

January 2023

heart beet

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



Happy New Year!

Olive Reynolds, VFC Board of Directors



On behalf of the board, I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year!

As excited as I am for the coming year, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the previous year and what the VFC Board has accomplished on behalf of our Co-op.

In 2022, we reviewed and revised the Policy Governance Register which defines how our Co-op is governed. The updated version is posted on the Board of Directors page of our website. Next, we will review and update our Ends Policies which states the purpose of the Co-op and sets standards for gauging success. Ends Policies are a clear and meaningful expression of our mission and are meant to provide long-term direction for VFC management to plan and work towards. By reviewing and updating our Policy Register and Ends Policies, we define goals that help our organization stay on track and pave

the way for future decision-making.

As we look ahead to the new year, we celebrate an exciting new addition at the Viroqua Food Co-op. Along with our regular registers, you will soon see self-checkouts. This much needed and highly anticipated resource will help support our staff in the checkout area and provide more convenience for customers. Through our research, we learned that self-checkouts are used most often by customers who are in a hurry (think lunchtime), or customers that only have a few items. The intent of self-checkouts is not to replace staff, but to free up the staff we have to attend to other important work in the store. It is important to note that we will always have someone there to assist with self-checkouts as well as regular staffed checkout lanes. This addition keeps us relevant in the marketplace and provides the right tools to support our staff and keep our grocery running efficiently. As these installations go in, we ask for your patience and understanding of the time needed to work out all the kinks and fully implement the equipment.

I am so proud of our Co-op, staff, board, and community for continuing to thrive through these tough times. With kindness in our hearts and hope for the days to come, we can expect a wonderful 2023.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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

VFC News

Co-op Community Fund Grant Recipient

Driftless Writing Center, Inc.

As part of the first Ridges & Rivers Book Festival to be held in Viroqua, WI in the Spring of 2023, the Driftless Writing Center, in partnership with the McIntosh Memorial Library and the Historic Temple Theatre will host writer and performer Dasha Kelly Hamilton for an all-ages performance of *Makin' Cake*, at Viroqua's Historic Temple Theatre. *Makin' Cake* is an exploration of US history, race, culture, and gender using the metaphor of cake baking. The performance will be followed by a community conversation.

The Driftless Writing Center will

use the VFC CCF Grant funds to purchase the required cake layers and frosting that are used in *Makin' Cake* plus cupcakes for the 250 community members for the after-show conversation. The group intends to purchase cupcakes from a variety of local businesses.

The Driftless Writing Center is a volunteer-led nonprofit based in Viroqua, WI that provides literary and educational opportunities, readings and discussions, writing classes and workshops, and an outlet for the presentation of original writing by area writers.



Pictured L to R: VFC Staff Member Gaby Marván with members of the Ridges & Rivers Book Festival organizing committee Bob J., Nikki W., and Richard R.

Local Farmers & Producers: Apply for the 2023 VFC Microloan!

The Viroqua Food Co+op Board of Directors welcomes local farms and small food producers to apply for our 2023 VFC Microloan. **Applications are due January 27th.**

This one-year no-interest loan of up to \$3500 is earmarked for specific projects that improve or strengthen existing local farms or small food businesses in our local food shed. Interest-free loans are the opposite of the normal cycle many farmers and food producers find themselves in. More familiar is the cycle of high interest loans, debt, and the inability to reach financial security and true economic viability through their business.

Founded in 2012, the VFC

Microlending Initiative continues to aim towards building resilience in our operations and ensures that VFC Owners and shoppers have continued access to local food and products. The boards intention is to share the resources of our cooperative to better enable local farmers and food producers to provide us with the food and resources needed to live a healthy life.

Types of projects funded by the VFC Microlending Initiative are the ones that:

- Help fill a hole in our local food system by expanding the production and/or distribution of products

- Purchase equipment to increase efficiency and decrease production costs
- Help a local producer grow their business

Last year, Driftless Brewing Company used a VFC Microloan to update marketing and packaging to allow them to have more flavors available for wholesale and to increase their distribution.

If you are a local farmer or producer interested in the 2023 VFC Microloan, find out more or apply on our webpage at www.viroquafood.coop/microloan or reach out to Jen McCoy at outreach@viroquafood.coop.





Lupine with her mother, Rachel Jepson Wolf, LüSa Organics founder

Local Producer Profile: LüSa Organics

Rachel Jepson Wolf made soap with her college roommates while pursuing her master's degree in environmental education. After graduation, she turned the craft into a small family-run business based out of her home. When Rachel discovered herbalism in the early 2000's her small cottage soap shop grew into LüSa Organics, a purveyor of soaps, salves, and balms and a featured local producer at the Viroqua Food Co+op.

The LüSa team includes Rachel's husband, Pete, and her two kids Sage and Lupine, plus three staff members. They work together to make soap and curate a line of salves and balms at the Food Enterprise Center (FEC) in Viroqua, WI. LüSa Organics is the second organization to house their business in the FEC and is the longest-standing tenant going on 11 years. The floors are painted

bright yellow, and the word *joy* runs around the top of the walls. There are jars of herbal infusions in a bright window, soaking in the sun. *"I chose the spot in the very back of the building because of the southern exposure - I wanted the sun in my space."*

New products are inspired by those Rachel loves. She added baby balm when her kids were little, and has developed products she later sold to address a need for a family member or friend. The name LüSa is a combination of her biggest loves: her daughter, Lupine and her son, Sage.

LüSa soap base is a mix of saponified oils of coconut, cocoa butter, olive, sunflower and fair trade shea butter.

"It brings us great joy to offer something that our friends and neighbors love."

A variety of “flavors” are added as herbs, minerals, herbal infusions, and essential oils to give each bar its unique characteristics. Ingredients are ordered in bulk from sustainable sources, and they make many of their own herbal infusions. Natural sources color the soap including herbs, spices, roots, minerals and activated charcoal. To utilize locally sourced ingredients Rachel added the Locavore line that features local grass-fed tallow and sunflower oil in the soap base. Locavore is available in all six of their bestselling bars.

Soap at LüSa is made in 216 bar batches. A batch is mixed and poured into a block mold. It then cures for two days before it is cut into bars. Bars are then cured for another month before they are packaged and sold. This cold curing process makes the soap harder, longer lasting and produces a nice, rich lather.

Sustainability

As an environmental educator, Rachel believes in creating a business that is as sustainable and ethical as possible. Each year, LüSa takes another planned step towards greater sustainability. One year, they eliminated palm oil from their recipes. Another year, they planted a tree for every order shipped. In 2019, they set out to reduce plastic use in their operation and even surprised themselves by reducing plastic usage by 98%. A large part of this was done by researching and finally sourcing cardboard tubes to replace plastic tubes for LüSa lip balms.

Inclusivity

Customers may soon notice some changes to packaging and product names as the LüSa line becomes more inclusive. “*What we need to do as a culture is to include everyone and be more welcoming*” Rachel explains. It is with this in mind that they are rebranding and changing a few of their product names and designs. For example, *Mama Balm* will become *Birth Balm*.

When it comes to her business philosophy, Rachel says, “*We want to make products for people who love the same things we do. For us, that is customers that seek products that are local, ethical, and sustainable – products that have heart.*”



Jars of herbal infusions sitting in the sunshine.



Lip balm in cardboard tubes.



Soap after it has been cut into 216 pieces.



Product Highlight

Arwyn Wildingway, Wellness Buyer

I love the integrity behind all the LüSa Organics products, and so must our customers because they sell so well! We carry almost their full line of soaps, lotion, salves, and balms.

I think my favorite products, especially this time of year, are the lotion bars. You can rub them anywhere you need it to get the benefits of non-greasy moisture and skin protection, in addition to their effective essential oil

Just in time for your post-holiday reboot! Juicy, colorful citrus appears at your co-op to save the day.

It's Citrus Season!

Winter Citrus Salad

Serves 6. Total time: 20 minutes

Dressing:

- ¼ tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons orange juice, freshly squeezed
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon salt
- freshly ground black pepper

Salad:

- 1 large red grapefruit
- 2 large Cara Cara or navel oranges
- 2 large blood oranges
- 1 small romaine heart, torn
- 2 cups radicchio, thinly sliced
- ½ cup toasted pistachios, coarsely chopped
- ½ cup pomegranate arils (optional)

1. For the dressing, in a jar or small bowl, combine the olive oil, vinegar, orange juice, honey and salt. Add a few grinds of pepper and whisk to mix. Reserve.
2. Using a sharp chef's knife, cut off the stem end and the opposite end of each piece of citrus to make a flat surface. Place on the flat, cut side and pare away the peel and pith, leaving just the flesh of the citrus exposed. Place each trimmed fruit on its side and slice thinly. Remove any seeds and reserve.
3. Spread the romaine on a large platter or in individual bowls. Arrange the radicchio and citrus sections on top of the romaine, with the blood oranges on top. Sprinkle with pistachios and, if desired, pomegranate arils. Drizzle with the dressing. Serve immediately.



Citrus-marinated Shrimp Skewers

Serves 4. Total time: 45 minutes; 15 minutes active

- 2 pounds extra-large shrimp, peeled and deveined, patted dry
 - ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
 - 2 teaspoons orange zest
 - 1 teaspoon lemon zest
 - 2 tablespoons orange juice
 - 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 - 1 clove garlic, pressed
 - 1 teaspoon minced ginger
 - 2 tablespoons fresh parsley
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1. Skewer the shrimp, four shrimp per skewer, and place in a baking pan or similar container.
 2. In a cup, whisk the olive oil, orange zest, lemon zest, orange juice, lemon juice, garlic, ginger, parsley, salt and pepper. Pour the marinade over the shrimp and turn to coat.
 3. Refrigerate the shrimp for 30 minutes to one hour.
 4. Preheat the grill. Pour a tablespoon of vegetable oil into a cup, then use a wadded paper towel, held with tongs, to oil the grate. As you take each skewer out of the marinade, let it drip for a few seconds, then place on the oiled grate. Discard the marinade. Cook for about two minutes per side, until the shrimp is browned and cooked through. Transfer to a plate and serve.



Lemon Cheesecake Bites

Serves 16. Total time: 3 hours; 15 minutes active

- 5 whole graham crackers (10 squares)
 - 2 tablespoons brown sugar
 - 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 - 1 pound Neufchatel cheese or cream cheese, softened
 - 2 tablespoons arrowroot
 - 2 large eggs
 - ¾ cup honey
 - 2 tablespoons lemon zest
 - 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 - 1 cup orange marmalade
1. Heat oven to 350°F. Line 12 muffin tins with paper baking cups.
 2. Add graham crackers to food processor bowl and process to make fine crumbs. Add the brown sugar and melted butter and process to mix. Stir the crumbs, then measure a tablespoon into each muffin cup. Pat down with your fingers. Set aside. Wash and dry the food processor bowl. Place the cheese in the bowl and process until smooth, scraping down and repeating as necessary. Add the arrowroot, eggs, honey, lemon zest and lemon juice and process until smooth, scrape down and process again.
 3. Divide the cheese mixture between the muffin cups (they will be almost full). Bake for 25 minutes, or until the cheesecakes are puffed in the center and jiggle slightly when shaken. Cool on a rack, then chill.
 4. When the cheesecakes are cold, the centers will have sunk a little; spoon a tablespoon of marmalade into each indentation and spread gently. Serve chilled.



Round up in January for Youth Initiative High School

YIHS provides holistic Waldorf-inspired education for grades 9-12, striving to integrate “head, heart and hands” (thinking, feeling and willing) into the fabric of school life. Students are encouraged to become mature, active, responsible, and empowered participants in the greater society. The school, its students, families and faculty strive to be of service to the larger community.



give
where
you live
recipients

January Youth Initiative High School

February Valley Stewardship Network

March Friends of Vernon County Parks and Forests

April Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School

May Driftless Humane Society

June WDRT - Driftless Community Radio

July Vernon Trails

August Living Faith Food Pantry

September Red Lou Library

October VFC Cooperative Community Fund

November Community Hunger Solutions

December Kickapoo Valley Reserve