

October 2021

the heart beet

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



Cozy Meals for Autumn

October is Co-op Month page 3

Hearty Soups & Stewspage 4-7

VFC Election Information page 8

The scoop in the Deli & Bakery

We asked Prepared Foods Manager Sam Witte & she delivers!



VFC: *The pandemic changed how our customers shop as well as how we operate. What challenges has the Deli Department faced in the past year?*

Sam: At the beginning of the pandemic, we had to close some of our most popular services including the hot bar and the salad bar. We knew it was important to continue to provide hot and nutritious food and had to get creative about how to bring some of those services back. We currently have hot meat and vegetarian options on the hot bar daily and will be adding some family sized portions later in the day. We have also seen a lot of success with pre-made salads in the grab-n-go, in both the single serve and the family sizes. It is encouraging now to see people get back into regular routines.

Our more recent challenges have been staffing and the availability of packaging. We have had to pivot a lot to make things work. I am so grateful for the wonderful team I work with who have stepped up in all kinds of ways to make sure we are able to provide delicious food for our community.

VFC: *What's new on the menu this fall?*
Sam: We are altering some of our hot bar offerings, adding a seasonal maple roasted butternut squash to the meatloaf

entrée, and replacing the plain rice with fried rice to our teriyaki chicken. We are also adding new entrées to the rotation including a curry dish, with either chicken or tofu, served over rice.

Based on the success of our pizza program, we continue to expand our take-n-bake options. We now have meat or spinach lasagna in ready to bake 8" pans, as well as chicken or bean & cheese enchiladas. When we did a test run of these in early August, the take-n-bakes sold out within hours so we knew we had a winner!

Our goal is to make our grab-n-go quick and easy to shop. You can stop in and pick up an entrée and a salad or sides to go without even moving your feet!

VFC: *What are your best sellers?*
Sam: Our made-to-order Burrito Bar has been a steady best seller. From the deli counter, the Korean Reuben with Kimchi is a timeless favorite. In our bakery, our seasonal muffins are what everyone seems to love!

VFC: *What you are most excited about?*
Sam: It's almost pie season! As a trained pastry chef – I get excited about making pies! Starting in November, we will have pies from the bakery available in a variety of seasonal flavors including: *Pumpkin, Apple Crumb, Brown Butter Pecan, French Silk, Crumble Berry, Blueberry Crumb, and Lemon Meringue.*

VFC: *What's your favorite thing about working at the Viroqua Food Co+op?*
Sam: Oh, definitely making food that makes our customers happy!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Bergquist, *President*
Elizabeth Tigan, *Vice President*
Aurora Boyd, *Secretary*
Andrew Anderson
Olive Reynolds
Julie Tomaro
Lizzy Haucke

GENERAL MANAGER

Jan Rasikas

The Board meets at 6:30pm on the 3rd Monday of each month. Meetings are hosted virtually for now. 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: vfcbod@viroquafood.coop

PUBLICATION TEAM

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The Heart Beet is intended as a vehicle for communication among VFC owners & 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/vfc-publications

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VFC News

Celebrate National Co-op Month in October!

In October, National Co-op Month gives us a lot to celebrate! We honor the spirit of cooperation and a model of business that: builds community; strengthens relationships; empowers people to collectively realize their social and economic aspirations.

One in three Americans belongs to at least one cooperatively-run business, with many belonging to multiple co-ops. In the United States, there are over 29,000 co-ops serving community needs – from natural food stores (over 400) to banks (credit unions are co-ops), manufacturers to farmers – and everything in between. With over 20 cooperatively run businesses in Vernon County alone, a co-op likely provides you with services you rely on every day.

So what differentiates the cooperative model from other business models? It all starts with the Seven International Cooperative Principles:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training, and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

These principles are the common thread that runs through every cooperative business, and they provide the framework for a business run by and for the people it serves.

As a cooperatively run business, the Viroqua Food Co+op plays an important role in our community. From partnering with local farmers and producers to build the local food economy to creating a community space where everyone is welcome.

At the Viroqua Food Co+op, our mission 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.

Here are three ways you can support the mission of the Viroqua Food Co+op and help build the cooperative economy:

- If you aren't already, become a Co-op member.
- Vote in the Co-op elections.
- Shop at the Co-op.

During the month of October, stop in and sign up to win one of our giveaways of Co-op products and more!



Cooperative Community Fund CALL FOR APPLICATIONS!

Local 501(c)3 nonprofits are invited to apply for a CCF Grant of up to \$1,000. Submission deadline is **Midnight on October 31st, 2021.**

More info online: viroquafood.coop/ccf

Build our Cooperative Community Fund. Donate or round up at the registers in October!

Give Where You Live CALL FOR NOMINATIONS!

VFC Owners – nominate your favorite local 501(c)3 nonprofit to be included on the GWYL Ballot. Submission deadline is **Midnight on October 31st, 2021.**

More info online: viroquafood.coop/community-outreach

GWYL is owner-driven donation program. Nominate in October. Vote in November!

Take the chill off a cold day with a warm bowl of hearty soup or stew that features beans, greens and a variety of fresh vegetables.

Soups & Stews



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Three Sisters Soup

Serves 8 to 10. Prep time: 1 hour, 10 minutes to 2 hours, 10 minutes.

- 2 pounds of your favorite winter squash (butternut, acorn, kabocha)
- 2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- ¼ cup garlic, chopped
- 2 quarts vegetable stock or water
- ½ cup white wine
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 large bay leaf
- 1 pound fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 2 15.5-ounce cans cannellini beans, drained
- ½ bunch green onions, sliced
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Halve the squash and scoop out the seeds. Place the squash halves skin-side down on a lightly oiled baking sheet, and then roast until cooked through and soft, anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes. (Approximate cooking times: acorn squash, 30 to 45 minutes; kabocha squash, 40 to 50 minutes; butternut squash, 60 to 90 minutes.) Remove from the oven and allow to cool.
2. Scoop the flesh of the squash into a large bowl, saving any liquid. Puree the cooled squash with a blender or food processor, adding some of the reserved liquid if needed.
3. In a large stockpot, heat the oil over medium heat and sauté the onions until they begin to brown. Add the garlic and cook, stirring often, until the garlic turns light brown in color.
4. Add the stock or water, wine, thyme, bay leaf and pureed squash and bring to a simmer. Stir in the remaining ingredients and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed.

The Three Sisters is an ancient Native American technique for growing corn, squash and beans together in a way that builds on the strengths of each individual plant and enables them to nurture one another. Cooked together, these ingredients make a nutritious soup that celebrates the harvest season.



Red Lentil Stew with Kale

Serves 4. Prep time: 45 minutes; 20 minutes active.

- 1 cup red lentils
- 4 cups water
- 2 cups cauliflower, chopped
- 1 small red bell pepper, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 bunch kale, stems and leaves, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ghee or coconut oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, chopped
- 1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 large jalapeño, seeded and chopped
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric

1. Rinse the lentils, then put in a pot with the water, cauliflower, red bell pepper and salt. Place over medium-high heat and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, place a lid on the pot, slightly ajar, and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 20 minutes. Stir in the kale and cook for about 10 minutes longer, until the lentils are soft and falling apart.
2. While the lentils cook, drizzle the ghee or oil in a large sauté pan and place over medium-high heat. Add the onion, ginger, mustard seeds and cumin seeds and sauté until they start to sizzle, then reduce the heat to medium-low and stir occasionally. Add the jalapeño and turmeric and stir for a few minutes before stirring into the lentils.
3. Add the sauté to the cooked lentils and let simmer for 5 minutes to meld the flavors.



Hearty Kale and White Bean Stew

Serves 6. Prep time: 50 minutes; 20 minutes active.

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups diced red onion
- 2 cups diced carrot
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 2 cups diced peeled butternut squash
- 2 cups sliced button mushrooms
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- 4 cups chopped kale, stems removed
- 1 12-ounce can white beans
- 1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 cup shredded Romano cheese (optional)

1. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan, add the onions, carrots, garlic, squash and mushrooms and sauté for 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Transfer the vegetables to an 8-quart stock pot and add the stock, kale, beans, tomatoes, Dijon mustard, fresh rosemary and red pepper flakes. Cover the pot and let cook for additional 20 minutes or until the kale is soft. Top with shredded Romano cheese if desired before serving.

Hearty autumn vegetables plus dark green kale make for a beautiful bowl of stew. Serve with brown bread or rye crackers.



Sausage and Potato Soup

Serves: 6. Prep time: 30 minutes; 20 minutes active.

- ½ pound sweet or hot Italian bulk sausage
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 large potatoes, cubed to make 3 cups
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 14.5-ounce can chicken broth
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes with juice
- ½ bunch kale, sliced
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
- ½ teaspoon dried marjoram, crushed
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 pinch crushed red pepper flakes, to taste

1. Place a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat and crumble the sausage into the pan. Stir as the sausage starts to sizzle, then add the onion. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 4 minutes, until sausage is browned and cooked through. Add the potatoes, carrot, garlic, chicken broth, tomatoes, kale, oregano, marjoram and salt. If desired, add red pepper flakes.
2. Cover and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 10 minutes. When the potatoes are tender, serve.

Italian sausage infuses this simple soup with flavor. Choose hot or sweet sausage, depending on your taste for heat.



Farmhouse Bean Soup

Serves 6. Prep time: 30 minutes; 15 minutes active.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 1 large carrot, peeled and diced
- 3 parsnips, peeled and diced
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 3 to 4 sprigs each of fresh rosemary and thyme
- 1 15-ounce can northern beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 15-ounce can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 5 cups fresh spinach, chopped
- Salt and black pepper to taste

1. In a large pot, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, carrot, parsnips and garlic and sauté 5 to 7 minutes.
2. Add the tomatoes, broth and herbs and bring to a boil.
3. Add the beans, reduce heat to simmer and cook 20 to 30 minutes until vegetables are tender. Stir in the spinach and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm.

Canned beans are nutritious and convenient, making this soup a healthy, fast and tasty option for a weeknight meal at home.

Give Where You Live

“Round Up” for local nonprofits to make a bigger impact!

Visit viroquafood.coop/community-outreach for a complete schedule.

Round up this month for Cooperative Community Fund

Established in 2016 with the specific goal of providing grant funding to local nonprofit organizations that have a mission consistent with the Viroqua Food Co+op. Priority is given to grant requests for educational projects, development projects, and local events that match VFC’s mission and focus on but are not necessarily limited to: food & food systems, nutrition, health & well-being, cooking education, sustainable agriculture, cooperative education, and social change.



2021 Board Election * Sept. 20-Oct. 20

Full candidate profiles, voting info & RSVP link on our website!
viroquafood.coop/board-of-directors/election-2021

Vote online!

Election closes at 6:15pm
on Wednesday, Oct. 20!



Attend the Annual Owners Meeting – get automatically entered to
win one of seven \$100 VFC Shopping Sprees!