

# Piestengel

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**May 12, 2022**  
**Amana, Iowa**

My brother Kevin and I share many idiosyncrasies, so I wasn't surprised when he said he thinks Iowa as a vacation destination is a good idea. In fact, Kevin has already toured the state.

One of the highlights of the Iowa trip for Kevin was visiting the Amana Colony, near Iowa City. The colony encompasses many of our common interests, farming, home-made food, antiques, history, plain living, (that last one might be a stretch, but you get the picture).



The Amana are adherents of a German religious movement known as Pietists. Persecuted for their beliefs in their home country, the Amana emigrated to the US between 1830 and 1855. The industrious German settlers established agricultural colonies near Iowa City.

The colonies prospered in the century that followed. The Amana developed a tight-knit community, free of influence from the outside world. Their religious practices, farming methods, and social structures all developed in a microcosm. The Amana language also evolved in isolation, a unique dialectic mix of High German and American English known as *Kolonie Deutsch*.

When the Great Depression struck in the early 1930's, the Amana made a prudent decision to convert farm woodworking shops into fabricating facilities, to supplement their failing agricultural enterprise. They started building home appliances with their colony's name proudly displayed. *Amana* soon gained a reputation for quality products.

The Amana Colony was officially alcohol-free, but when prohibition ended and the need for refrigeration of alcoholic beverages increased, the Amana enterprise dived into filling

the demand. Amana rode the refrigerator wave well into the 1940's, then converted their shops to making equipment for the war effort. When the war ended Amana reverted to home-appliance manufacturing. Every post-war residence in America had an Amana appliance in its kitchen.

In the 1960's Amana again showed its adaptability by taking war-time technology and converting it to commercial purposes. Amana techs discovered that micro-wave technology, designed as a weapon, could cook your dinner. Amana manufactured and sold thousands of low-cost microwave ovens in the years that followed.

I totally agree with Kevin that a visit to the Amana colony was a "must" on our American Midwest tour.



I didn't learn much Kolonie Deutsch on our stopover, but one word stuck with me. The Amana took the American word "pie" and combined it with the High German word for "rhubarb". The hybrid word for this dessert is ....

... *Piestengel*



It tastes as good as it sounds.

I picked up a "to go" piestengel for Kevin, but I don't think it will make it that far.

Air conditioner in our Iowa hotel room

