

May 2024

heart beet

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



You Can Eat Well and Save at the Co-op!

9 Insider Tips to Smart Grocery Shopping and Big Savings

Shop the deals.

There are a lot of great deals at the co-op! Get to know our sales cycles to find the best deals on the foods you love. Use our sales flyers or the Co+op Deals App when you plan your meals. You can find current sales flyers at the co-op or on our website at: www.viroquafood.coop/sales.

Join the co-op.

Become a member-owner with a one-time equity investment of \$75 and you can save at the co-op every time you shop! With our Owner Extras benefit, co-op owners enjoy an additional 10% off items already on sale in the Co+op Deals Flyer. This is real savings you'll see at the register.

Redeem coupons.

Manufacturer coupons, CX Survey coupons and coupons on products or on the shelf offer real value! Keep your eye out for great coupons for savings at the register.

Plan your meals.

Meal planning helps to avoid impulse shopping and eliminates food waste. When you plan out a weeks' worth of meals, you can buy only the ingredients you need, like one onion instead of a bag of onions or a cup of flour from the bulk department instead of a whole bag.

Keep it simple.

A complex menu for every day of the week is unrealistic for most people. Keep it simple, buy the jarred pasta sauce and add in some of your favorite fresh veggies to make a quick, complete and nutritious meal.

Indulge a little.

Use low cost basic ingredients like rice and beans to stretch your food budget. Then, add in a bit of your favorite splurges like artisan cheese or fermented vegetables to add loads of flavor and character to your meal!

Make a list.

A shopping list helps you buy only what you need.

Plan for leftovers.

Plan a leftover night and clean out the fridge! Write a date on all your leftovers and opened items to ensure they are safe to eat. Then, make a plan to use them up before they expire!

Buy foods in season.

Fresh food in season is often plentiful, cheaper to buy, and at the co-op, locally produced. Plan your meals around seasonally available items or learn how to preserve the foods you love for off-season eating. Freezing is a quick and easy option that preserves the nutrients in fresh foods.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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: viroquafood.coop/board-of-directors

The Heart Beet is intended as a vehicle for communication among co-op 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

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A Quick Guide to Deals at the Co-op!

At the co-op, we strive to provide food at fair prices for everyone.

Getting to know our sales programs can help you find the best value at the co-op. And now, all co-op owners will find extra savings at the register when they automatically get an extra 10% off Co+op Deals everytime they shop!



Co+op Basics is a selection of staple organic and natural foods and household goods at everyday low prices. Look for the “co+op basics” purple signs throughout the store.



Owner Extras VFC owners receive an additional 10% off Co+op Deals sales items. Discount applies at the register when you use your owner number at checkout.



Co+op Deals are available to all shoppers and change every two to three weeks. The current Co+op Deals sales flyer is available in the store, on the grocery.coop app and online at: viroquafood.coop/sales



Coupons are accepted for any items we carry as long as the coupon is current and has redemption information on it.



Fresh Deals highlight weekly sales on products in the store's perimeter – the fresh stuff! Fresh Deals run Wednesday through Tuesday. Sales flyers are available in the vestibule as you enter the store, and on our website: viroquafood.coop/sales

Shop our Bulk Department

We buy in bulk so you don't have to! Shopping our bulk bins allows you to buy only the quantity you need. You can dispense bulk products into provided bags and containers or bring your own. Here's how to shop bulk:

- Weigh your container before you fill it (this is called the tare weight). Write it down, and make sure to tell the cashier the container weight so you don't get charged extra!
- Fill your container. Do not allow the serving utensil (scoop, spout or spoon) to touch your container.
- Write the PLU number (located on each bin) on a tag or on the container so the cashier can ring up your purchase correctly.



Flash Sales occur when we get product at a great price and pass the savings on to you. Be sure to keep an eye out for these bright red and yellow signs. The deep discount is only good for a short time!

Wellness Wednesday On the third Wednesday of each month all shoppers enjoy 10% off all regularly priced wellness and body care items.



Sarah Mercer

Local Producer: Little Bird Plants

Sarah Mercer was born with a passion for plants and says, “Having the opportunity to start Little Bird Plants is a dream come true.” Her new business is located in the historic greenhouses at 520 E Terhune Street in the middle of Viroqua. Sarah first became involved with the greenhouses as part of her education at Thoreau College, where she furthered her knowledge of plants and propagation. She continues to be inspired by the help and advice of local plant experts, including longtime mentor and Wisconsin Master Gardener Arwyn Wildingway, whom Sarah affectionately calls “*the grandmother of the greenhouse.*” As the owner of Little Bird Plants, Sarah shares her passion through her business that cultivates community, is rooted in history, and, of course, is all about plants.

The historic facility has four connected greenhouses that house tropical plants, herbs, annuals, vegetable starts and native butterfly and bird-loving perennials. The longstanding greenhouses were formerly operated by The Flower Basket Greenhouses and Floral Shop before they were taken over by Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School and then, Thoreau College. Sarah says, “Growing luscious green plants year-round in our Midwest climate and continuing the legacy of Viroqua’s historic greenhouses is really special.”

Sarah’s vision is to create a place that cultivates community. She not only wants to create a retail space, but she also wants to create a place for community. This is why you will find places to sit and relax with a friend scattered throughout the property. Last winter, she

“Growing luscious green plants year-round in our Midwest climate and continuing the legacy of Viroqua’s historic greenhouses is really special.”

hosted a music event and potlucks to encourage visitors and share the space. Many of her plants have a history too! She is proud to start most of her plants with cuttings and seeds, many passed down from local folks.

As a new business owner, Sarah relies on community partnerships like the one she has with the Viroqua Food Co-op. She says, “I love having a little plant display at the co-op! It gives shoppers a chance to purchase plants even when the greenhouse isn’t open and my display at the co-op also helps advertise my business.” Little Bird Plants can also be found at the greenhouse, at Pennycress Studio in Viroqua and at Firefly Farm and Mercantile in Cashton. New this year, Sarah captures a niche market growing veggie starts for Driftless Seed Supply.

While she doesn’t have organic certification, Sarah is committed to earth-friendly growing practices. She focuses on easy-growing plants with the customer in mind, “I want to inspire people to grow their own plants and create a green space for themselves,” Sarah says, “It is rewarding to know that I’m helping to keep Viroqua beautiful, one plant at a time.” You can find out more about Little Bird Plants, including greenhouse hours, at www.littlebirdplants.com.

Annuals vs. Perennials

Annual plants, such as tomatoes and zinnias, typically complete their entire life cycle within a single growing season, from germination to seed production, and then die off. Their primary focus is on rapid growth and reproduction, aiming to produce as many seeds as possible to ensure the survival of their species. In contrast, perennial plants like roses and strawberries have a longer lifespan, persisting through multiple growing seasons. They often invest more energy into establishing a strong root system and may exhibit dormancy during harsh conditions, regrowing from the same rootstock year after year. Perennials may take longer to mature and flower compared to annuals but can provide a consistent source of blooms or harvests over several years, making them a valuable asset in gardens and landscapes.



Inside the greenhouse



Arwyn Wildingway & Sarah Mercer



Plant starts inside the greenhouse



Asparagus

Discover new ways to enjoy the bounty of this spring superfood while it's local and in season!

Embrace the beauty of springtime and indulge in the vibrant flavor of locally sourced asparagus. This superfood not only delights the palate, it also packs a nutritional punch with important vitamins and antioxidants. You can savor the flavor of roasted asparagus or relish the crunch when eaten raw. When you enjoy local asparagus this season, you support local farmers, reduce your environmental impact and indulge in the freshest produce available. Find it at the co-op today, this seasonal delicacy is as fleeting as the days of spring.



Cauliflower “Couscous” with Asparagus and Peas

Serves 8. Total time: 30 minutes

- 1 head cauliflower
 - 12 ounces asparagus
 - 10 ounces frozen peas, thawed
 - 1/3 cup pine nuts
 - Zest and juice of one lemon
 - 2 tablespoons olive oil
 - 1 small shallot, minced
 - 2 tablespoons mint leaves, julienned
 - 1 teaspoon thyme leaves, chopped
 - Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1. Break the cauliflower florets apart, cutting the larger ones down until all the pieces are roughly the same size. Place the florets in a food processor and use 8-12 quick pulses to reduce the cauliflower size and texture to slightly smaller than a grain of rice.
 2. In a 12-inch skillet, heat 1/2 cup water and a pinch of salt to a simmer. Add the cauliflower in a single layer. Bring back to a simmer, reduce heat a little, cover and cook cauliflower 5 minutes, or just enough to take the raw edge off, but not so much it becomes soft or loses texture. Remove the cauliflower from the skillet and drain in a colander or mesh strainer, then place in a medium serving bowl.
 3. Heat a small, dry skillet over medium heat. Add the pine nuts and stir frequently. Toast just until they smell nutty and have begun to turn golden, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.
 4. Remove the woody ends of the asparagus, then cut each spear on the bias into 1-inch lengths. Wipe out the skillet used for the cauliflower, add

the olive oil and heat over medium heat. Add the shallot and saute gently for a couple minutes, until translucent. Add the asparagus and continue sauteing a few minutes more, just until the asparagus is al dente. Add the lemon zest and juice, fresh thyme and salt and pepper and cook another 30 seconds or so.

5. Add the shallot-asparagus mixture, peas, pine nuts and mint to the cauliflower. Drizzle with a little olive oil and toss gently to combine. Adjust the salt and pepper, and lemon juice to taste. Serve slightly warm or at room temperature.



Zesty Broiled Asparagus with Cotija

Serves 4. Total time: 10 minutes

- 1 pound asparagus
 - 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
 - 1 teaspoon chili powder
 - 1 teaspoon kosher salt
 - 2 ounces Cotija cheese, crumbled
 - 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1. Preheat the broiler and move the top rack of the oven so it's six inches away from the heat source.
 2. Line a sheet pan with foil. Snap off the bottom couple inches from the asparagus and discard. Place the stalks on the sheet pan, drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with chili powder and salt. Toss to coat.
 3. Spread the asparagus evenly on the pan, and broil for two to four minutes, just until the asparagus is browning in spots and the oil is sizzling on the pan. If your asparagus is thin, it will take two minutes; thicker asparagus will take longer. Remove from the broiler, sprinkle with the Cotija cheese and oregano, and return to broil for one minute to heat the cheese.

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



**Round up this month for
WDRT 91.9FM
Driftless Community Radio**

WDRT 91.9FM is a listener-sponsored, volunteer-driven community radio station serving the Driftless Region, offering a broad mix of cultural programming and providing opportunities for members of the public to produce their own programming.

You can find out more about our Give Where You Live Program at: viroquafood.coop/gwyl.



Recipients based on co-op 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 2nd Wednesday of the month make up our monthly Give Where You Live total donation. Learn more about GWYL on our website.



**2024 Viroqua Food Co+op Microloan
Awarded to Keewaydin Farms**

The Viroqua Food Co+op Board of Directors is excited to announce that the 2024 VFC Microloan is awarded to Rufus Haucke of Keewaydin Farms. The loan will help purchase a Rohand II lay down harvester cart to help improve the comfort and increase the harvest efficiency on the farm. Keewaydin Farms supplies the co-op with locally grown certified organic produce. In 2024, Rufus will enter his 20th season as a market gardener. We appreciate the long standing relationship with Keewaydin Farms and are thrilled to support them farming into the future!

The Microlending Initiative began in 2012. Through this initiative the co-op awards a one-year no interest loan of up to \$3,500 to one local farmer or producer annually. The loan is designed to help strengthen our supply chain and support our local food system. You can find out more at viroquafood.coop/microloan.