

February 2023

heart beet

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



Driftless Heart

Jan Rasikas, General Manager

Local and organic food in the heart of the Driftless Region.
It all comes together at the Viroqua Food Co+op.

There's a reason why we call this newsletter The Heart Beet; why the Viroqua Food Co+op (VFC) brags about being in the heart of the Driftless. Part of this is geography. The Driftless region is a beautiful and fertile stretch of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois and we are in the middle of it. But it's more than that - our region is a major hub for organic growers and makers. We celebrate this Driftless ingenuity and grit in our store as we work to build a local food economy.

Our small-town is known as a foodie destination and the Viroqua Food Co+op plays a big part in making that a reality. At the VFC, the light shines bright on local farmers who build healthy soil to grow organic food. It's where you can find hand-crafted, fresh beautiful products for you and your family. It's where small businesses get a leg-up when we share their great stories with owners and shoppers. The folks who live in the Driftless region know that our Co-op is a destination and draws owner-members from Spring Green to Caledonia; from Sparta to Prairie du Chien and beyond.

The VFC runs essential programs like *Give Where You Live* that lift up the community organizations that make our lives rich and full. Through our Microlending Initiative we can provide our local folks like an organic maple producer, a local brewery, and an

organic tomato grower a no-interest microloan to improve their operations. We care for our community in these ways because we choose a cooperative business model that has concern for community as one of its guiding principles.

But our impact goes much further than that. The University of Minnesota Extension studied VFC's economic impact on Vernon County during our 2018 expansion.* As part of the New Markets Tax Credit program used to help fund the project, Equity Plus hired the University of Minnesota to conduct a study measuring the economic contribution of our food cooperative. Before we expanded, we generated an estimated \$12.3 million of economic activity to Vernon County annually. The study estimated that at our 2023 fully expanded capacity, the Viroqua Food Co+op's annual contribution to Vernon County's economy jumps to \$20.3 million.

We operate, embrace, and share this cooperatively run business not because it is the easiest way to go, but because we know that it is the best way to build a local food economy, care for our community, and ensure that everyone has access to good food. We are more than a grocery store; we are a community that shares values and cares for each other. We are a Co-op with heart.

* Tuck, Brigid. "Economic contribution of the Viroqua Food Cooperative" University of Minnesota Extension. 2018. <https://extension.umn.edu/community-research/economic-contribution-viroqua-food-cooperative>

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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

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

The Seven International Cooperative Principles

1 Voluntary and Open Membership

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

2 Democratic Member Control

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Those serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership.

3 Members' Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. The economic benefits of a cooperative operation are returned to the members, reinvested in the co-op, or used to provide member services.

4 Autonomy and Independence

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

5 Education, Training, and Information

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

6 Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7 Concern for Community

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

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eeBoo Piece & Love Puzzles

New York, NY

Puzzles that support a lifetime of empathy, creativity, and inclusion.

We love that eeBoo is a mission driven, woman owned & mother run company that provides sustainable, safe, gorgeous puzzles, games and art supplies.

Four Elements Love Infused Body Oil

Baraboo, WI

Grounding sandalwood is lifted with elegant rose and warming cinnamon. A spicy and erotic blend to bring a smile and tingle to your being. Apply all over the body after a bath, shower or in the bedroom to stay moisturized.

We love Four Elements commitment to organic agriculture and their luxurious products that are made from herbs grown right on their farm.

local

Honey Mama's Lavender Rose Cocoa Truffle Bar

Portland, OR

A luxurious treat made for blissful moments. Aromatic lavender oil is swirled with smooth cocoa and sweet honey to create a silky, rose-topped indulgence. Find yours in the Grab 'n' Go by the deli.

We love the Honey Mama philosophy that food is medicine and that choosing nutrient-dense real foods is a choice that changes lives and empowers vitality.

Lake Champlain Chocolates

Burlington, Vermont

Experience the best chocolate truffles – made from fresh butter, local cream, and luscious fair trade chocolate. With every bite, their delicate chocolate shell gives way to creamy ganache that melts in your mouth.

We love that Lake Champlain Chocolates is a multi-generational family business that sources local, organic, and fair trade ingredients for their chocolates.



In Good Company

Products we love and the small companies that make them.

Big Dipper Wax Works Candles

Seattle, WA

Heart themed and cinnamon scented beeswax candles.

We love that Big Dipper Wax Works donates 10% of their net profits from all candle sales to organizations dedicated to outreach, education, and sustainability efforts devoted to promoting sustainable beekeeping.

Forage Peach Kombucha

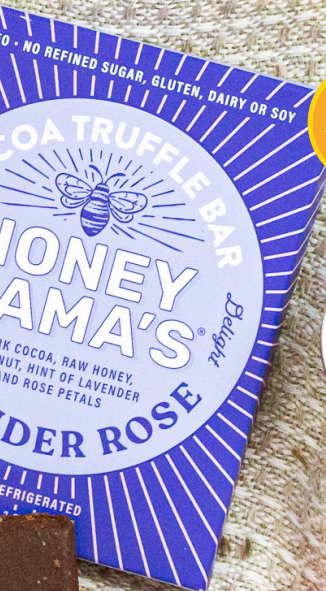
Madison, WI

White tea + pure peach + hints of quince = a deliciously delicate balance of fruits 'n flowers. The kombucha with a surprisingly shy, sweet side. Savor simple sparkles in every can.

We love that Forage Kitchen crafts healthy, delicious food from Wisconsin farmers and vendors.

Reminder:

Valentine's Day is Tuesday, February 14th!



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Beets

Besides being a delicious, nutritious root vegetable, beets are also considered to have aphrodisiacal qualities.

You may not think of beets as particularly sexy, but they've been considered an aphrodisiac in many cultures for centuries. The idea isn't completely fanciful; beets contain boron, which is related to the production of sex-related hormones. Beets are also thought to increase blood flow to the extremities, thanks to their nitric oxide content. The old superstition stating that a man and woman who eat from the same beetroot will fall in love could be a bit more tenuous, though.

Not quite as sexy but still just as much fun, beets can function as a litmus test indicator. When beet juice is added to an acidic solution, the solution will turn pink; when added to an alkali solution, it will turn yellow. That's because beet juice, in addition to being highly pigmented, is mildly acidic, so when added to an alkali substance, it prompts a molecular change in the pigment of the beet, changing its color. Now that's a fun experiment for a rainy day!

That pigment is called betalain, and it's what gives beets their red color. The red liquid that comes from the root can also be used for food coloring, red-colored mulches, and as a fabric, Easter egg and even hair dye.

Also known as table beet, garden beet, and blood

turnip, beets are in the same family as spinach and are closely related to Swiss chard. Originally the root was used medicinally, and only the leaves were eaten as food. Discovered as a source of sugar in the 19th century, beets have one of the highest sugar contents in the vegetable world. The leading growers of commercial beets today are the United States, Russia, France, Poland and Germany.



These nutrition-packed root vegetables are an excellent source of folate and a good source of fiber, vitamin C and potassium. Don't forget to eat your beet greens, too—much like you would eat spinach. Beet tops are an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium and magnesium and a good source of calcium, iron and copper. They also provide antioxidants.

Beets are red, right? Yes – the main variety of beets found in most grocers is the Red Ace. In addition to this common red variety, though, there are golden beets, white beets, Chioggia beets, and baby beets. Golden beets turn a golden orange when cooked and are slightly sweeter than red beets. Chioggia or Candy Cane beets have white and red concentric circles when the beet is cut in half. White sugar beets are grown in the U.S. for granulated sugar. And baby beets are both sweeter and faster cooking than larger beets.

Raw beets can be grated to add to slaws or to make a

quick and easy relish (toss with chopped onion, vinegar and Dijon mustard) – beautiful as an accompaniment to corned beef or roast turkey. Grated beets make a lovely garnish, too.

Borscht, the traditional soup of Slavic countries, can be enjoyed cold or hot. This bright Chilled Summer Borscht is smooth and light, perfect for a summer's lunch, while Elizabeth Tatarinoff's Winter Borscht is hearty enough for the coldest days.

Roasting brings out the sweetness of beets. They can often be roasted in advance of serving, making them a versatile addition to salads. Or simply serve sliced, roasted beets with curly endive and goat cheese. Or create a beautiful side dish by topping roasted beets with a lively Salsa Verde.

Boiling is another option for cooking beets. And while they're perfectly delicious as a side with just a spritz of lemon and a dash of pepper, they also make scrumptious pickles, gratins or even a pizza topping. Combined with ricotta cheese, kale and walnuts, boiled baby beets make a stellar Kale and Beet Pita Pizza, for example.

Available almost year round, beets abound in the winter. Look for smooth, hard, uniformly round beets with no cuts, bruises, wet spots or shriveled skin. They should be bright and not too large (overgrown beets will be more fibrous). If they have their leaves, they should be bright green. If they have a large, hairy taproot, it means that the beet is probably overgrown and may be tough.

To store beets, trim the leaves two inches from the root and store them separately. While you'll want to eat the leaves as soon as possible, the roots will keep in the refrigerator—in a plastic or produce bag—for up to three weeks. Just before cooking, wash the beets gently. If necessary, peel the skin after cooking (peeling isn't always needed with smaller beets). To use the greens, wash them in running water to remove the dirt.



Gingered Beet and Apple Salad

Serves 6. Total time: 30 minutes

- 1 pound beets, peeled
- 1 apple (about ½ pound)
- ¼ pound carrots, peeled
- ½ cup fresh parsley, minced
- 2 tablespoon apple cider
- 2 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Using the shredding blade of a food processor or a grater, shred the beets, apple, and carrots. Mix well with the remaining ingredients. Season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately or refrigerate to let the flavors blend.
2. Try using other varieties of beets, like golden or chionga beets, for an even more colorful salad.

Serving Suggestion

Pair this sweet vegetable slaw with salty or spicy dishes flavored with miso or tamari, or serve as a side to hot-and-sour soup or pork.

This jewel toned sweet slaw is beautiful, refreshing and delicious. A great recipe for beet fans and beet hesitators alike.



Round up in February for Valley Stewardship Network

The Valley Stewardship Network works to protect the lands and waters of the Kickapoo River Valley through stewardship, outreach, and community empowerment that results in healthy food and water for generations to come.



coffee & conversation

with the
Board of Directors

Saturday, February 11th

9-11am • Deli seating area



Hey, VFC Owners!

Stay informed. Vote. Get Owner Deals.

Keep your owner information up to date
so you can participate!

Update your owner account at viroquafood.coop/owner-updates