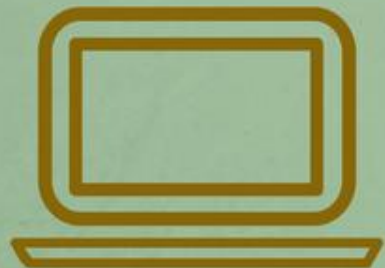**NC GROWING TOGETHER**
Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets

From the NCGT Social & Online Media Guide for Food Producers

BUILDING A FARM OR FOOD BUSINESS WEBSITE

Created by Krista Morgan, Locally Grown Accounts Representative, Lowes Foods, NCGT Project Liaison with assistance from Emily Edmonds, NCGT Extension & Outreach Program Manager

USDA
United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

Important Notes about this Resource Guide

These guides are designed for farmers, advocates, market managers, Extension agents, and others who work with farm and food businesses. Each guide outlines step-by-step instructions for utilizing various social and online media to market farm and food businesses, not only for direct-to-consumer markets but also because wholesale buyers increasingly want their farmers to have an online presence for co-marketing purposes.

This guide utilizes Wix.com as the template for building online sites, due to that company's common distribution, wide use, and free service. Other "DIY" website-building companies, such as Squarespace, offer similar services.

The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement of that product/service, nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned.

This guide was written by a local accounts representative for a regional grocery store chain to help farmers and small food manufacturers grow their online presence and drive customers to the stores where their products are sold.
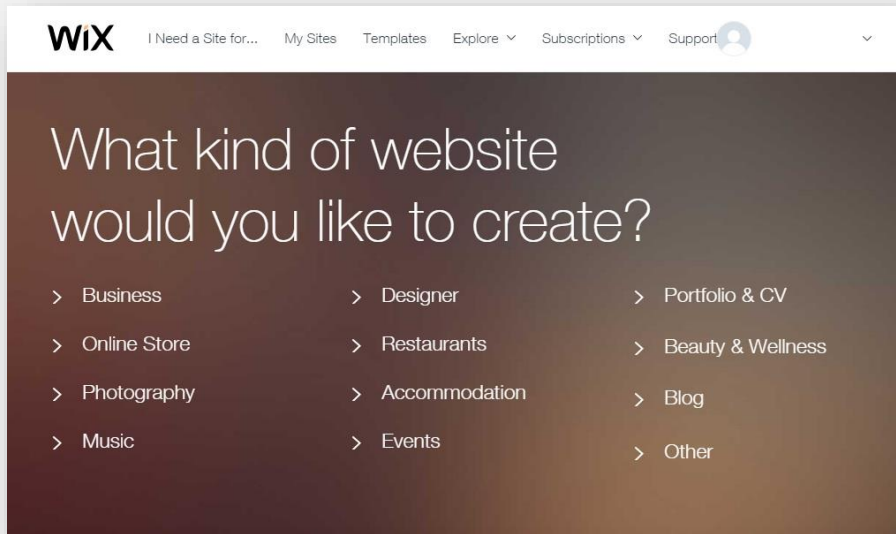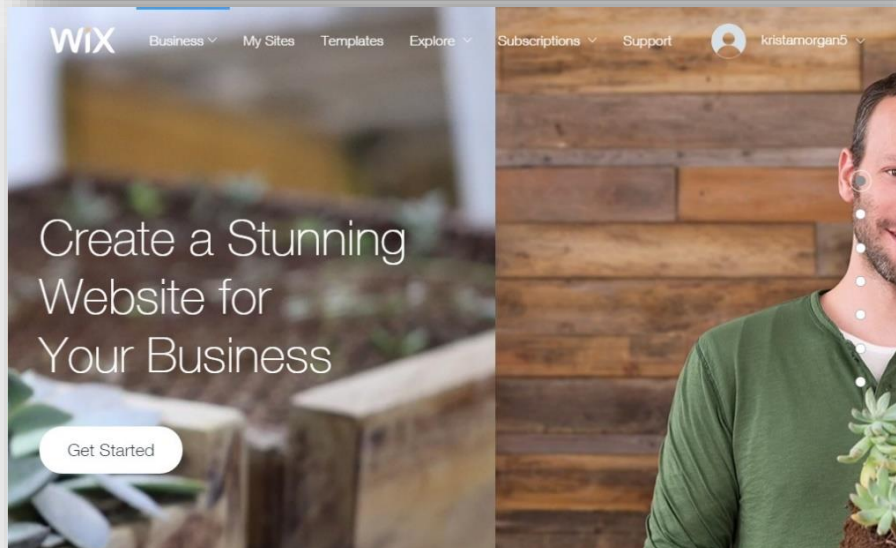
Building Websites Online at Wix.com
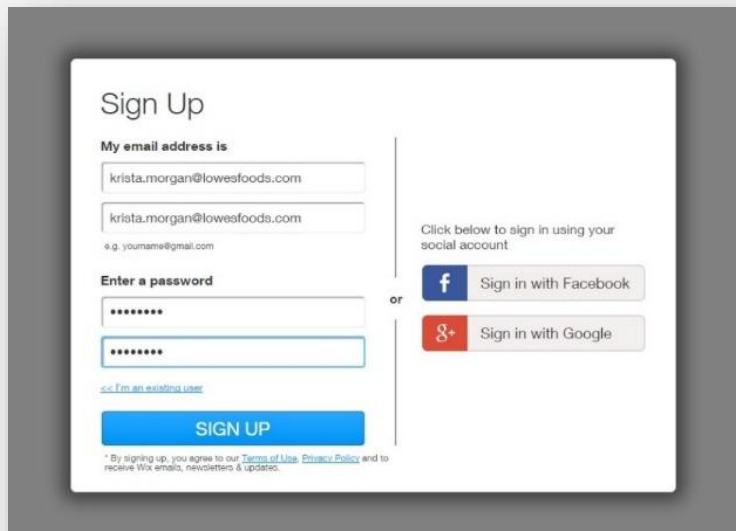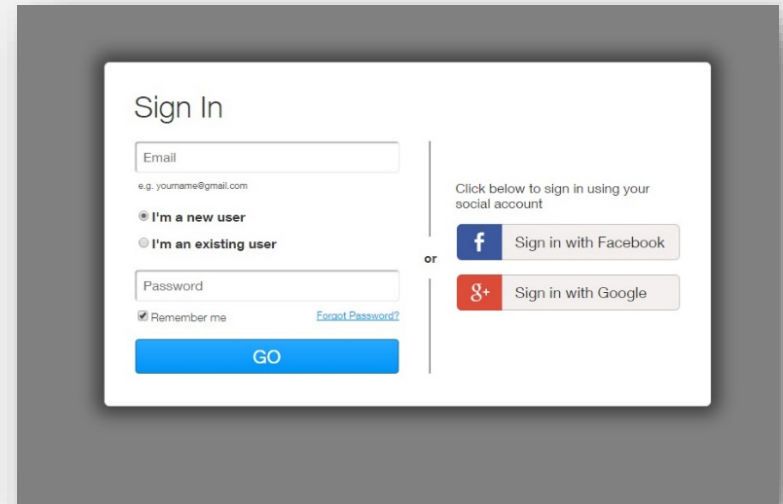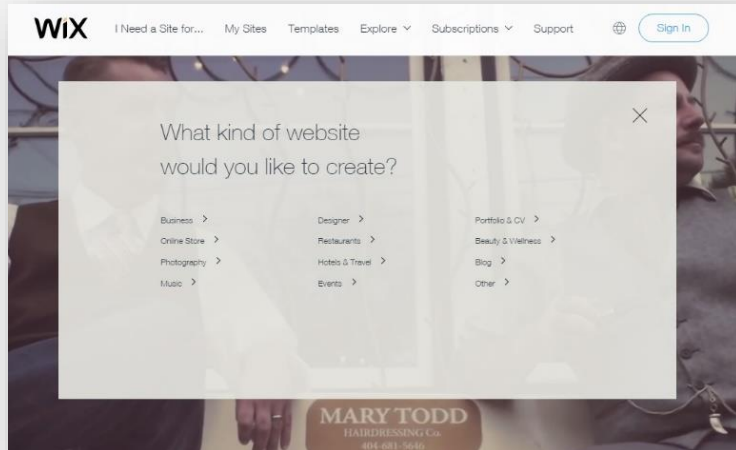
- Go to www.wix.com
- Click "Sign In"
- Enter your email and choose a password, and select "I'm a new user"
- Click "GO/Sign Up"
- Complete registration
- Sign in to wix.com

Choosing Your Website Type

☐ Click the kind of website you'd like to create. "Business" is likely to be the best choice.
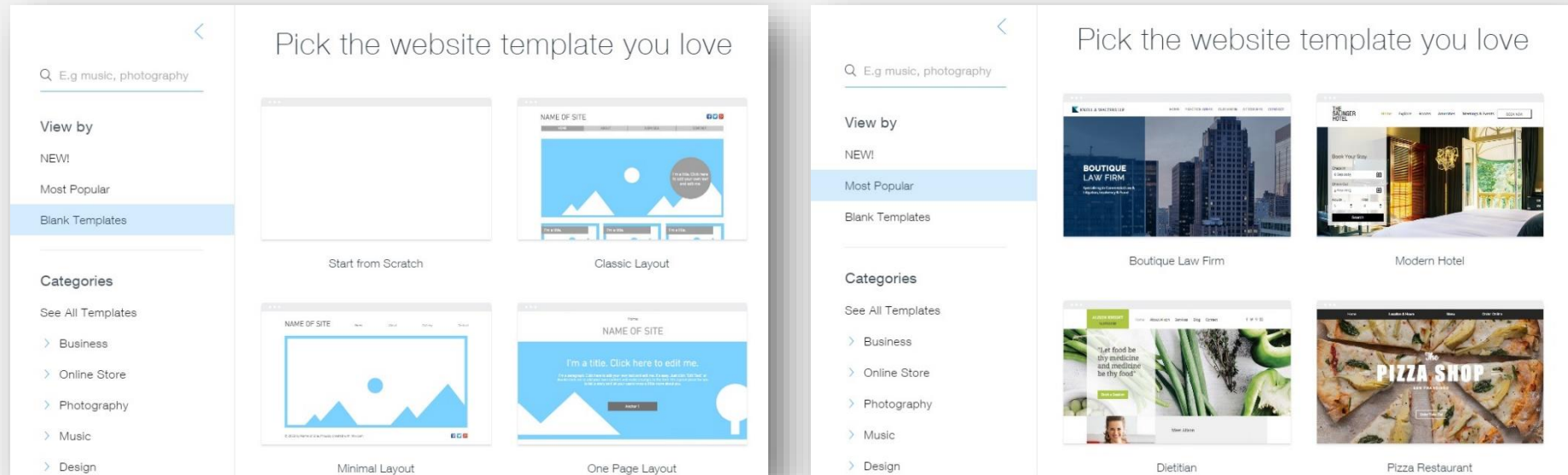
☐ Click "Get Started."

Wix is an online service that allows you to create a free website with no coding knowledge or technical requirements.

The program does the work for you – you simply select your website type, add pictures and content, and set things up to look the way you want!

Other websites, like Squarespace, also offer this service. For the purposes of this guide, we have shown the process of creating a website through Wix; however, the steps will be much the same on any major "do-it-yourself" website design platform.

Choosing a Website Template (Layout)

Pick the website template you love

Start from Scratch · Classic Layout · Minimal Layout · One Page Layout

Boutique Law Firm · Modern Hotel · Dietitian · Pizza Restaurant

❑ Choose a template you like. Make sure you like the layout elements first and foremost – do you want a large picture at the top, or more room for text? Do you want one item at a time, or links to lots of different items?

❑ Keep in mind that you can customize all the words, pictures, and colors, but that the layout of the template should include the physical elements you like most. Some of these templates are free and some have a small cost, so make sure to check when you are searching.

For the following examples, you'll see the "classic layout."

Adding Website Text, Titles, and Photos

Below are examples of the blank template and what kinds of changes you can make by clicking on each item on the page. These changes only took about 10 minutes to make!

❑ Simply click each element you'd like to change and follow the directions to add or change photos and words. (Wix has some free photos, but you should have some of your own photos on your computer before you start.)
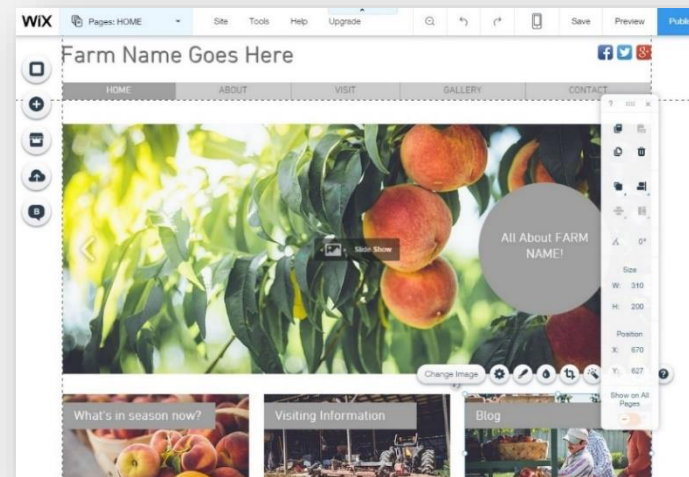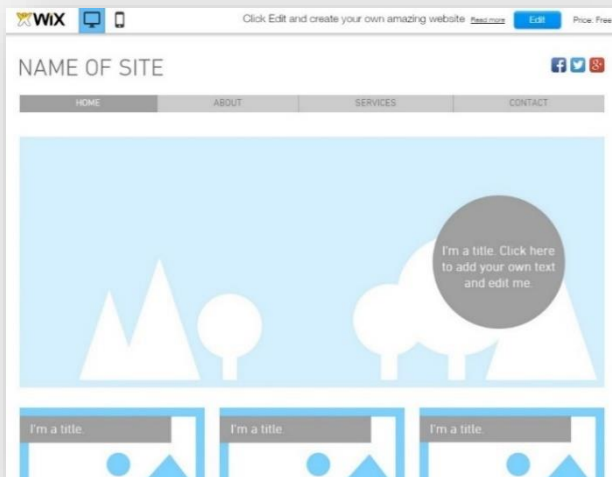

❑ Once you finish the the home page of your website, you'll get more comfortable with the Wix programming. Then you can move on to editing the other pages like the "About" or "Contact" page.

❑ To edit other pages, follow the same steps you chose on your home page: select the page you want to edit and follow the prompts to add titles, pictures and content.

Saving Your Work and Creating a Domain Name

There is a free domain name option, but it is specific to Wix, which means you can't customize it for your farm. If you can, it is highly recommended that you purchase a custom domain, which means you can customize your website so that it's easy to remember and contains your farm name.

Domain names range in cost, but purchasing through Wix makes it easy to connect yours to your site, and can save you money by using their hosting plan (something that will probably cost extra at other sites).

❑ To purchase a domain name on Wix, click the "Connect your own customized domain name" and follow the prompts for "I need to purchase a domain name."

❑ To purchase a domain name elsewhere, find another site that sells domain names and complete your purchase. Then return to Wix and select "Connect your own customized domain name," following the prompts for "I already have a domain name."
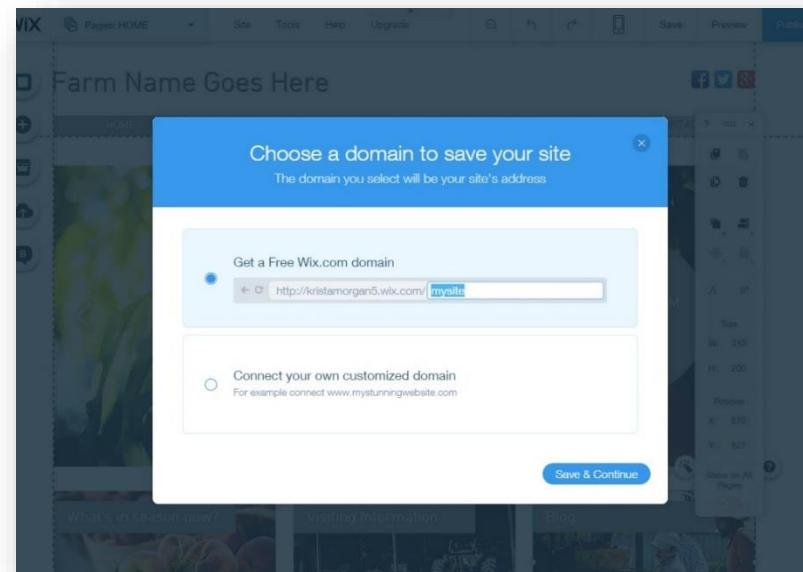

The first time you save your website, you will need to select a domain name.

The domain name is what people type to access your website (like www.ncgrowingtogether.org).

Adding a Facebook or Social Media Account and Creating the Footer

❑ To add your Facebook page, click the Facebook icon in the top right corner, select the larger icon that pops up, and then type your Facebook link in the box designated "Your facebook link goes here." (To get your facebook link, log in to facebook, select "profile" and scroll down until you see "profile link." Then copy that link and paste it into Wix.)
❑ Leave the "New Window" option checked for "how does it open?"
❑ Click "Done" to finish your work.
❑ Follow the same steps for other social media platforms, such as Twitter or Pinterest.
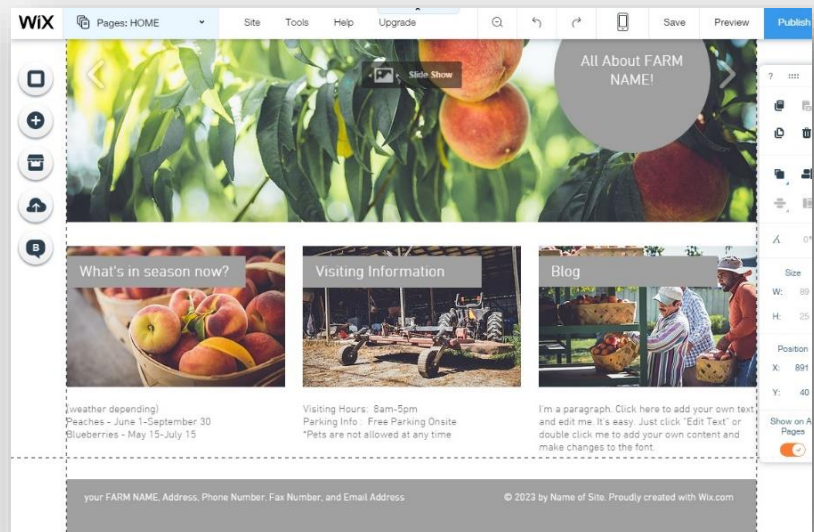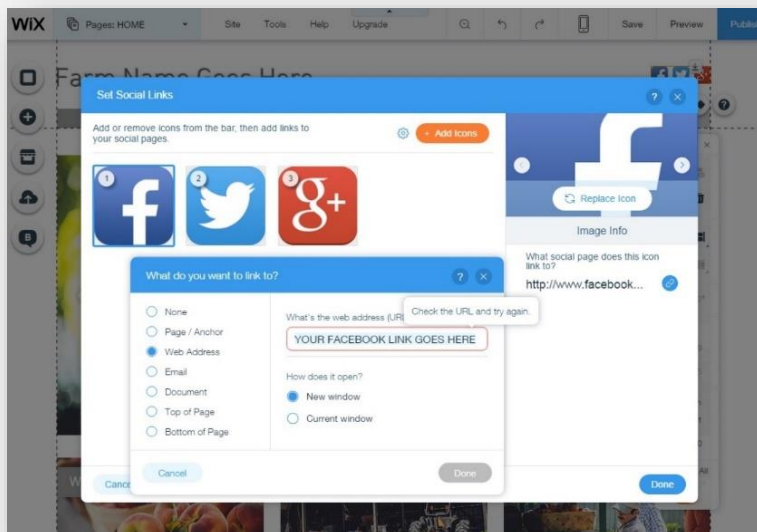
❑ To edit the footer of your website (which appears at the bottom of every page automatically) scroll to the bottom of your website and edit the large box at the very bottom.
   Always include your farm name, address, phone number, and email address in the footer.

Creating Mobile Websites on Wix

While you build your website, you are automatically building a mobile friendly version of your website!

❑ Don't worry about making changes here, but you can see how your page will look on different screens by selecting either the computer or phone icons in the top right corner.

Wix will match the changes and updates you make on your regular website page so that they appear on your mobile page.

When people visit your website from a smartphone or tablet, they will see the mobile version of your website – which makes it easier to load pages, see pictures, and access all your content on a smaller screen.
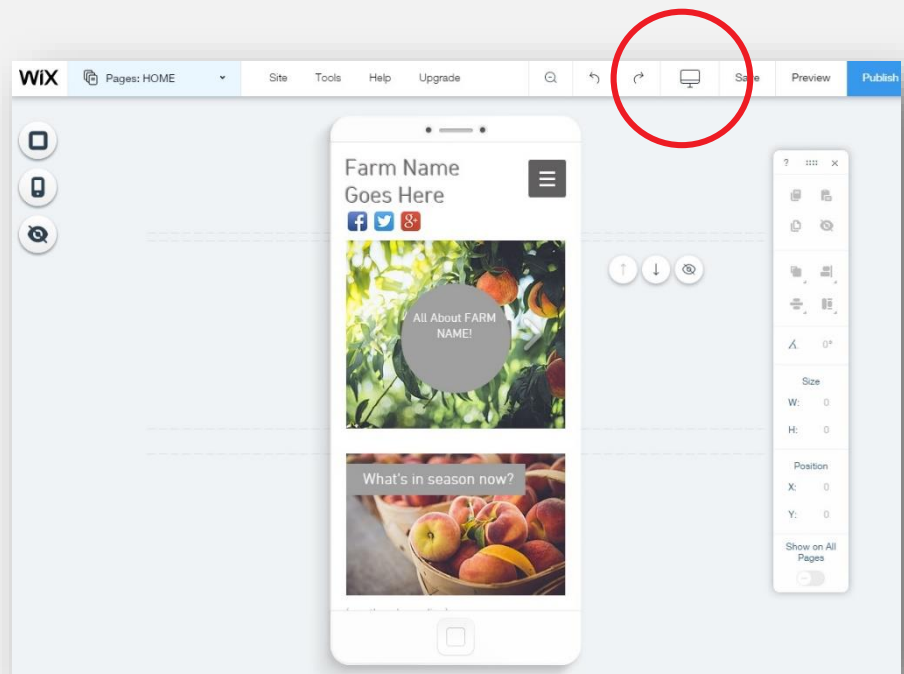
❑ After making all your changes, click "Save," and then click "Publish" in the top right corner.

❑ A box will pop up to confirm that you have successfully published your site. Click "View Site" to take a peek!

If you have enabled social media connections on your website, Wix will often ask you if you want to update your social media accounts after you've made changes to your website. This is a great idea, as you can share whatever new items you've added – specials, sales, upcoming events, or new photos – with your followers on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms.

Wix allows you to simply click "Share with my networks" and it will automatically post to all your connected social media accounts.
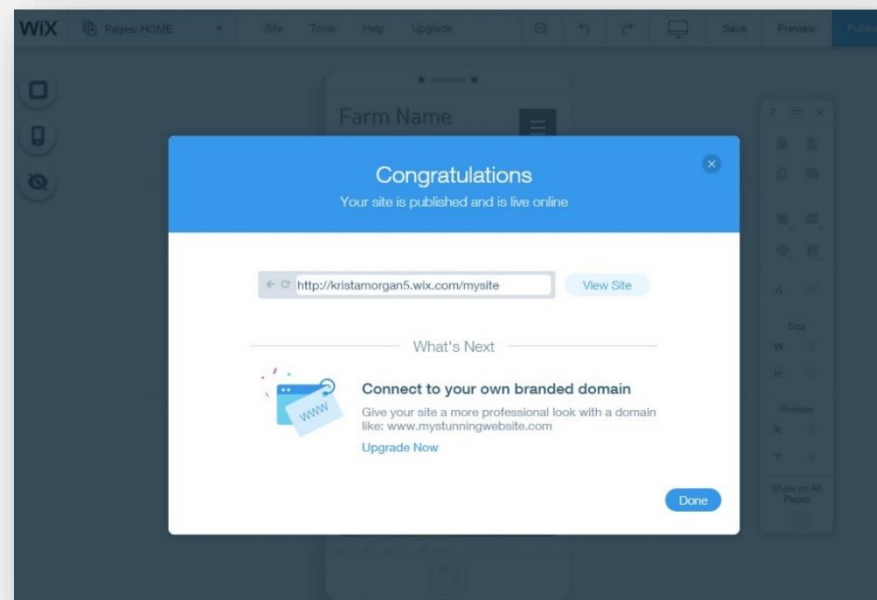
Share your new website on your social media accounts!
Add the domain name to any brochures or marketing you have, to your product labels, even to your chalkboards at the market or your store!

More Resources for Building Web and Social Media Platforms

North Carolina Cooperative Extension has agents in your county who can help you navigate marketing for your business. Find your local county center at: https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center/.

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has an Agribusiness Development Division that houses resources for business development: http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/agribiz/index.htm.

The Center for Environmental Farming Systems' NC Growing Together Project provides a number of resources for farmers who need to build online marketing in order to work with wholesale buyers: https://www.ncgrowingtogether.org/for-producers/.

NC Cooperative Extension has a step-by-step guide to marketing your agritourism program with social media: https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/using-social-media-to-market-agritourism.

SSAWG (Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group) provides a guide for internet marketing (sales through your website) at: http://www.ssawg.org/internet-marketing/.
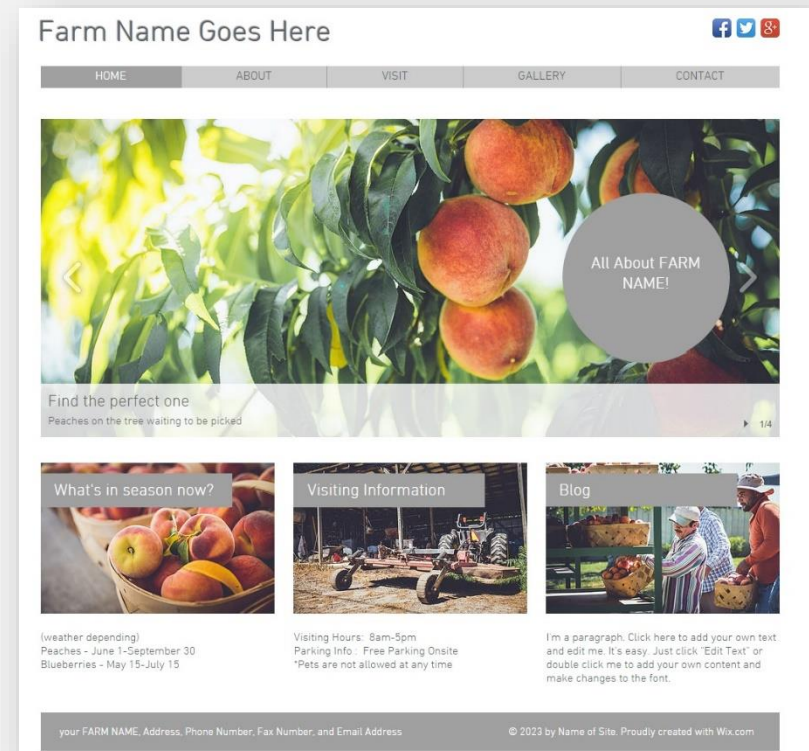
About the NC Growing Together Project

NC Growing Together is a five year (2013—2017) USDA-funded project in North Carolina.

NCGT aims to bring more locally-produced foods into mainstream markets, strengthening the economics of small to mid-size farm and fishing operations and their communities.

NCGT is an initiative of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, a partnership of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C. A&T), North Carolina State University (NC State), and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS).

For more resources aimed at helping local producers access mainstream markets, please visit www.ncgrowingtogether.org.