

February 2024

# heart beet

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



## Welcome Allison!

We are pleased to welcome Allison Sandbeck to our co-op Leadership Team as the Prepared Foods Manager.



We are pleased to welcome Allison Sandbeck to our co-op Leadership Team as the Prepared Foods Manager. Allison comes to us with over two decades of culinary experience and a passion for creating delicious and nutritious meals using local and fresh ingredients.

We sat down with Allison to talk about her new role!

**What brought you to a career in food service?** *That's actually kind of a funny story. Shortly after I graduated from college with a double major in Art and Art History, a friend of mine who started a catering company called me and asked me to make 12 batches of different muffins and cupcakes for an event she had the next day. I asked why she called me as I wasn't a baker and she said, "I know you will make them pretty." It was this event (and friend) that sparked my interest in culinary arts.*

**How does your passion for art transfer to cooking?** *Designing menus and producing meals from fresh ingredients is a creative process. It's not set like a painting. Cooking is constant creation, an ever-evolving art form that starts with simple ingredients and transforms into something beautiful. The satisfaction and gratitude people express over a good meal that I created is really rewarding.*

**What excites you about your new role?** *The co-op is such a friendly place. Every day people stop me on the floor excited to see me here. I have met new people and have seen many familiar faces. It is great to be in a supportive, welcoming environment and to share my love of food with people.*

*I am also excited to get to know and work with a new team. There are great folks here doing a lot of hard work every day. I love building a team and helping people develop their skills. I am excited to see what we can create together.*

With Allison and her team on board, you will be delighted to see some of our old standards and a variety of new choices on our shelves with so much more to come.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elizabeth Tigan, *President*  
Andrew Anderson, *Vice President*  
Olive Reynolds, *Secretary/Treasurer*  
Peter Bergquist  
Bjorn Bergman  
Dustin Skelley  
Shana Meshbesher

### 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:

[viroquafood.coop/board-of-directors](https://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.

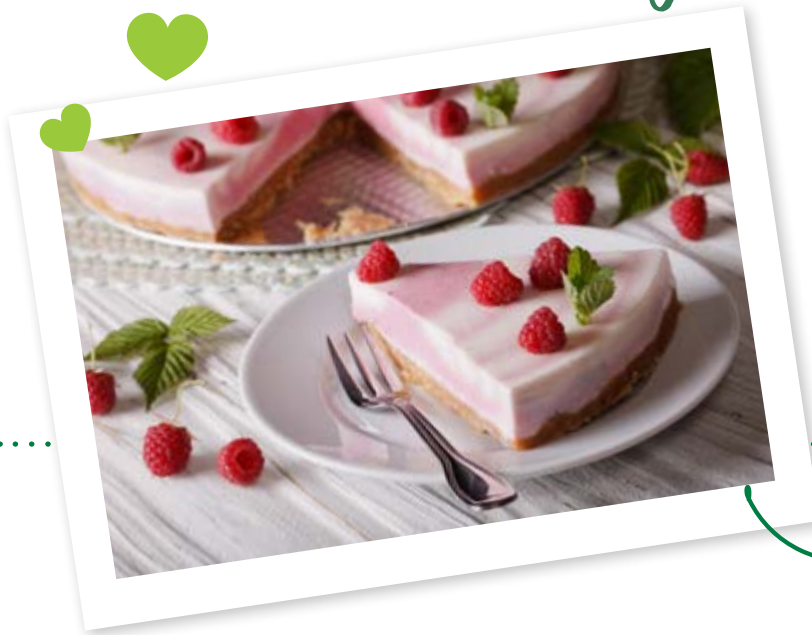
The Heart Beet is printed and available in-store monthly. A digital copy is available online at:

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

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# Valentine's Pre-Order

.....♥..... *from our bakery* .....



**Raspberry Mousse Pie** - 8 inch **WF**

**Triple Chocolate Layer Cake** - 6 inch **WF**  
(dark, milk, white)

**Specialty Cupcakes** - 4 pk (one of each flavor)

- maple-walnut with maple buttercream frosting
- chocolate with salted caramel buttercream frosting
- strawberry with lemon buttercream frosting
- pear spice with cream cheese frosting

*Preorder through our website at:*  
[viroquafood.coop/holiday-order](http://viroquafood.coop/holiday-order)  
*Preorder Deadline: February 8th*  
*for pick up February 13th or 14th*

*apply now!*

## Vernon County Cooperative Association Scholarship Opportunity



**2024 scholarship application**

Each year, the Vernon County Cooperative Association awards a \$500 scholarship for a high school senior to continue their studies at a two- or four-year institution of higher education. Applications are due March 1st. You can find the application with local high school guidance counselors or at: [viroquafood.coop/scholarships](http://viroquafood.coop/scholarships).

The applicant's parents or guardian must be either a member or an employee of a Vernon County Cooperative Association Member.

Names of Vernon County Cooperative Association Members:  
Compeer Financial, Chaseburg Farmers Union Co-op, CROPP – Organic Valley, Westby Co-op Creamery, Westby Co-op Credit Union, Vernon County Farmers Union, Vernon Electric Cooperative, **Viroqua Food Co-op**, Vernon Communications Co-op, Ethos Green Power Co-op, Premier Cooperative.

# Good for Your Heart

Salmon is loaded with heart healthy Omega 3 fatty acids.





### Seared Salmon with Stone Fruit Salsa

Serves 4. Total time: 20 minutes

- 4 4-ounce salmon fillets, skin on
- 3 cups chopped stone fruit (2 nectarines, 4 plums, mix in cherries, etc.)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 medium jalapeños, seeded and chopped
- 1 large scallion, chopped
- ¼ cup cilantro, coarsely chopped
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- Salsa (optional)

1. Unwrap the salmon and place on paper towels and pat dry. Let sit at room temperature for 10 minutes.
2. Place the fruit in a measuring cup. Once you have three cups, add the lime juice, salt, jalapeños, scallion and cilantro and toss to mix.
3. Place a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle the lime juice over the salmon and rub it around to coat, then sprinkle with salt and pepper. Drizzle oil in the hot pan and swirl to coat, then place the fish fillets in the pan, skin side up. Press lightly with a spatula to make sure the salmon is in contact with the pan.
4. Cook for two to three minutes for thin fillets, four minutes for one-inch-thicker ones. Slide a thin metal spatula under the fish and flip, then cook for two minutes longer. Insert the tip of a paring knife in a fillet to check for doneness. The middle should be a little rosy but cooked through.
5. Serve each fillet with about ¾ cup of salsa over the top.

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### Baked Salmon Provencal with Olives

Serves 4. Total time: 35 minutes; 5 minutes active

- 1 pound salmon filet, cut in four portions
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- ¼ cup green olives, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, chopped
- ¼ cup white wine
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- ½ teaspoon coarse salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Heat the oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly oil a 9-inch square pan or small casserole.
2. Pour 1 tablespoon of the olive oil into the pan, and add the cherry tomatoes, white wine, olives and rosemary; toss to mix. Place in oven and roast for 15 minutes.
3. Place the salmon filet, skin side down, on the vegetable mixture, then salt and pepper the salmon portions and drizzle with remaining olive oil. Return to the oven and bake for 15 minutes, until the salmon flakes when pierced with a paring knife.



### Serving Suggestion

*Simple grilled or oven-roasted vegetables—zucchini, yellow squash, asparagus, red peppers—pair nicely with this salmon entrée.*



# What's a Maafe?

Maafe is a popular West African dish, made with groundnuts (usually peanut butter), tomatoes and optional beef, lamb or chicken. This delicious version is packed with nutrition and pairs the full, satisfying flavors of sweet potato with a spicy peanut and tomato sauce.

## Sweet Potato Maafe

Serves 2. Total time: 25 minutes, 15 minutes active

1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
1 large yellow onion, diced  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1-2 teaspoons fresh ginger, minced (optional)  
¼ cup tomato paste  
2 cups vegetable stock or chicken stock  
1 lb. sweet potato, peeled and cubed  
2 carrots, peeled and chopped  
2 turnips (or other root vegetable), peeled and chopped  
⅓ cup smooth, natural peanut butter  
2 cups green cabbage, chopped  
¼ to ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes  
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and saute until the onion begins to soften, about 5 minutes. Stir in the minced garlic and ginger, if using, and saute for 1–2 minutes more. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 1–2 minutes. Add sweet potato, carrot, turnip, broth and red pepper

flakes and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer until the sweet potato, carrots and turnip begin to soften, about 10 minutes.

2. In a small bowl, whisk together the peanut butter with a little hot broth from the pot. Add the peanut butter mixture to the pot along with cabbage and stir to combine. Simmer for 5 minutes more or just until the cabbage has wilted and the other vegetables are cooked through. Add salt and pepper to taste, if needed, and serve hot.



### Serving Suggestion

*Serve this rich, hearty stew with rice, couscous or quinoa and a fresh, green salad or sauteed greens, like kale or collard greens.*

## Jamaican Jerk Chicken and Quinoa

Serves 6-8. Total time: 4 hours, 15 minutes; 10 minutes active

- 1 ½ cups quinoa
- 2 ½ cups chicken stock
- 4 cups chopped sweet potatoes
- 4 medium boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 2 tablespoons jerk seasoning
- ½ teaspoon salt (if needed, depending on salt in jerk seasoning)

1. Put quinoa, stock, sweet potatoes and jerk seasoning in the crock of a slow cooker and stir to mix well. Nestle the chicken thighs down into the quinoa.
2. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Uncover and taste; everything should be tender and fragrant. Add salt if needed. Serve warm.



With the magic of jerk seasoning, this simple slow-cooker dish takes on a spicy island vibe. Chicken thighs simmer with the quinoa, infusing the grain with flavor as they become fall-apart tender.

## Jerk Tofu with Pineapple

Serves 4. Total time: 1 hour active

- 1 pound extra firm tofu, pressed to remove water and cut into 1- to 2-inch cubes
- 1 pound fresh pineapple, cut into 1- to 2-inch cubes
- ½ cup diced red pepper

### Jerk Sauce

- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons tamari
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon hot sauce or habañoero sauce
- 2 tablespoons fresh chives, minced (reserve 1 tablespoon for garnish)
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- Pinch of salt and pepper

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1. To press tofu: wrap it in a clean, lint-free towel or place it between two plates, then add a 2 to 3 pound weight on top (a cookbook works well) and let it sit for 15 minutes or more to remove excess water.
2. In medium-sized mixing bowl, combine the jerk sauce ingredients. Reserve 4 tablespoons of the sauce for dressing the tofu when cooked.
3. Marinate the pressed, cubed tofu in the jerk sauce for 30-60 minutes or overnight.
4. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
5. Place the tofu and marinade onto an oiled sheet pan and bake for 20 minutes; then gently stir or flip the tofu and bake for another 15-20 minutes until the tofu is firm and the sauce is absorbed. On a separate oiled sheet pan, bake the pineapple cubes for 20 – 25 minutes until they just start to brown.
6. Toss the pineapple and tofu together. Drizzle with the remaining 4 tablespoons of jerk sauce and garnish with chives and diced red pepper. Serve over a bed of greens or crisp lettuce.

**Nominate in October. Vote in November. Donate all year round.**



### **Round up this month for Kickapoo Valley Forest School**

The Kickapoo Valley Forest School (KVFS) is a tuition free public charter school that honors full nature immersion, child-centered practices and environmental stewardship for grades 4K-3rd.

Find out more information about our Give Where You Live Program at: [viroquafood.coop/gwyl](http://viroquafood.coop/gwyl).



*Recipients based on VFC owner votes each November. Register round-ups plus the donations in the collection boxes at each register, combined with 1% of VFC's total sales on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month make up our monthly Give Where You Live total donation. Learn more about GWYL on our website.*

## **coffee & con+versation**

with the  
**Board of Directors**

**Saturday, February 24th**

9-11am • co-op seating area



All owners are welcome to stop by and enjoy a complimentary cup of coffee, sample baked goods and visit with members of the co-op Board of Directors.