

May 2021

# the heart beet

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



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# Springtime in Wisconsin

Jan Rasikas, General Manager



*I love springtime in Wisconsin!*

I love the smell of rain on the earth and the hint of warm weather in the air; searching for ramps in the woods, and watching the robins build a new nest under the eaves of my back porch. Delightful!

I can imagine that many of you too, are looking forward to the new season and the changes we all secretly hope are just around the corner. After a full year of pandemic protocols, we're more than ready to grill out with friends and visit relatives. And let's face it (pun intended), ready to not wear a mask!

Good job VFC members and shoppers! All day, every day, shoppers tell us how grateful they are for our diligence and dependability. We have created a caring, safe environment for staff and shoppers. Access to healthy food is our top priority, even throughout a pandemic.

A few folks are asking when mask wearing at the Co-op will end. We still have a little bit more to go. Our stance hasn't changed; we

are committed to following CDC recommendations on all Covid-19 / pandemic issues, as we have since April of last year.

From the *CDC.gov* website:  
*"CDC recommends that people wear masks in public settings, at events and gatherings, and anywhere they will be around other people. Masks should be worn in addition to staying at least six feet apart, especially if indoors around people who don't live with you."*

While we share a concern for everyone's health when they shop, our main concern is the welfare of our employees. VFC staff are exposed to 800 to 1,100 shoppers per day, seven days a week. When employees stay healthy, the Co-op stays open, and we can serve our community! Our plan and protocols are aligned with UFCW Union conditions for staff safety during the pandemic.

We will publicly announce when mask protocols are lifted for VFC shoppers.

Keep going friends! We can do it!



## 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 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)

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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/vfc-publications](http://viroquafood.coop/vfc-publications)

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# VFC News

## Order ahead from the VFC Bakery



### Quick coffee for all

Did you know we offer “coffee to go?” Our coffee kits come with approximately 96oz. of ready-to-serve coffee! We also throw in eight sets of cups, lids, stir sticks, one pint of Organic Valley Half & Half and sugar options per request. You can order the coffee container without all the bells and whistles, but call the deli to customize your order!

These are perfect for impromptu meetings or small gatherings when your regular coffee maker isn't able to fully caffeinate the crowd with haste!

### Next day pastry orders

Consider adding made-to-order pastries onto your coffee order. We are happy to accommodate a 24-hour turnaround with both the coffee kit as well as the pastries.

### Custom bakery orders

Cakes and pies are a different story as our Deli may need up to 72 hours notice so they are made exactly how you prefer it.

Start your next order with a quick call to our Deli or Bakery Team! All varieties and pricing information is available on our Deli webpage at: [www.viroquafood.coop/deli](http://www.viroquafood.coop/deli)

## Wisconsin celebrates its 180<sup>th</sup> Cheesemaking Anniversary

May is American Cheese Month, and Wisconsin, the State of Cheese®, is taking the celebration to a new level, with big plans all month long that coincide with the state's 180<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of cheesemaking. *Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin* is highlighting Wisconsin Cheese in stores across the country, through virtual events and on social media in a one-of-a-kind celebration that cheese lovers won't want to miss. Here are ways cheese lovers can join in on the fun:

### So many Wisconsin Cheeses, so little time!

Ask Sarah, our cheese expert at the VFC, for her variety & pairing recommendations.

### Explore fromage-filled events!

Enter the ticket lottery for the

chance to attend exclusive, memorable, and educational events for cheese lovers at: [wisconsincheese.com/wondersofwisconsin](http://wisconsincheese.com/wondersofwisconsin)

### Discover the wonders of Wisconsin Cheese online

Learn about Wisconsin's commitment to mastery, creativity, quality and innovation with a new “wonder” cheese showcased daily on the Facebook and Instagram pages of [@WisconsinCheese](https://www.facebook.com/WisconsinCheese). For serious cheese fanatics who want to celebrate Wisconsin Cheese all year long, consider joining [Cheeselandia.com](http://Cheeselandia.com), Wisconsin's online cheese community.



# Hit the Trails

These portable, protein-packed snacks will give you the energy you need for your outdoor adventures.



## Nut Butter and Flax Powerballs

Servings: 15. Prep time: 20 minutes.

- 1 ½ cups almond butter
- 1 banana, peeled and mashed
- 2 tablespoons ground flaxseed
- 2 tablespoons whey protein powder
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ⅓ cup almonds, finely chopped

1. In a mixing bowl, stir together the almond butter, banana, flax, protein powder, cocoa powder and honey. Blend until smooth.
2. Line a plate or pan with parchment paper. Roll the mixture into 1- to 2-inch balls and place on parchment paper. Next, roll each ball in the chopped almonds and return to parchment paper. Place in the refrigerator or freezer until firm.



## No-Bake Apricot Cashew Energy Bars

Servings: Makes 14 bars. Prep time: 1 hour, 15 minutes; 15 minutes active.

- 1 ½ cups chopped dried apricots
- ½ cup cashews
- ½ cup almonds
- ½ cup cashew butter
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 1 cup flaked coconut
- ⅓ cup shelled hemp seeds
- ⅓ cup chia seeds
- 3 tablespoons cacao powder
- 1 tablespoon maca powder

1. Place the apricots, cashews, almonds and cashew butter in a food processor and mix until the apricots are finely chopped and the ingredients have come together. The mixture will still be coarse.
2. Transfer to a mixing bowl and add the remaining ingredients. Stir until the mixture takes on the consistency of a very thick dough. Line a loaf pan with parchment paper and press mixture firmly into the bottom of the pan. Chill in the refrigerator for at least one hour, then check to make sure it has set. When set, turn the mixture out onto a cutting board and slice into 14 pieces. Keeps refrigerated up to 5 days.

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## Chocolate Matcha Energy Balls

Servings: Makes 16. Prep time: 15 minutes.

- 1/2 cup raw cashews
- 1/4 cup raw walnuts
- 1 cup pitted dates
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup or honey
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon matcha, divided
- Pinch of salt

1. Place cashews and walnuts in the food processor and grind the nuts to a fine mince, then scrape them to the center of the container. Add the dates, maple syrup or honey, cocoa, 1 tablespoon matcha and salt. Process until the dates form a thick paste and the mixture holds together if you squeeze a bit of it.
2. Scoop out a tablespoon of the mixture, form into a ball and place into a medium bowl; repeat until all of the mixture has been used. Use a wire mesh strainer to sift the remaining matcha over the balls. Roll the balls around to coat. Store, tightly wrapped, in the refrigerator for up to a month.



## Chewy Cocoa Granola Bars

Servings: Makes 12. Prep time: 20 minutes active; 50 minutes total.

- 2 cups rolled oats, thick
- 1/2 cup raisins, dried cherries or other dried fruit
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped almonds, walnuts or peanuts
- 1/4 cup cocoa
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup applesauce
- 1/2 cup honey or agave syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cut a piece of parchment paper 8 inches wide, and place it in an 8" x 8" baking pan, with the edges hanging over to make handles for easy removal of the finished bars.
2. On a sheet pan, spread the oats and toast them in the oven for about 10 minutes, until fragrant and lightly golden in spots. Let cool on a rack.
3. Place the cooled oats in a large bowl and add the dried fruit, nuts, cocoa and salt and stir to mix well.
4. In a medium bowl, combine the applesauce, honey and vanilla. Stir until smooth, then pour over the oat mixture. Stir until well mixed, then spread in the prepared pan. Using a spatula, press the mixture firmly and evenly in the pan.
5. Bake for 30 minutes, until the bars feel firm when pressed. Cool on a rack for 10 minutes, then use the parchment to lift the bars out and let cool completely. Cut 3-by-4 to make 12 bars. Store, tightly wrapped, for up to 4 days at room temperature or a week in the refrigerator.





## Local Producer Profile

# Carr Valley Cheese

**H**appy American Cheese Month (as in cheese made in America)! To celebrate the occasion, we are featuring Carr Valley Cheese, as they are a leader in the world of American artisan cheese and are one of our beloved local cheese makers.

Carr Valley Cheese is owned and operated by Sid Cook. Sid is a fourth generation Master Cheesemaker who has been a licensed cheesemaker since he was 16 years old. The Cook family has been making cheese since 1883. Sid grew up in Plain, WI, with a cheese factory attached to the house he grew up in – this was called the Irish Valley Factory. Sid is the youngest of four siblings, all of whom grew up making cheese as well. Sid is Master certified in Fontina, Cheddar, Mobay, and Gran Canaria.

Carr Valley is also home to another Master Cheesemaker, Bob Koenig. Bob has been working for Carr Valley Cheese since he was 14 years old. Bob at one time held the title as the world's youngest Master Cheesemaker. He is Master certified in Fontina and Gouda. He is also a licensed buttermaker.



*“Cheesemaking is the perfect marriage of art and science. It’s positively amazing how complex and diverse cheese can be using only four simple, wholesome ingredients. Milk, cultures, rennet, salt. That’s it!”*

*–Master Cheesemaker Bob Koenig*

### Carr Valley Cheese beginnings

Sid purchased the original Carr Valley Cheese factory in 1986, located in La Valle, WI. This plant started in 1902 and is now known for its artisanal cheddars still being made the old-fashioned way. As Carr Valley grew, he expanded by purchasing plants in Mauston, Portage, Fennimore, and Linden, WI. Carr Valley now employs nearly 150 people company-wide.

### Carr Valley Cheese varieties

Carr Valley is known for producing high-quality traditional varieties of cheese such as Cheddar, Gouda, and Fontina, along with many of Sid's creations. Carr Valley produces over 100 different varieties of cheese including cow, goat, sheep and mixed-milk products, along with four varieties of butter – keeping our cheesemakers very busy all year round!

Sid Cook was the first American Cheesemaker to produce a mixed-milk cheese, containing cow, sheep, and goat milk. His first attempt at it was called “Sid’s Dairy World,” a Colby style cheese. Carr Valley no longer makes that product, but VFC customers may be familiar with Menage – our best-selling mixed milk cheese (*you should try this!*).

### Supporting Carr Valley Cheese means supporting local farmers

Sid Cook puts a strong emphasis on supporting the small local farmer. Carr Valley Cheese picks up cow milk from 30 dairy farms local to the La Valle, WI area. Carr Valley purchases milk at a premium price to ensure that these small farms stay in business. They also purchase goat milk from a goat farm within one mile of the La Valle plant and sheep milk from a local co-op in northern Wisconsin.

### From rural to international

The company has grown from one small plant in rural Wisconsin to having a world-wide presence. Sid has grown Carr Valley Cheese to become the most award-winning cheese company in the world, with over 850 national and international awards!

### The best part

Bob says, “Cheesemaking is the perfect marriage of art and science. It’s positively amazing how complex and diverse cheese can be using only four simple, wholesome ingredients. Milk, cultures, rennet, salt. That’s it!”

### “Uniquely Carr Valley”

Carr Valley continues to work hard to keep the tradition of cheesemaking an

important part of Wisconsin heritage. Sid may continue to release new, creative products but will always find it important to produce the highest quality traditional varieties as well.

### Top three favorite cheeses & favorite pairings

The Carr Valley team has a hard time choosing just a few favorite products!

1. One of Sid’s favorite pairings is a slice of 6 Year Cheddar on a piece of warm apple pie.
2. The Carr Valley Team love the Penta Crème Blue with honey or a chocolate stout.
3. They also think a perfect Wisconsin pairing is Apple Smoked Cheddar with a Brandy Old-Fashioned Sweet.

Carr Valley’s recommended pairings above; VFC Cheese Buyer Sarah’s picks below!



# 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 Vernon Trails

Vernon Trails is a non-profit organization committed to developing and maintaining sustainable roadways & trails, while continuing to create access for human powered users.

Vernon Trails is currently seeking funding for ongoing projects at Sidie Hollow including: Increased and improved signage; A one mile shared-use trail on the west coast of Sidie Hollow Lake, easily accessible and machine-built; Kiosks at ALL trail heads; Iron Rangers for donations at trailheads; Cascade Terra Tamer Rescue System.



# time to grow!

with the VFC

## Garden Center

- Find useful gardening tools & beautiful pots
- Grow your garden with local, organic seedlings which include annual & perennial flowers, herbs & veggies
- Feed the soil with organic compost, soil and fertilizing soil amendments
- Beautiful hanging baskets, shrubs, trees, bulbs, and more

Check our **Facebook page** or **sign up for emails** on our website to get the scoop on flash sales!