



My Just Desserts, Water Sweets Company, Named One Of 28 New Small Businesses Inducted In Illinois-Made Program By Office Of Tourism

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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CHICAGO - The Illinois Office of Tourism today announced 28 new small businesses or 'Makers' have been recognized as part of the Illinois Made program. The program recognizes each business as a hidden gem for locals and visitors to discover, offering unique products and experiences all around the state. From vegan dessert makers, alpaca and hemp farmers, and a Chicago candlemaker with a mission to provide young moms with critical job training skills - each of the small businesses featured helps make Illinois a one-of-a-kind destination for visitors.

My Just Desserts in Alton and Water Sweets Soap Company in Edwardsville were selected for this honor. My Just Desserts is located at 31 E. Broadway in Alton, and Water Sweets Soap Company is located at 6108 Shoger Drive, Suite C, Edwardsville. My Just Desserts is known for daily food specials from sandwiches, salads, soups, pies,

and much more. My Just Desserts is located at Water Sweets Soap Company is a hand-crafted, soap manufacturer and retailer specializing in bath and body products with no preservatives that are all made in-house.

The Illinois Made program, launched in 2016, inspires residents and visitors to discover the people, products, and authentic experiences created by one-of-a-kind small businesses found in every region of the state. This newest class of Makers is being announced just in time to highlight for consumers even more options to buy local products during this year's holiday shopping season.

"I am honored for my business to be recognized alongside so many other hard-working small businesses around the state," said Yvonne Campbell, owner of My Just Desserts in Alton (Southwest Illinois), one of the newest Illinois Made makers and recipient of the state's Business Interruption Grant (BIG). "The past two years have been challenging for my business, but through the support, I've received from the state's business recovery programs and the Illinois Made program, I look forward to sharing my desserts with visitors to the area for years to come."

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker said Illinois is home to a diverse, vibrant small business community that attracts visitors from across the country and around the world.

"Through our Illinois Made program – we celebrate the unique contributions of small businesses across our communities and provide people yet another reason to explore all aspects of Illinois," said Governor Pritzker. "I want to congratulate the 28 new Illinois Makers on this distinguished honor, and encourage our residents and visitors alike to plan a visit to discover the products and experiences unique to Illinois."

The Illinois Made program now features over 200 Makers from all corners of Illinois and continues to drive foot traffic into local small businesses around the state.

"Small businesses are the backbone of Illinois' economy and offer food, products, and experiences that make a visit to all regions of Illinois special," said Sylvia I. Garcia, Acting Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), which includes the Illinois Office of Tourism. "We are excited to expand the Illinois Made program to include 28 additional small businesses that have uniquely made in Illinois products and highlight why folks should visit communities across our great state."

"This new Illinois Made class is a diverse representation of the unforgettable experiences visitors can find across our state, from the big city of Chicago and surrounding suburbs, all the way to rolling hills of Southern Illinois," said Karla Flannery, Deputy Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism. "We look forward to

finding new and exciting ways to promote this group of small businesses, their owners, and communities to both domestic and international visitors.”

The 2021 Illinois Makers reflect a wide range of business types – from restaurants, breweries, and wineries, to retail, farms, and orchard businesses – which coincide with the latest trends in tourism, including artisan products and those offering outdoor experiences for visitors. This year, more than half (18) of the businesses represented are owned by women or people of color. The new Makers include the following businesses, broken down by region:

Chicago & Surrounding Areas (Chicago & Beyond):

Accents by Fred - Forest Park

Boggio’s Orchard - Granville

Brewpoint Coffee - Elmhurst

Bright Endeavors - Chicago

Gayety’s Chocolates - Lansing

Hungry Monkey Bakery - Lake Forest

Kombucha Brava LLC - Evanston

Magic Meadows Alpaca - Wonder Lake

McMahon Gallery - Lake Forest

More Brewing Company - Huntley

Noir d’Ébène Chocolat et Pâtisserie - Evanston

Patterson Glass - Mundelein

Thornton Distilling - Thornton

Tony Cannoli - Mundelein

Vintrendi Wine Company - Park Forest

Northwest & Southwest Illinois (Great Rivers Country)

Dot's Pots - Moline

Mackinaw Valley Vineyard - Mackinaw

My Just Desserts - Alton

The Nut House - Peoria Heights

Thyme Square Bakery - Quincy

Water Sweets Soap Company - Edwardsville

Central Illinois (Lincoln of Lincoln)

CBPB Popcorn Shop - Champaign

Riley's Vegan Sweets & Eats - Peoria

Trefzger's Bakery - Peoria Heights

Wildflour Bakery & Candy Co. - Casey

Witness Distillery - Vandalia

Southern Illinois (Trails to Adventure)

Buffalo Bluffs Hemp Farm - Cobden

Shawnee Hills Lavender - Cobden

“The pandemic brought about unexpected challenges for Illinois’ farming community but has also given more people reason to discover outdoor hidden gems, like ours, in their own backyard,” said Sally Kazanis, owner and founder of Magic Meadows Alpacas in Wonder Lake. “We’re thrilled to be a part of the newest Illinois Made class, as an agritourism destination, that is available for locals and visitors to not only shop homemade products at but also make memories year-round.”

“Our mission is to help local young mothers gain valuable job experience through our paid training program and we are so glad that the state truly supports us in our goal,” said Ellen Kogstad Thompson, founder of Bright Endeavors in Chicago. “Illinois Made

was created to uplift local communities around the state through highlighting the people that make Illinois small businesses a travel destination, like the incredible moms that create our hand-poured candles, and we are honored to be a part of its mission as well.”

The Illinois Office of Tourism promotes Illinois Made makers through inclusion in both its new road trip itineraries and Enjoy Illinois travel magazine, events, seasonal campaigns, and annual Illinois Made Holiday Gift Guide that encourages consumers to support small businesses throughout the holiday shopping season. The 2021 Illinois Made Holiday Gift Guide will be announced later this month.

The Illinois Made program builds on the State’s efforts to highlight small businesses as a visitor attraction in and of themselves, to celebrate its diverse communities, and to boost tourism activity to support local economies statewide. Moreover, driving traffic toward tourism and tourism-related small businesses – among those hit hardest during the pandemic - is a key component of the Pritzker administration’s plan to guide a statewide economic recovery post-COVID-19.

The Illinois Office of Tourism (IOT) encourages residents to nominate businesses for the Illinois Made program on a year-round basis. IOT reviews nominations and selects businesses based on the criteria for the program along with local business representation across the state. To nominate a business for the program, [click here](#).

To learn more about Illinois Made visit: [EnjoyIllinois.com/IllinoisMade](https://enjoyillinois.com/IllinoisMade)

About the Illinois Office of Tourism:

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.