying things in bulk makes me a little crazy. Of course, I purchase items that I will actually use, such as dried onions and whole cloves for holiday decorations. But things go haywire when I run across something novel, buy it, and then have no idea what to do with it later.

Novelty doesn't run in bulk

For instance, take a 4-pound bag of marshmallow bits, the kind that come in a favorite breakfast cereal, but just the marshmallows. The best part! My kids would love these! Which was true, for about three days. They snarfed them to a nausea-induced state and then swore off them forever. After several months in the freezer, the marshmallow bits got thrown into a snack mix and were finally consumed.

My most boggling purchase was the 3-pound bag of meringue powder. I have made precisely one meringue pie in my life – lemon – and even my home economics teacher in high school had to admit it was perfect. However, I never again have had the motivation or the time to repeat this feat.

I have no idea how many pies could be made from 3 pounds of meringue powder, but obviously this package was meant for someone manufacturing tarts on an industrial scale. Why I purchased it remains a mystery swathed in the mists of time. After incredulous laughter from my family, my grandma took it off my hands. When she died several



years later, we cleaned out her house and discovered the bag remained unopened in her cupboard.

Mountains of mums

Lest you think I only overbuy at bulk stores, I'm bound to disappoint you. A newer entrant into the bulk sales world is the Amish produce auction, held several times a week throughout the year. Everything is bid on in large lots – 36 peppers, a box of 150 pumpkins or 15 large mums.

Who can resist those mums—colorful and full, lined up in rows, just waiting to be taken home?

And so I bit. My plan was to keep six of them and sell the rest to friends and family. Great idea but transporting them in my cramped Grand Am without crushing them meant a feat of gymnastics unknown to the Olympics. First, the plants were much larger than they looked standing together bloom to bloom. I wedged them into the trunk, tucked them

onto the floorboards, folded them on either side of my legs. It looked as if Shakespeare's Birnam Wood had come to life, driving down the road.

Second, a hitherto unknown problem came hopping to life. Each mum housed at least 9.5 grasshoppers, all of which began jumping around the car – except for the .5, which dropped wings on my lap. Opening the windows sucked some of them out, but the wind also mangled the mums.

After a precarious journey, we arrived home. I kept the best mums and gave the rest away. I didn't have the nerve to charge for them in their diminished condition.

I still buy mums every year, bringing a larger vehicle along. But I've sworn off the meringue powder. I promise.

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons, two incredibly adorable grandsons and a lovely granddaughter.

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