

March 2023

# heart beet

A Pulse on What's Happening at the **Viroqua Food Co-op**





# Macy Knows Cheese!

Macy, Cheese Buyer



You may know Macy as the bright smile behind the cheese counter at Viroqua Food Co+op. She's helped countless people find a new cheese or locate their favorite in VFC's artisan cheese case. Macy's goal is to make the many varieties of cheese approachable and to help people connect to and discover a cheese they love.

## What sparked your interest in cheese?

I grew up in a small farming community in Southwest Wisconsin. I appreciate that most of our food comes from hard-working people who dedicate their lives to their craft, animals, and land. When it comes to cheese, it is often all three. This excites me because it's not only the process of cheesemaking that is important, it is a whole story that begins on the farm.

## Explain more about that.

Cheese's main ingredient is milk. Whether it is cow's milk, goat's milk, sheep's milk, or a blend of the three, the flavor and quality of the milk starts with the land the animals

are grazed on – what they eat. Two kinds of cheese made with the same process but from two different regions may have remarkably different flavor profiles. And that is just the beginning of the story. Where cheese makers passion and craft really come together is in the cheese. Whether soft or hard, sharp or sweet, smokey or floral, fresh or aged, every cheese unique product that is shared with the world.

## Cheese Madness at VFC!

March brings Cheese Madness! Where shoppers can fill out a cheese bracket (see pg. 4-5), taste and vote for their favorite artisan cheese.

## How did you pick the cheese that you did for the challenge?

I love this challenge, it's a fun way for people to try a bunch of different cheeses! I went for a diverse mix of Wisconsin favorites. I chose varieties that taste well on their own and that would be fun to compare to each other. In the first bracket, I paired two of the same variety where there is a clear difference between the flavor of the two kinds of cheese. I thought it would be interesting for people to see how different one smoked gouda, for example, might taste from another. I'm excited to see which cheese is chosen as the Cheese Champ!

## Say cheese!

Macy's best advice: If you find a cheese you love snap a picture of the wrapper. You'll be glad you did the next time you try to find it in our beautiful, bountiful case of cheese.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Bergquist, *President*  
Elizabeth Tigan, *Vice President*  
Lizzy Haucke, *Treasurer*  
Olive Reynolds, *Secretary*  
Andrew Anderson  
Julie Tomaro  
Bjorn Bergman

## GENERAL MANAGER

Jan Rasikas

The Board meets at 6:30pm on the 3rd Monday of each month. Meetings are currently hosted in person and online. Changes are posted on the VFC website. To make a presentation or ask questions at a meeting, please contact a Board member 10 days in advance. Contact the Board at: [www.viroquafood.coop/board-of-directors](http://www.viroquafood.coop/board-of-directors)

The Heart Beet is intended as a vehicle for communication among VFC Owners and shoppers. Articles pertaining to health and nutrition are presented for informational purposes only. VFC recommends consulting a healthcare professional for medical problems and advice.

The Heart Beet is printed and available in-store monthly. A digital copy is available online at:

[viroquafood.coop/newsletters](http://viroquafood.coop/newsletters)

# Spring into Ownership

March 1st – 14th

The Co-op difference is you!

The Viroqua Food Co+op is so much more than a grocery store. We're a big part of a caring community, pooling our change to support non-profits, and putting local farmers first in our efforts to build a local and organic food economy – right here in Viroqua!

Unlike corporate chains, our consumer co-op is locally owned, and democratically controlled by the folks that shop at our store. This means owners like you!

*Not an owner yet?*

*Becoming an owner is easy!*

Join with an equity investment to receive a lifetime of savings, as well as a vote to help guide us on our mission to strengthen our local community.

All it takes is a one-time payment of \$75 for a one-adult household or \$150 for a two-adult household. Join in-store at the Customer Service Desk or online at [www.viroquafood.coop/become-an-owner](http://www.viroquafood.coop/become-an-owner)

## All new owners receive:

- A coupon for \$10 off their next shopping trip
- Popular product coupons worth over \$12
- A VFC branded gift to share your co-op pride - \$12- \$15 value

Join between March 1st and March 14th and you also receive a progressive owner coupon worth up to \$40 (use before March 31st).

Plus, the first 24 new owners receive a VFC Tote Bag filled with Co-op Basics products.

Whether you are already a VFC Owner, or you choose to join now – it is your support that helps us on our mission.

*VFC Mission: The Viroqua Food Co+op combines a commitment to natural foods, superior customer service, and building a Cooperative business. We emphasize organic and local foods and products to promote the long-term health of individuals and the environment. As member-owners and as a center for community, we offer the opportunity to create together a work of enduring value.*



## Shop Co+op Basics

Looking for value? Our Co+op Basics program offers everyday low prices on many popular grocery and household items. From milk to beef to cereal, you'll find new low prices on some old favorites. Today, you'll find more than 200 Co+op Basics items in the store. **Just look for the purple signs!**



# CHEESE MADNESS

## The Grate Eight



**March 14th - 31st**

Welcome to 2023 Cheese Madness! To the right are eight delicious and unique Wisconsin based cheeses that will battle head to head for the coveted title of Cheese Champ!

Make your guesses now! Fill in your bracket and drop it off at the VFC Customer Service Counter prior by March 14th. All brackets that match the final bracket are entered into a drawing to win a specialty cheese box. Then, stop in to sample (sample dates on the bracket to the right) and place your vote for your favorite cheese. The cheese with the largest number of votes advances to the next round.

**Submit your completed cheese bracket by  
March 14th at the Customer Service Counter  
to enter to win a specialty cheese box.**



Your Name:  
Your Phone #:

Wednesday, March 15th  
Sampling: 3-5pm

**Smoked Gouda**  
Carr Valley Creamery

local

Thursday, March 23rd  
Sampling: 3-5pm

**Smoked Gouda**  
Marieke Gouda

local

Wednesday, March 29th  
Sampling: 3-5pm

**Mozzarella**  
BelGioioso

**Mozzarella**  
Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese

local

Announced  
Friday, March 31st

**CHEESE**

**CHAMP**

Friday, March 17th  
Sampling: 12-3pm

**Driftless Reserve**  
Rochdale Farms Cooperative

Saturday, March 25th  
Sampling: 11am-2pm

**Triple Play Extra Innings**  
Hook's Cheese Co.

local

**Feta**  
Organic Valley

local

**Feta**  
Nasonville Dairy

local

Brackets that match the final bracket will be entered in a drawing to win a specialty cheese basket.







Get to Know:

# Spring Greens

Tender, fresh spring greens — *a pure delicacy* — are the perfect way to usher in the new growing season.

Tender, fresh spring greens — a pure delicacy — are the perfect way to usher in the new growing season. It's likely that we humans have delighted in dining on the first green foods when winter ends since prehistoric times.

And are they ever good for you! The nutritional value varies depending on

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the particular variety of green, but in general spring greens are rich in vitamins C and K, calcium and iron. They're also high in fiber and a good source of potassium, vitamin A and beta-carotene.

Some spring greens are cultivated, like spinach, endive, radicchio and Asian greens like tatsoi and mizuna. Others grow wild, including dandelion greens, nettles, fiddlehead ferns, chickweed and purslane. Some, like arugula, watercress, sorrel and mache, are both cultivated and found growing wild. Mesclun is a mixture of small, young salad leaves.

Each spring green brings its own distinct taste to the table. Arugula is pungent, for example, while watercress is peppery. Mache is sweet and nutty, and dandelion greens are slightly bitter. Enjoy them all on sandwiches and in frittatas, stir-fries (add towards the end of cooking) and lightly steamed as a side dish. They can also be used to make pesto.

Spring greens were meant for [spring salads](#), of course. Toss an array of them with a light vinaigrette, and season just enough to enhance their mildly sweet to mildly peppery taste. Spring greens are accented by a flavorful vinaigrettes and complementary fruits in this [Spinach and Strawberry Salad with Goat Cheese](#). For delightfully unexpected and delicious flavor, try [Grilled Peach and Prosciutto Salad](#) or [Golden Beet Salad with Honey Apple Dressing](#), which combines spring greens, a sweet dressing and goat cheese. You might even toss spring greens with a light grain like [Couscous with Feta and Toasted Pine Nuts](#) is the ideal summer lunch dish.

Some spring greens are sturdy enough to stand up in soups, too, as

in this [Watercress Soup with Shitake Mushrooms](#).

Various spring greens are available in early spring through early summer, usually March through early June. Dandelion greens, for example, are harvested in early May and fiddleheads in April and May. Once the weather gets hot the plant goes to seed and the leaves become bitter.

Because they're very perishable, you'll want to buy spring greens close to the time you're going to serve them. Choose fresh, bright green, firm leaves with uniform color. Avoid wilted, discolored or slimy leaves.

Remove any bad leaves before storing. Store either in produce bags or rolled loosely in a damp clean towel in a plastic bag. Leave the bags open and place in the refrigerator. They'll keep for five to ten days, though the sooner you use them the better.

Before serving, wash the leaves carefully by immersing in a bowl of cold water. Rinse and spin dry or spread on a clean towel to dry. You can remove the small stems or leave them on — they're tender enough to nibble right up.

## Local Greens in Season

**local** Organic Salad Green Mix

Organic Arugula

Organic Spinach

Organic Green Top Radishes

*from Stoltzfus Farm*

**local** Organic Micro Greens

*from Stoltzfus Farm and Deep Rooted Organics*

**local** Organic Sprouts

*from River Valley*

**local** Organic Cabbage

*from Jacob Byler*

**local** Organic Green Daikon Radishes

*from Driftless Organics*

**Check out this website for ways to use local greens as well as recipes mentioned in this article:**  
[www.grocery.coop](http://www.grocery.coop)





# give where you live

## Round up in March for Friends of Vernon County Parks and Forests

The Friends of Vernon County Parks & Forests partner with park staff and volunteers to celebrate, protect, and preserve the Vernon County parks of the Driftless area

Register round-ups plus the donations in the collection boxes at each register, combined with 1% of VFC's total sales on the 2nd Wednesday of the month make up our monthly Give Where You Live total donation.



## St. Patrick's Day at the VFC



2pm - 5pm

*sampling:*

### Fizeology Foods Ferments

Meet the local producer who's got the kraut!



### St. Patrick's Day at the VFC

Enjoy a specialty hot bar with three kinds of Reuben sandwiches in our Deli, Irish Soda Bread in our Bakery, and house-made corned beef from our Meat Department.



2pm - 5pm

*sampling:*

### Fizeology Foods Ferments

Meet the local producer who's got the kraut!

