

September 2022

heart beet

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



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It's Peak Local Produce Season

Linda Gallardo, Produce Manager

Buying local supports your neighbors and strengthens our local economy. When we say local we mean 100 miles from our door.



This season local produce is running a little early, a little late, and a little right on queue. This is typical for a summer growing season with local fruits and vegetables in the Driftless Region. Our unique area has many micro-climates with rolling hills, valleys and ridges. To give you the best quality, we bring in produce from each local grower when it is at its peak and ready for sale.

Direct to farm relationships is part of our Co-op's commitment to growing the local food economy. When we say local, we mean 100 miles from our door. Throughout the year, we order produce from over 60 individual local farms. Some farms specialize in single items, some offer a variety of items seasonally, while others provide local products year round. During peak local produce season we receive as many as 40 deliveries a week.

To round out our mix we use large distributors. Some who offer local and regional products from farms we know. This is another important resource for our local farmers, especially those that don't sell at a farmers market, through a CSA, or direct to our store. Instead, these farms pack and ship the majority of their crop to one place which enables them to sell larger quantities of produce to a wider market and to us, too!

September brings local organic apples and pears. With favorable growing conditions this year, we anticipate an abundant local harvest.

Our local farmers are feeling the impact of higher fuel, labor and supply costs. As a result, you may notice that some local produce prices are slightly higher than the past few years.

Buying local goods supports your neighbors and strengthens our local economy. Whether you are wondering what's coming in fresh from our region or how to select the perfect local melon, our Produce Team is ready to serve you year round, seven days a week.

We'll see you at the Co-op!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

GENERAL MANAGER

Jan Rasikas

The Board meets at 6:30pm on the 3rd Monday of each month. Meetings are currently hosted 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](mailto:info@viroquafood.coop)

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

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Board Elections



Owners Vote: September 12 - October 12, 2022

It's election season! Make your voice heard and contribute to the future of our Co-op by voting for our 2022 Board of Directors.

Before September 8th:

If you have moved or changed your email address please update your owner record at viroquafood.coop/we-own-it

Starting September 12th:

VFC Owners with a current email address on file will receive a link via email to the online ballot. Voting opens September 12, 2022 at Noon.

Owners may also find the link to vote on our website at: viroquafood.coop/annual-election

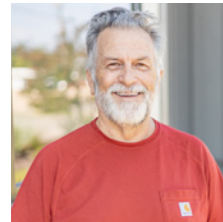
Paper ballots will be available in the store upon request.

Coming up:

All owners are invited to attend our in person, Annual Owners Meeting at 6 pm on October 12, 2022 at the VMH Expo Center on the Vernon County Fairgrounds. There's plenty of room to spread out at this event. Please RSVP with your name and owner number by September 12, 2022 at viroquafood.coop/annual-election.

Meet the Candidates

September 8th • 4-6pm • See back page for details.



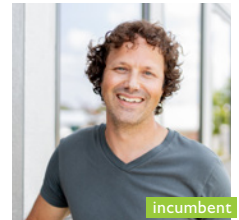
Mike Link



Bjorn Bergman



Olive Reynolds



Andrew Anderson

Full candidate profiles, videos and Annual Owners Meeting information on our website: viroquafood.coop/annual-election

New Website

It's here! We've updated our website to make it easier to find what you are looking for. Enjoy new and easy to navigate features where you can:

- update your owner contact information
- sign up for weekly emails
- search recipes
- meet our local producers
- find out what's on sale
- buy a gift card
- purchase a membership
- find events
- see what is on sale in our wellness dept
- find our hot bar menu

So, what are you waiting for? We'll catch you on the web: viroquafood.coop





Local Producer Profile: Meadowlark Organics

Halee and John Wepking responded to Paul Bickford's search for a forward thinking individual or couple to join his 950-acre farming operation. With a vision larger than the farm itself, they aimed to rebuild a regional organic grain economy focused on nutrition, freshness and flavor and to elevate the ecological benefits of small farms. The partnership they found with Paul is central to the success of Meadowlark Organics a local and organic flour producer on the shelves at your Co-op.

John and Halee's background in organic agriculture and the culinary arts gives them an understanding of the grain supply chain with a unique focus on the final product. John explains, "A bread maker relies on the structure of their bread flour to create a consistent loaf. If the flour isn't predictable, a

baker has to adapt their process to achieve the desired results. That's too risky for production bakers and small bakeries who cannot afford to lose a batch of bread or a day of work. For them, using locally grown and milled flour is only a benefit if the consistency is there." It is with this understanding that they test and blend grains from three different farms to create a bread flour that has a consistent protein content and will produce predictable results for the baker.

Working with and elevating small family farms is also part of Meadowlark Organics mission. To that end, John is a regional resource who is active in farm conferences and on farming listservs. He readily shares his experience to help interested farmers convert their fields to food grade grain production. On their own farm, the Wepkings work in partnership with ten other local farms to create their products.

John shows his care and passion for organic farming and seed propagation through every step of production. He walks the fields before each harvest to hand select and preserve the seed from the plants with the most desirable characteristics. He also uses a process called seed cleaning to isolate the seeds he wants and remove debris and seeds that may carry disease.

Attention to environmental stewardship is apparent in other ways on the farm. To prevent erosion of the rolling hillsides fields are broken into contour strips that follow the natural terrain. They also use a 7 year crop rotation cycle to build nutrients in the soil. Other fields are open pollinated and planted with several varieties of seed and then the crop is handpicked for the strongest varieties to create the perfect blends.

While the seed, soil and farming methods are all important, the Wepking's also understand the symbiotic relationship between the farm and the mill. Halee explains, "Farmers can grow all kinds of grain, but a local mill is the lever needed to build a regional grain economy." With that in mind, they began working with Lonesome Stone Milling Company in Lone Rock, WI. When the Lonsome Stone owners decided it was time to retire, John and Halee took the opportunity to buy their equipment and then built a mill house right on the farm. The mill not only gives them control at every stage of production, it also allows the farm to employ their team year-round.

Meadowlark Organics hand delivers their flours. While most of their product goes to the Madison and Milwaukee metro areas, we are fortunate to have access to their products here in Viroqua. A large weekly order of grain for La Crosse Distilling Company keeps a delivery truck coming our way. It is because of this that your Co-op along with many Viroqua area small businesses have access to fresh, organic, locally milled flour.

John and Halee know they are lucky. It is rare to find such a perfect partnership. To come into an existing farm and redefine what the farm does is almost unheard of. It all started when Paul reached out looking to mentor future farmers who would help to improve his farm. Together, years later, they are well on their way to changing the landscape of grain production in the Driftless Region.



bonus profile! →

Local Producer Profile: Rhythm Bakery

Lauralyn and Mason of Rhythm Bakery were brought together by their shared love of slow food. They make real sourdough bread in Viroqua, WI with local ingredients including Meadowlark Organics spelt and flours. The name Rhythm poetically describes both the ebb and flow of life and the rising and falling of their sourdough starter. You can find their breads and crackers at VFC year round.

View their full profile on our website: viroquafood.coop/localfolks



Healthy snacks

Busy back to school routines call for easy meals and after school snacks. Make yours healthy with these ideas from the co-op!



Spicy Roasted Garlic Hummus

Makes about 1.5 cups. Total time: 15-20 min (if garlic is already roasted)

- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and roasted
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 4 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons tahini
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil

1. Toss 4 peeled garlic cloves in a little oil and double wrap in aluminum foil. In a preheated 350 degree oven, roast the garlic for about 30 minutes or until the garlic is soft but not burnt.
2. In a food processor, puree the roasted garlic and the one raw garlic clove along with the diced jalapeño. Add the chickpeas, lemon juice, tahini, cumin, and salt. Puree until smooth. While the food processor is running, slowly add the olive oil and blend until smooth.

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Cinnamon Apple Chips with Dip

Serves 4. Total time: 2 hours, 50 min (active: 20 min)

- 4 large apples
 - 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 - 1 tablespoon sugar
 - 2 teaspoons vegetable or coconut oil
 - ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
 - ¼ cup Greek yogurt
 - 2 tablespoons honey
1. Heat oven to 200°F. Cut apples in half. Remove seeds, stems and bottoms. Use a sharp knife to make thin crosswise slices. Place the half-rounds in a large bowl, and sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar. Toss to coat.
 2. Drizzle two sheet pans with oil, then spread the apple slices on the pans. Bake for 2 1/2 hours. Place on racks to cool.
 3. While apple chips cool, combine peanut butter, yogurt and honey in a small bowl and stir. Place apple chips on a plate with the bowl of dip in the center and serve.

Make ahead of time as an after-school snack for hungry kids, or jazz up breakfast oatmeal with a side of apple chips and dip. Chips will keep in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 4 days.

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Black Bean, Corn, and Roasted Tomato Quesadillas

Serves 4-6. Total time: 20 mins

- 1 medium onion, chopped fine
 - 2 garlic cloves, minced
 - 1 teaspoon ground coriander
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 1 tablespoon canola oil
 - 1 cup corn
 - 1 (14-ounce) can fire-roasted tomatoes, drained
 - 1 teaspoon hot sauce
 - ½ lime, zested and juiced
 - 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained
 - ¼ bunch fresh cilantro, chopped
 - 6 10-inch tortillas (or smaller tortillas, if desired)
 - 6 ounces shredded cheddar or Colby cheese
1. Saute onions, garlic, coriander, cumin, and salt in canola oil until onions become soft. Add corn, fire-roasted tomatoes, hot sauce, lime juice, and lime zest. Saute an additional 5 minutes and remove from heat.
 2. Mash half the black beans and combine with remaining whole beans. Add cilantro. Add bean and cilantro mixture to the sauteed mix and combine. Scoop evenly onto tortillas. Add cheese and fold tortillas in half. Heat in a lightly oiled skillet and cook on each side until golden-brown. Serve whole or cut into halves.

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Give Where You Live

“Round Up” for Local Nonprofits to Make a Bigger Impact

Round up this month for McIntosh Memorial Library

McIntosh Memorial Library is an inspiring beacon of lifelong learning, bringing knowledge alive, sparking imagination and creating possibility for a vibrant and creative Viroqua. They are a member of the Winding Rivers Library System. The library offers programming for patrons of all ages with a special emphasis on children's programming for youth ages 2-18 years old.



celebrate
local food



Meet local producers & sample their products.
Sign up for the Local Foods Challenge.
Meet 2022 Board of Directors candidates.

Sept. 8

4-6 pm
On the
VFC Patio