

December 2021

# the heart beet

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



## Share Good Cheer

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# Shop Local for the Holidays

Seven reasons why buying local food & gifts for the holidays make a big difference in our community.



We welcome the season of celebrations, of sharing good food and gifts with family and friends. Before you stress about holiday packages arriving on time – consider what our local community has to offer. Shopping local for the holidays supports our neighbors who make the Driftless a wonderful place to live.

Here's how:

- 1. Buying local provides direct and needed support to area producers.** Farmers markets and festivals have had their season and winter is tough for many local producers that rely on these avenues for income. Buying locally produced food and gifts now gives much needed support to local producers to help them through the winter months.
- 2. Shopping local is fresh!** Fresh food is the best! Buy local and keep fresh food in our community. The more we support the local food economy, the stronger it becomes – leading to more product availability and diversity of products available.
- 3. Shopping local is better for the planet.** When buying food and gifts from local businesses, you cut down on the environmental impact of transportation, use less packaging, and use less refrigeration – all of

which reduce your carbon footprint.

- 4. Shopping local provides local jobs.** Whether you buy local products or buy from locally owned businesses, you directly support local jobs and keep cash flowing (and staying) in our community.

- 5. Shopping local supports local culture.** From sausages to soda pop, bourbon syrup to fresh-roasted coffee, and so much more – we have all the great flavors here in the Driftless and that's made possible by you! Shopping local, buying local products, and supporting our community of creative growers, producers and makers, keeps the unique and wonderful community we share vibrant and thriving!

- 6. Shopping local creates a ripple.** When you shop local, you create a ripple effect in our community, supporting not only the business you bought from but other local businesses like printers and credit unions.
- 7. Shopping local supports diversity.** Small businesses, unlike big box stores, have the flexibility to carry products that reflect the communities they serve. They are more likely to support local artisans, producers, makers, and other small businesses with unique products.

And shopping local is EASY at the VFC! No long car rides or hours of online shopping. We work hard every day to give you plenty of local options to choose from. When you shop the Viroqua Food Co+op, you support over 200 local farmers, producers, and makers. And you have access to unique and beautiful gifts and delicious food your friends and family will love!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Olive Reynolds  
Julie Tomaro

## GENERAL MANAGER

Jan Rasikas

The Board meets at 6:30pm on the 3rd Monday of each month. Meetings are hosted virtually for now. 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

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The Heart Beet is intended as a vehicle for communication among VFC owners & 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

## Buy four save more – wine sale

From red, to white, to bubbly delight, our expanded selection of wine makes a great gift! Don't forget a bottle for your host or hostess! Stock up and save this holiday season with VFC's "buy four, save more" wine

sale! Choose any four or more bottles and you receive 10% off your wine purchase at the register. Don't miss this sale, happening now through January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.



## Goodness Giveaways throughout December

Try your luck this holiday season and share a little goodness with neighbors in need! Enter to win one of 12 great prizes in our Goodness Giveaways. Starting Monday, November 29<sup>th</sup> we will giveaway three prizes a week. We are raffling off lots of great local

products, backpacks, kitchen goods, an Instant Pot, and so much more!

*One entry per prize, per person. Suggested donation of a non-perishable item for Living Faith Food Pantry with entry.*



## VFC can help this holiday season

Shop the Co-op for all your holiday needs – we're here for you!

### Merry Markdowns are back!

From gifts, to appetizers, to everything in between – we are here to help make your holiday shine! Great deals on holiday favorites throughout the store December 8<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup>.

For meals large and small, look to the Co-op for easy solutions, specialty items, and everything to make your holidays merry and bright.

### from our butcher

Locally made sausages, ribeyes and tenderloins, holiday hams, and lots of custom cuts.

### from our bakery

Specialty cakes, housemade pies, and take-n-bake cookies to go.

### from our deli

Pre-made sides, take-n-bake entrées, and holiday cheese balls.

### from our cheese counter

Local and artisan cheeses.

### from our produce

Locally grown carrots, squash, sweet potatoes, cranberries, garlic, onions, and so much more.

### from our grocery

Pantry staples and quality goods for all your holiday baking needs.

### Gift Cards make great gifts, too!

Need a gift for that *hard to buy* for family member on your list? VFC Gift Cards are good for anything in the store. Request one for any amount from a cashier upon checking out!



## for the soup enthusiast

Anyone can cook like a professional chef with the right tools! VFC's got a wide variety of cookbooks and kitchenware.



# Build a Gift with Books

Tell someone you love them by gifting them a book about their favorite things. With a wide array of topics, you can be sure to find the perfect book and gift pairing here at the Viroqua Food Co+op.

## for the baker & maker

Spoil the baker and maker in your life! Pair a baking book with specialty ingredients, kitchenwares, or printed tea cloths. We consider aprons, made locally by *Driftless Stitch*, the cherry on top!



## for the mixologist

Curate a gift of cocktails and mocktails! Consider pairing books with local sparkling mixers, unique glassware, fun-shaped ice cube trays, locally distilled spirits, bitters, and more.



## for the avid gardener

We like to think that gardening is the gift that keeps on giving! From learning the basics and just getting started – to nature journaling for the pro's, we have lots of gifts for anyone with a green thumb.



# Merry Markdowns

## December 8–21

Join us for two weeks of Merry Markdowns!  
Save on holiday items, gifts, and foods throughout our entire store.

## Winter Trees and Wreaths

Shop local and sustainable this holiday season!

It's time to spruce up your home for the holidays! Find the perfect holiday trees, wreaths, and garlands here at the Viroqua Food Co+op.

Enjoy the uplifting scent and natural beauty of real pine in your home with organically grown holiday trees from Whose Organics, in Sauk City, Wisconsin. In 2008, Whose Organics converted 27 acres of certified organic pasture into an organic holiday tree farm. They've continued their organic practices and now sell gorgeous, chemical-free and paint-free trees.

Choose from our wide selection of Scotch Pine, Fraser Fir, and Colorado Blue Spruce Trees – all of which are available in various sizes. There really is nothing like the joy of finding the perfect tree for your home. With our courtyard full of such a variety, your search will be all of the fun and none of the stress!

Don't forget to decorate your home with beautiful wreaths and holiday greenery from the Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School (PRWS) Class of 2023. Proceeds from your purchase of these charming greens will go

directly to the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade class at PRWS to help raise money for their 2023, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade class trip.

### Win a holiday tree!

Starting November 29<sup>th</sup>, be sure to sign up for a chance to win a local, organic holiday tree! Winner will be selected on Monday, December 6<sup>th</sup> and announced via social media.

## Sustainable DIY Holiday Decor



### Dried Orange Slices

Bake thinly-sliced oranges at 250° for roughly 2.5 hours. Flip them over halfway through baking. Once cooled, string twine or yarn through any soft spots. Use as ornaments or string together for a decorative garland.



### Rosemary Gift Decor

Fresh rosemary sprigs are a beautiful way to add an extra touch to your holiday gifts. Tie them in your ribbon or tuck them in the folds of your wrapping paper for that extra special touch.



### Cranberry Garlands

Make popcorn one day in advance – stale is best. Wash cranberries and toss any mushy ones. Use wire or thin yarn to string berries and popcorn. Get creative and make your own patterns!



### Scented Pinecones

Keep those harvest-fallen pinecones from your backyard or long hike. Add just a few drops of your favorite essential oils to the cone's crevices and place them in a bowl for decor. Enjoy these all season long!



Upon the winter solstice, the Sun appears at its lowest point in the sky, and its noontime elevation seems to stay the same for several days before and after this day. The Sun's gradual decrease in the sky reverses upon the winter solstice, marking what many cultures believe to be a "rebirth" of the Sun as the hours of daylight become longer.



## Winter Solstice December 21<sup>st</sup>



### Bringing Light to the Longest Night

**Julie Tomaro, Board of Directors**

Here we are in the darkest times of the seasonal rotation, but as we look around we see lights everywhere. Lights on trees, in windows, along Main Street and adorning quiet country homes, casting their glow out into the impenetrable darkness. A golden glow that brings in a flood of memories. It's rhythmic traditions like these that give me pause – a time to reflect on the multitude of generations before us that slowly created these

rituals-turn-holidays that we hold so dear. Bringing light and warmth into what were surely very dark and cold days.

A year ago was the first time in memory that these holiday rituals were suddenly so different for so many. Devoid of the soft warmth and intimacy we had come to expect. Instead, there were familiar faces in two dimensions, the golden light tinged with blue. But we adapted, made due,

and were grateful for what was. Maybe we even found aspects that are worth keeping, that will become our new seasonal traditions.

Perhaps that will look like staying closer to home and eliminating the stress of travel, or including extended family that you wouldn't otherwise see via the now ubiquitous Zoom. Possibly you have redefined who your family is and celebrations will now include neighbors.

Maybe you have even taken to giving more of yourself to various needs in your community.

As we arrive again in this darkest season with a new perspective, we are presented with an amazing opportunity to reach back to those long-evolving traditions we had to lay down and pick up what we treasured most. Bring it forth with renewed enthusiasm into the future. Gathering with loved ones,

sharing familiar foods, rekindling old memories, and bearing witness to the passage of time. No wonder our ancestors took these cold days to unite, exchange seasonal merriment, and burn a little extra light to chase away the darkness the winter solstice brings.

*With these thoughts making my heart full, I wish all of you a beautiful Solstice as we turn back towards the light.*



# Make it Your Own

Every household has their own customs when it comes to holiday celebrations. Try putting a new twist on an old classic – or create a new tradition all your own!



## Mulled Ciders and Wines

Fill your home with the delicious aroma of holiday spices and create a signature mulled cider or wine beverage to share with your guests. Visit the bulk department to find cinnamon sticks and all the spices you need!

## Do a Mug Exchange

Have your guests bring a holiday mug as a gift. Source yours from one of our many local potters. For a bonus, add your favorite hot chocolate mixture, tea, or coffee to make it special!



## Charcuterie for All

Build a custom charcuterie board. Invite your guests to bring their favorite cheese, salami and accompaniments. Arrange it all on a beautiful board for everyone to share.

## Turn it into Brunch

Celebrate midday with a delightful holiday brunch. Pick your favorite breakfast items and pair them with salads and sides. Don't forget the mimosas!



## Pass Down a Recipe

Start a holiday recipe swap. Who says recipes have an age requirement? Pass along a new recipe every year or teach new family members how to make an old favorite.

# Brunch for a Bunch!

For a fun twist on brunch, arrange your favorite breakfast foods on a board for your guests to graze.



## Spinach, Ham & Gruyere Strata

Serves: 6-8  
Make time: 1 hr. total

### Ingredients

5 packed cups baby spinach	1/2 tsp kosher salt
1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil	1/4 tsp black pepper
1 shallot, thinly sliced	2 cups grated Gruyere cheese, divided
1 1/2 cups chopped Canadian bacon (about 7.5oz)	5 eggs
4 cups cubed bread (~12 slices)	1 1/2 cups milk

### Directions

- Preheat oven to 400°F and grease a 9"x5" baking dish.
- Add olive oil to large skillet over medium-high heat. Once hot, add shallot and cook for 2 mins. until softened. Add spinach and cook for additional 1-2 mins., until wilted. Remove from heat and transfer to large mixing bowl.
- Add Canadian bacon, bread, salt, pepper and 1/2 cup of grated Gruyere to bowl. Mix together and transfer to greased baking dish.
- In medium bowl, whisk eggs and milk together. Add remaining Gruyere and stir to combine. Pour mixture evenly on top of mixture in baking dish.
- Bake in oven for 35-40 mins. until golden brown on top and bubbling.
- Remove from oven and let sit for 10 mins. before serving.

### Suggestions

Egg strata makes a great addition to any brunch spread. With pieces of bread in the mixture, it's a heartier version of a frittata or quiche. This recipe is easily doubled and easily adapted to whatever ingredients you have on hand, so don't forget to throw in any veggies or leftover holiday ham you might have in the fridge!

Recipe used with permission – PLUS – more great tips & tricks from: [www.grocery.coop/recipes/spinach-ham-gruyere-strata](http://www.grocery.coop/recipes/spinach-ham-gruyere-strata)



## Breakfast Pizza

Yields: 1 large pizza  
Make time 1 hr  
prep time 30 mins.; bake time 15-20 mins.

### Ingredients

1 batch of pizza dough	3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
8 oz bulk breakfast sausage	1 cup milk or half-n-half
1/2 cup diced onion	4-6 large fresh eggs
1/2 cup red or green peppers, diced	1 cup shredded sharp cheddar
3 Tbsp butter	1 cup shredded mozzarella

### Preparation

- Roll or pat out pizza dough to 14" circle or 12"x16" rectangle. Set aside while preparing the filling. Prefer a fuller, more bready crust? Let pizza crust rise a bit before topping. Prefer thin crust? Skip the rise, and roll crust just before topping.
- In large sauté pan, cook onions and peppers in a touch of butter or oil until they begin to soften. Add sausage, breaking up with a spatula as you go. Cook until the sausage is cooked through but not browned. Drain mixture of excess fat and set aside to cool slightly.
- In same pan, cook butter and flour for ~4 mins.; don't allow to brown. Remove pan from heat and whisk in milk or half-n-half. Return to heat and cook until sauce begins to thicken.
- Crack eggs into sauce and whisk in well. Continue cooking until soft set. Avoid overcooking, which makes eggs rubbery.
- Spread egg mixture over crust, then top with sausage mixture, spreading evenly. If there are more eggs than pizza, save for another day rather than risk having a soggy crust. Top with both cheeses.
- Bake in pre-heated 400°F oven for 15-18 mins. until well-browned and bubbly.

### Tips & Tricks

Pizza for breakfast? No cold, old slices here. This pizza features soft-scrambled eggs in a creamy sauce topped with sausage, peppers, onions... whatever your favorite omelet topping! Sharp cheddar cheese adds tang, and mozzarella gives that stretch and pull that we love. Treat the family this holiday break and make pizza... for breakfast!

Recipe used with permission – PLUS – more great tips & tricks from: [kingarthurbaking.com/recipes/breakfast-pizza-recipe](http://kingarthurbaking.com/recipes/breakfast-pizza-recipe)

# Holiday Baking

Spice up your holiday spread with these much-loved classic treats.

Recipes by Robin Asbell

## Gingerbread Cookies

Makes 48 3-inch cookies. Prep time: 1 hour

- 1 ½ cups unbleached flour
- 1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- ¼ cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup molasses
- 1 large egg

### Royal Icing

- 2 cups powdered sugar, approximately
- 1 large pasteurized egg white or 2 ½ tablespoons meringue powder
- ¼ teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons water, approximately

1. In a large bowl, mix together flours, baking soda, baking powder, salt and spices. Using a stand mixer or an electric beater, cream butter until soft, then add brown sugar and beat until well-mixed. Add molasses and beat, scrape down and add egg, beat again until combined. Stir in the flour mixture. Divide dough into four rectangular pieces, place between sheets of parchment and roll out ¼" thick. Stack sheets of dough on a baking pan and chill for 3 hours.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Lay sheets of dough on counter, remove top layer of parchment and use a cookie cutter to cut into shapes. Using a thin spatula, transfer cookies to parchment-lined baking sheets. Repeat process with scraps.
3. Bake 12 minutes, switching the pans between oven racks halfway through. When cookies are puffed and look dry, remove and cool on the pan for five minutes, then move cookies to a cooling rack.
4. Using a stand mixer or electric beater, mix powdered sugar with egg white or meringue powder. Mix in lemon juice and water, a tablespoon at a time, to reach desired consistency. Transfer icing to a piping bag with a small round tip and use to draw outlines on the cookies.



## No-Bake Sugar Cookie Truffles

Serves: 24 truffles. Make time: 2 1/2 hours; 30 minutes active

- 12 3" sugar cookies (14 oz.)
- 2 tablespoons cream cheese
- 1 cup white chocolate chips

1. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper. Crumble cookies into bowl of a food processor and add cream cheese. Process until a smooth paste is produced, scraping down and repeating as needed. Use a tablespoon to scoop out level portions. Roll each between your palms to make an even ball. Place on the prepared pan and chill until firm, about 2 hours.
2. When firm, melt the white chocolate in a double boiler set over barely-simmering water. Use a fork to drop each truffle into the white chocolate, turn to coat, and lift out, tapping the fork on the edge of the pan to allow excess chocolate to fall back into the pan. Place dipped truffles back on the parchment-lined pan, and repeat.
3. If there's any leftover chocolate, use the fork to drizzle it back and forth over truffles for a decorative pattern. Chill again until set, then transfer to a storage container and keep in the refrigerator, tightly covered, until time to serve. These keep for a week in the refrigerator.

This three-ingredient sweet treat is fun to make and a great gift item for a special friend. Get the kids involved – they can help dip the truffles in white chocolate and decorate the gift boxes. Serve with a sprinkle of crushed pistachios for a nutty accent, if desired.



## Date and Pistachio Balls

Serves: 30 1-inch balls. Make time: 30 minutes

- 2 cups pitted dates
- 1 cup unsalted pistachio nuts, shelled
- ¾ cup shredded unsweetened coconut
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder (optional)

1. In a food processor, finely grind the pistachios. Remove ¼ cup of the ground pistachios and set aside. Add the pitted dates and ½ cup shredded coconut to the food processor and blend well until the mixture sticks together.
2. Using clean hands, form the mixture into 1" balls, roll them in the remaining coconut or pistachios and set on a plate or platter.
3. To make chocolate date balls, remove half of the blended date/coconut mixture from the food processor, then add 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder to the remainder and process until well blended. Roll in additional cocoa powder to resemble chocolate truffles.

These sweet and simple no-bake dessert bites are a delicious addition to holiday cheese or cookie trays. Get extra creative by rolling in a combination of matcha powder for a variety of flavor, or cacao nibs for some extra crunch.

# Give Where You Live

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

The complete schedule for 2022 will be available in January on our website here: [www.viroquafood.coop/community-outreach](http://www.viroquafood.coop/community-outreach)

### Round up this month for Kickapoo Valley Reserve

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve is an 8,600-acre tract of public land located between the villages of La Farge and Ontario in Southwest Wisconsin.

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve Educational Programs offer hands-on environmental learning opportunities that promote positive environmental values to people of all ages.



## Seasonal Staff Picks



Deviled Eggs with a twist! Start with fresh hard boiled eggs, then mix yolks with the usual – relish, mayo, paprika, etc. Then dunk the boiled egg whites in raw eggs, and – wait for it – flour mixed with *any* flavored-chip crumbs. Fry, then add filling... Don't knock it 'til you try it!

-Alex, Customer Service



My family loves when I make a holiday-shaped pizza. I get a fresh pizza dough from the deli, roll it out at home, then cut it into the shape of a Christmas tree! I top it with deli mozzarella and our favorite meats or veggies (we love the classic pepperoni).

-Matt, Refrigerated/Frozen Buyer

## Special Holiday Hours

DECEMBER

24

7am-7pm

DECEMBER

25

CLOSED

DECEMBER

31

7am-8pm

JANUARY

1

10am-7pm

Viroqua  
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