

April 2021

# the heart beet

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

## Earth Love

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# Think of Our Green Pastures

Shana Meshbesh, Assistant Marketing Manager

As our lands start teeming with life again this spring, what legacy are you leaving behind on this – our community’s – green pasture?



Shana's upcycled fabric bag, napkins & masks, reused containers & refilled bottles; more ideas on pgs 6-7!

I'm a native who moved away – far and wide for what I considered a long time. Now, I call my resettlement back in Viroqua a long time (8+ years in the Marketing department at the VFC). It's through my travels and time spent elsewhere that I appreciate more fully what it is we have here – one of the “greenest pastures I've found yet!”

This past year of introspection/slowing down has given me a new perspective on how our world functions at large vs. the way our collective community does.

Every April I reflect on Earth Day and what it means for us – immigrants, natives, locals, and transplants alike – and here are some thoughts to consider:

## Interconnected supply chains

The world went into lockdown one year ago and we all got a reality check, no longer being able to “get whatever we want, whenever we want it!” This invisible connection has been wildly taken for granted. I recognize that each of us benefit from access to worldly products (my love for avocados, chocolate & coffee does not go unnoticed). But as the springtime offers a breath of rebirth,

I think it's a smart time to ask ourselves: *Is this purchase – a want – or a need? Either way, can I find it locally sourced? Or make it? Or at least trust that my money directly supports those who produce it?*

## Clean air & safe drinking water

In the past year, we watched different landmasses be consequentially affected by fires, floods, and even unanticipated freezes. Regarding businesses as well as local lands, let's count our blessings that our community members are continuously working in tandem with pro-environment, nonprofit watch groups in the area to help maintain the health of our region.

## Wisconsin's legacy of the first Earth Day in 1970, thanks to Gaylord Nelson

Did you know Earth Day was started by our then-Senator, Gaylord Nelson – instigated by a massive oil spill and inspired by the student anti-war movement? Well, now ya' know!

Did you know they chose April 22 because it was a weekday falling between Spring Break & Final Exams in order to maximize the greatest student participation? Well, now ya' know!

Did you know that first Earth Day led to the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as well as many other first-of-their-kind environmental laws? Well, now ya' know!

As our lands start teeming with life again this spring, I ask you to consider: *What legacy are you leaving behind on this – our community's – green pastures?*

More interesting Earth Day facts at: [www.earthday.org/history/](http://www.earthday.org/history/)

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The Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30pm. 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: [vfcbod@viroquafood.coop](mailto:vfcbod@viroquafood.coop)

## PUBLICATION TEAM

Charlene Elderkin  
Design, Writing, Editing  
Shana Meshbesh  
Editing, Writing, Design,  
Photography  
Bjorn Bergman  
Research, Writing  
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The Heart Beet is printed and available in-store monthly. A digital copy is available online at: [viroquafood.coop/vfc-publications](http://viroquafood.coop/vfc-publications)

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# VFC News

## What's new in the deli

A year ago, all our plans for prepared foods went out the window with the pandemic. As you will remember, we had to close down the hot bar, soup and salad bar. The VFC Deli went back to the drawing board to integrate offering take-n-bake foods, grab-n-go favorites, and take-out items like burritos, tacos and Sunday brunch from behind the deli counter.

### Self-serve oatmeal & hot soups are back!

We were recently cleared by the Health Department to once again offer oatmeal and hot soups from our hot bar. Oatmeal is available from 7-11am. Check out all the great toppings! Hot soup is available from

9am-7pm, with one meat and one vegetarian option offered each day.

Our popular **whole roasted chickens** are now available in smaller portions: half chicken, quarter breast and quarter leg/thigh.

### Pizza by the slice!

Co-op shoppers have adored our new deli-made 16" pizzas for their soft, chewy, pizzeria-style crust and tasty sauce. They were so popular that we began selling the dough and sauce separately so folks could make their own at home. Now with the addition of a pre-made option, we are offering the same delicious pizza by the slice! As the weather warms, enjoy your pizza on the outdoor patio!

new! 



## VFC Garden Center helps your garden grow

The growing season is almost here! Gardening has become more popular than ever, and we are excited to offer you all you need to grow your own food and flowers.

While you are waiting for the ground to thaw and our greenhouse to go up, peruse our large selection of certified organic seeds, spring branches and boughs, and organic growing mediums (compost, soil, and fertilizing soil amendments).

**By the beginning of April**, we will have spring bulbs and many varieties of certified organic seed potatoes, grown locally by Vermont Valley Community Farm in Blue Mounds, WI.

**Mid-April**, weather permitting, our greenhouse will go up containing organic seedlings (annuals, perennials, fruits & veggies), shrubs, trees, and more. Watch for our **Earth Day**

**Flash Sale (April 22)** on soils & soil amendments. Check out the gardening merchandise – tools, pots, seed starting trays and more.

**May Day weekend**, don't miss our Garden Center Open House. There will be great deals and a wide variety of organic seedlings and local flowers, including porch planters from

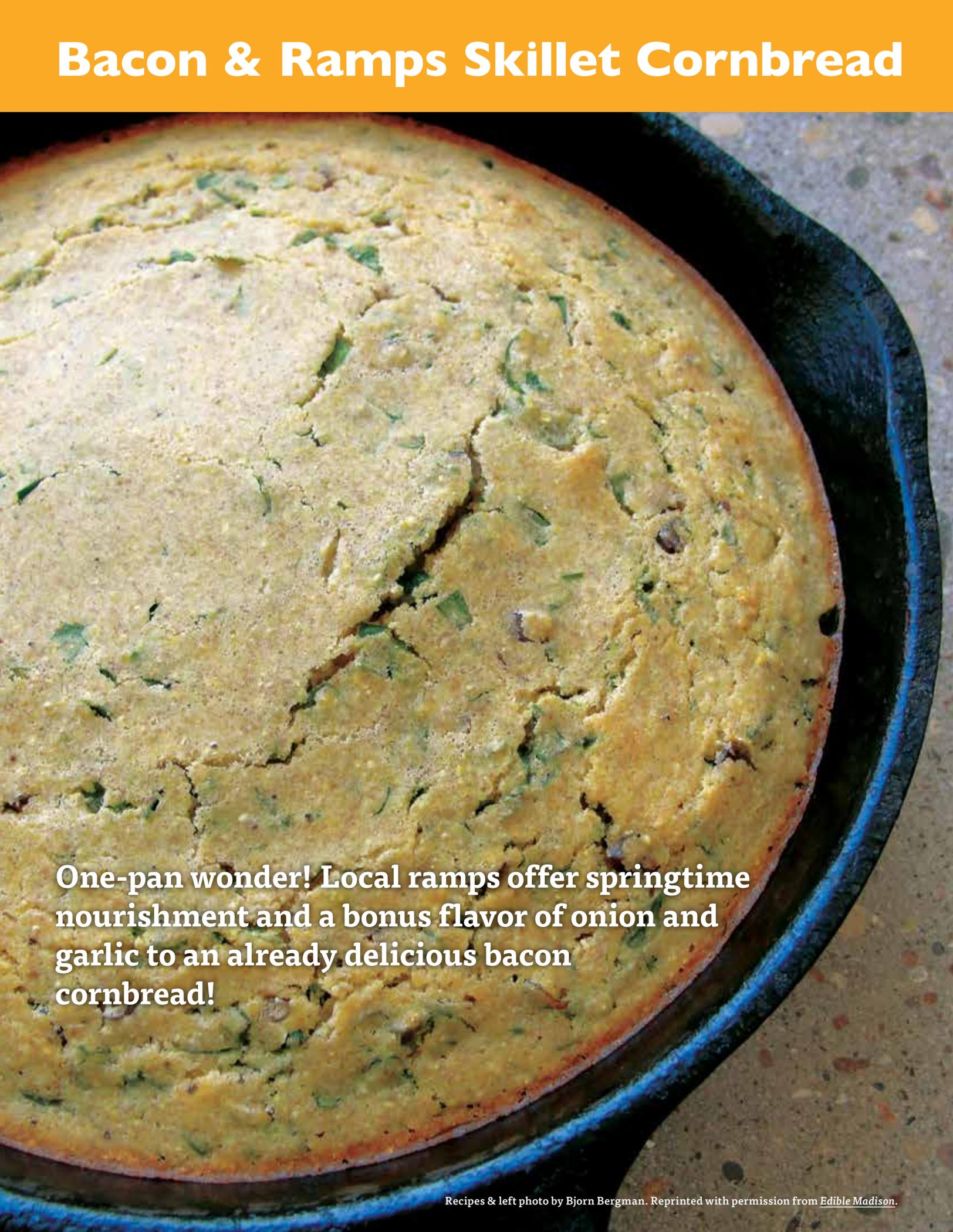
Thoreau Gardens and hanging baskets from Bluffview Greenhouse.

You can count on the VFC to provide local and certified organic products whenever possible. When you purchase from VFC, you are supporting our fantastic local organic growers.

We look forward to helping your garden grow this season!



# Bacon & Ramps Skillet Cornbread



**One-pan wonder! Local ramps offer springtime nourishment and a bonus flavor of onion and garlic to an already delicious bacon cornbread!**

## Bacon & Ramps Skillet Cornbread

Prep Time: 15 min    Cook Time: 25    Serves: 8

- 1½ cups yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup all purpose whole wheat flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 egg
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup
- 3 slices uncooked bacon
- 6-8 whole ramps, roots removed & rinsed
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 450°. In small bowl, mix together cornmeal, whole wheat flour, baking powder and salt. In large bowl, whisk together egg, milk and maple syrup. Mix dry ingredients into the wet ingredients. Set aside.
2. Over med-high heat, fry bacon in an 8-inch cast iron skillet. When bacon is crispy, transfer to paper towel to drain. Crumble when cooled. Reserve bacon fat in cast iron skillet.
3. Separate ramp bulbs and stems from the leaves. Mince bulbs and stems. Chop ramp leaves into ¼-inch pieces.
4. Sauté minced bulbs and stems in cast iron skillet with reserved bacon fat for 1 minute.
5. Add sautéed ramps, bacon fat, chopped ramp leaves, bacon crumbles and melted butter to the cornbread batter and mix well. Pour batter into the same hot 8-inch skillet that the bacon and ramps were fried in.
6. Place skillet on center oven rack and bake until toothpick or knife pulls cleanly out of the center of cornbread, 15 to 25 minutes.
7. Cool 10 minutes before cutting.

*Nothing beats a piping hot slice of cornbread after a day of ramp hunting. Serve while it's still warm and slather on plenty of local butter and honey.*



## Watercress Pesto

Prep Time: 10 min    Yields: 1 ½ cups pesto

- 2 packed cups watercress, roughly chopped
- 2-3 cloves fresh garlic
- ½ cup grated Wisconsin Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup walnuts
- Pinch of salt
- Pinch of black pepper
- ½ cup olive oil or Driftless Organics Sunflower Oil

1. Add watercress, garlic, Parmesan, walnuts, salt, and black pepper to food processor. Pulse until well blended.
2. Turn processor on and slowly add oil.
3. Once added, stop the processor & scrape sides to make sure all ingredients are incorporated.
4. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt & pepper.
5. Process again until pesto is creamy.

*This peppery watercress pesto makes a delightful topping to crostinis with some lox, capers and goat cheese. Consider watercress pesto a potent addition to wedges of creamy, soft cheeses and apple or pear slices. Makes a great addition mixed into a salad vinaigrette or smeared on your next sandwich!*

# Things We Love

Household cleaners that are good for the environment are important to you – and us, too!



### CitraSolv

This concentrated cleaner and degreaser harnesses the power of natural plant extractives that effectively cut through virtually every type of grease, grime, and even the sticky residue left behind from jar stickers and labels.



### Zero-Waste Dish Soap Bar

Ditch the bottle with this zero-waste dish soap from Lusa Organics. It's long-lasting, effective, and is plastic-free! Made of five ingredients and locally produced right here in Viroqua.

### Free & Clear Liquid Dish Detergent

This biodegradable, high-sudsing foam formula is made with plant-based ingredients and contains no dyes, synthetic fragrances, or phosphates. It's tough on messes so dishes can get fresh and clean – fast! All Field Day household cleaning products are cruelty free, too.



### Bac-Out

This Biokleen cleaner uses a unique blend of live enzyme cultures to actively breakdown and absorb organic material to eliminate stains and odors and prevents their return. Great on pet stains, wine spills, and so much more!



## DIY Hand Sanitizer

Total time: 2 minutes

- 1 750mL bottle of Grain Alcohol (190 proof/ 95% alcohol) **\*do not use regular vodka; must be 190 proof**
- ½ cup (118mL) Clean Water  
**\*According to the WHO – using sterile distilled water, or boiled and cooled tap water, is recommended.**
- 2 tsp-1 Tbsp (11mL) Vegetable Glycerin

### Directions

If utilizing entire 750mL bottle of 190 proof alcohol, easiest method is to remove *just over* ½ cup of alcohol from the bottle. Then add the water/glycerine mixture to replace the removed alcohol back into the bottle. Mix and enjoy!



## Pro Tips & Ideas

### First option is best:

If given a choice, find a sink and wash your hands with plenty of soap and water for 20+ seconds. Hand sanitizer should be used as a second option when hand washing isn't possible.

### Potential moisturizing ingredient:

Aloe vera gel is a great moisturizer to compensate for the dehydrating effect alcohol can have on the skin. Adding up to 1 part aloe gel to 2 parts alcohol. *But not too much*, otherwise it may leave a tacky sensation when dry.

### Make it smell good:

Consider adding 5-50 of your favorite essential oils (start with a few drops, then sample it on your skin)! Think “antiviral but good smelling & hydrating” (e.g. tea tree, geranium, lavender, eucalyptus, lemon, cinnamon, sweet or wild orange, oregano, rosemary, thyme, clove, etc.).

## Reusable Vessels for Sustainable Products



You don't need to start big to make a big impact! If the idea of recycling all of your cleaning products and purchasing reusable vessels can sound a bit daunting on your wallet, consider starting small. Maybe your first step is reusable washcloths and plant-based scour pads instead of paper towels and napkins. Or as simple as refilling your soap containers instead of buying an entirely new dispenser. Whether you are making your own products or diluting a store bought concentrate, be sure to use reusable vessels for easy and personalized cleaning.

Reusing items isn't just about keeping the same containers and deciding that you've done something good for the environment; it's about continually reducing your waste and reducing your reliance on toxic cleaning materials so that these reusable items consistently mitigate your carbon footprint.

# Give Where You Live

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

Visit [www.viroquafood.coop/community-outreach](http://www.viroquafood.coop/community-outreach) for a complete schedule.

## Round up this month for The Historic Temple Theatre

Built in 1922, the Historic Temple Theatre serves as a cultural and civic center for the entire region. The Associates of the Restored Temple Theatre strive to preserve and enhance this historic building by presenting events for the enrichment and enjoyment of all.



## Garden Center Open House

Friday April 30 – Sunday, May 2

- Great deals on beautiful hanging baskets
- Grow your garden with local, organic seedlings
- Find useful tools and beautiful pots



## Earth Day Electric Vehicle Event

Saturday April 24, 10am-12noon

Meet at the Electric Vehicle charging station in the VFC parking lot. EV owners will be available to answer questions. At 12:30pm join the EV parade to Readstown where Vernon Electric will demo their new DC Fast Charger.

