



Appleton

May 2025

Monthly

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FOUNDER/PUBLISHER

Jon Croce

EDITOR

Jamie LaFreniere

SENIOR EDITOR

Tim Froberg

FOOD EDITOR

Jenni Eickelberg

COPY EDITOR

Jim Collar

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Holly Boettcher, Carly Cerniglia,
Jim Collar, Phyllis Collar, Jenni Eickelberg,
Tim Froberg, Angela Halderson, Tammi
Johnson, Steve Lonsway, Megan Reinhold,
Adriana Sanderfoot, Tyler Sjostrom, John
Van Den Brandt, Dr. Jim Ziegler

ART DIRECTOR

Brittany Franciosi

SENIOR DESIGNER

Rachelle Hansen

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Jon Croce

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Greg Doyle
Patti Roberts

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Carly Cerniglia
Debbie Daanen Photography
John Van Den Brandt

BUSINESS MANAGER

Dean V. Pallex, CPA

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Mackenzie Valentine

DISTRIBUTION DIRECTOR

Jon Croce

INQUIRIES / QUESTIONS

Jon Croce
920.707.0013
jcroce@appletonmonthly.com



Wisconsin Historical Society
Library Archives acknowledges
Appleton Monthly Magazine

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EDITOR'S NOTE



FINALLY *Spring!*

You can almost hear it—spring in Appleton doesn't just arrive, it sings. From the first chirp of morning birds to the sizzle of patio grills, there's

an energy in the air that says, "Let's get out there!" Appleton Monthly is blooming right alongside the daffodils, and we're serving up a fresh issue full of celebration for the creativity, flavor, and spirit of our community.

Ready to shake off the winter blues (and those salt-stained boots)? Start with our jam-packed list of 37 fun things to do across the Fox Cities. From star gazing to flying a kite with the kiddos, this list is your ultimate local guide to enjoying every sunny moment. We have sports, nature, movies, food, gardens, and so much more. No chores here though—just pure, post-thaw joy.

In our culinary corner, get ready to carb-load—deliciously. Jenni is rolling out a multi-page spread dedicated to our beloved bakeries. From crusty artisan loaves to cupcakes that deserve their own fan club, she took a sugar-dusted journey around the ovens of local bakers who are kneading their way into our hearts (and stomachs). Warning: may cause sudden cravings and an urgent need for a pastry run.

There is one more thing returning in the spring! If you are a mega-fan like Tim and me, you're most excited about the return of the Timber Rattlers to Fox Cities Stadium. This month we talk to two of the people responsible for their continued success, Rob Zerjav, who started as an unpaid intern and is now general manager and CEO, and Chris Mehring, director of media relations and the instantly recognizable play-by-play announcer for the past 26 years. Play ball!

As you turn these pages, we hope you find inspiration, information, and a renewed appreciation for the vibrant community we share. Here's to new beginnings and the stories that bring us together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie LaFreniere".

Jamie LaFreniere, Editor

Thoughts, ideas, and comments can be sent to Jamie at editor@appletonmonthly.com

CONTRIBUTORS



Jim Collar

Jim Collar is a journalist, lifelong resident of the Fox Cities and a supporter of our local music scene. He previously worked as a reporter for The Post-Crescent and The Oshkosh Northwestern. Jim contributes to Appleton Monthly with his Music Vibes article.



Jenni Eickelberg

Jenni Eickelberg is a married working mom with two teenagers. She's an Appleton native passionate about food blogging on her "Food for Thought Fox Valley" Facebook group page. In her spare time she loves to read, spend time with her family, volunteer, and travel. Jenni contributes to Appleton Monthly with her Taste cover articles and restaurant features.



Angela Halderson

Angela Halderson is the owner of Strong Meridian, a natural healthcare practice focusing on the root cause of dis-ease. She is a dietitian trained in functional medicine, energy medicine, homeopathy and herbalism. When you are tired of being sick and tired, reach out to angela@strongmeridian.com for a virtual visit. Angela contributes to Appleton Monthly with her Healthy Living article.

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Rob Zerjav

President | CEO
Wisconsin Timber Rattlers

By TIM FROBERG

THE VISIONARY RUNNING THE RATTLERS

LOVE OF THE GAME FUELS TIMBER RATTLERS' ZERJAV

By TIM FROBERG

Rob Zerjav's first step in professional baseball came as an unpaid intern with the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers in 1997.

Zerjav – in his own words – “just wanted to get his foot in the door.”

He did that and had the business skills and passion for baseball to keep those management doors moving.

Zerjav yanked open Door No. 2 a few years later by becoming the Timber Rattlers' director of baseball operations.

The Green Bay native entered Door No. 3 in 2002 when he accepted the job as the team's general manager and CEO.

"It's been unbelievable," Zerjav said. "Never in a million years would I have thought this was the path for me. I'm very, very fortunate."

HONORED AS ELITE EXECUTIVE

The Timber Rattlers are also fortunate to have Zerjav running their show. The well-known publication "Baseball America" named Zerjav as its 2023 Minor League Baseball Executive of the Year. He has also been selected as the Midwest League's Executive of the Year three times (2007, 2012 and 2018).

In addition, the Timber Rattlers have been honored four times by the Midwest League for promotional excellence and landed the league's prestigious President's Award threetimes under Zerjav's watch. The Rattlers also received the Larry MacPhail Award –minor league baseball's highest achievement for promotional excellence - in 2012.

The Timber Rattlers have been an affiliate of the Milwaukee Brewers since 2009 at the Class A and High A levels. They have a player development contract with Milwaukee in which the Brewers supply and pay the players and coaches, while the Rattlers provide them with a place to play.

The Timber Rattlers were a Seattle Mariners' affiliate when Zerjav began working with the organization and the stadium was used strictly for baseball. The venue has been renovated and expanded in recent years to include a banquet facility that is used for weddings, company parties and various celebrations. The stadium hosts 280-290 events per year, including concerts like the Bachman Turner Overdrive Marshall Tucker Band scheduled for July 24.

"When I started here it was kind of pipe dream that we would ever become an affiliate of the Brewers," Zerjav said. "We're now open year-round with the addition of the banquet hall and we have been called the crown jewel of the Brewers'





minor league system. A lot of what's happened here is beyond my wildest dreams."

THE FAN EXPERIENCE

Winning ballgames is wonderful, but providing a terrific fan experience is Zerjav's top priority.

"We don't control the team on the field and we can't control wins and losses," Zerjav said. "But we can control the experience and the fun people have. Putting out a great product with great customer service and doing everything we can around the ballgame is what we're trying to do."

Home games feature a variety of fun, entertaining events like go-kart races, boxing with oversized gloves and flying bratwursts shot out of the Bratzooka cannon. There are countless giveaways ranging from t-shirts to much-desired bobbleheads (Milwaukee's Jackson Chourio will be among them this summer) and a long list of popular theme nights such as the undisputed fan favorite, Star Wars Night.

"It's a great compliment when you see people leaving the stadium and they're saying, 'You know, I'm not a big baseball fan and I don't even know what the final score was, but I love coming to Timber Rattlers games.'"

"We work hard to make it a great experience, so everyone has a great time, whether we win or lose, whether someone is a baseball fan or not. It's fun for all ages, whether its little kids coming to the ballpark with their parents or grandparents, teenagers hanging out or maybe people on a date night."

WEARING MULTIPLE HATS

Zerjav has strong people skills and he's a hands-on executive. He can be seen at most home games, talking with fans and vendors and tending to a variety of duties to keep the Rattlers' show running at high speed.

"Rob's attention to detail is impressive," said Chris Mehring, the team's director of media relations and the

Rattlers' play-by-play radio announcer for the past 26 years. "He doesn't miss a thing. If he sees a piece of paper that doesn't belong on the concourse, he will pick it up. He walks around before and during the game, talking with fans, broadcasters, opposing team's broadcasters, Brewers people, players, coaches.

"He's really good with people and he's on top of everything."

Being on top of everything makes for busy days and nights. Zerjav admits he has a tough time just kicking back and watching the ballgame.

"I was at the Brewers' spring training facility in March, so I didn't have all the responsibilities of one of our home games," he said. "During games, I was having a hard time just sitting there for nine innings. I had to get up and walk around. That's what I'm used to."

CATCHING BASEBALL FEVER

Zerjav caught the baseball bug at an early age and never lost it. He grew up just a few blocks from Lambeau Field and was an outfielder and pitcher for the Ashwaubenon High School baseball team, graduating in 1993.

"Of the nine starters my senior year, seven went on to play college ball and Aaron Stecker went on to play in the NFL," said Zerjav. "And then there was me. I went out for the (University of Wisconsin-Whitewater baseball) team my freshman year and that's where that dream ended."

He couldn't make it as a player, but Zerjav found another route to a career in baseball. He graduated from UW-Whitewater in 1997 with a degree in marketing and accepted the unpaid internship with the Timber Rattlers.

"Back then, I didn't know there were careers in baseball," Zerjav said. "It was pre-Internet, and schools didn't have sports management degrees. I just kind of fell into it. God had a plan. I never thought I would be working in sports."



Zerjav's love of the game helped him get through his early days with the Rattlers that started with no paycheck. Zerjav joined the club's full-time staff following the internship as a group sales representative and worked two years in that position before starting his management climb.

"Ever since I can remember – since I was maybe 4 years old - baseball was everything to me," Zerjav said. "If you talked to anyone who went to grade school with me, they would tell you that. If I had to write about something or do an art project or a class presentation, it was always about baseball."

"I was big Brewers fan and it was back in the days of Robin Yount, Paul Molitor and Teddy Higuera. I was also a big Oakland A's fan – just a huge baseball fan in general. I soaked up everything about the game."

In his 28 years with the Rattlers, Zerjav has watched several exciting prospects take their initial baby steps into pro ball with summer stints in Grand Chute.

"Seeing Jackson Chourio play here (in the summer of 2022) – we've never had a player quite like that," said Zerjav. "He was special. I don't know if I will ever see a player quite like that. He came in here as an 18-year-old prodigy with all these high expectations and lived up to the hype."

"I will always remember a dad walking down the concourse with his son and he was like, 'Wait, we have to stop. Jackson is up.' And then he doubles off the wall."

"That's one of the things I love about my job and minor league baseball. We make memories."

One of Zerjav's favorite Timber Rattlers' memories was Wisconsin's Midwest League championship in 2012.

"I will never forget being in the dugout in Fort Wayne and holding the trophy," Zerjav said. "That was a very special moment. It was a special team. It wasn't a team full of superstars – just some really good players."

Rob isn't the only Zerjav with a strong passion for

baseball. He and his wife, Nikki, have two sons, Cooper and Davis, who are also heavily involved in the game. Cooper, a junior at UW-Milwaukee who is pursuing a business degree, will serve an internship with the Milwaukee Brewers this summer.

Davis is a youth baseball player in the West De Pere school district who plays travel ball over the summers.

"With Davis's travel ball and the Rattlers, it makes for a very busy summer," Zerjav said.

Tim Froberg has worked as a reporter for the Appleton Post-Crescent, Green Bay News-Chronicle, and Marinette EagleHerald. He won eight Wisconsin Newspaper Association writing awards.

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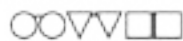
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By BRITTANY FRANCIOSI



During the Civil War, Ann Jarvis made an effort to foster friendship and community between the mothers on both sides of the war. **She started a committee in 1868 which established the first "Mother's Friendship Day."**



Many people mistakenly believe that Cinco de Mayo is a celebration of Mexican independence, however **Independence Day in Mexico (Día de la Independencia) is actually commemorated on September 16.**



The first green-houses were built around 30 CE in Rome so Emperor Tiberius could eat a cucumber a day to preserve his health.

While held on different days internationally, Great Britain, Canada, Costa Rica, Samoa, Georgia, Australia, and Thailand **all have designated celebrations for Mother's Day.**



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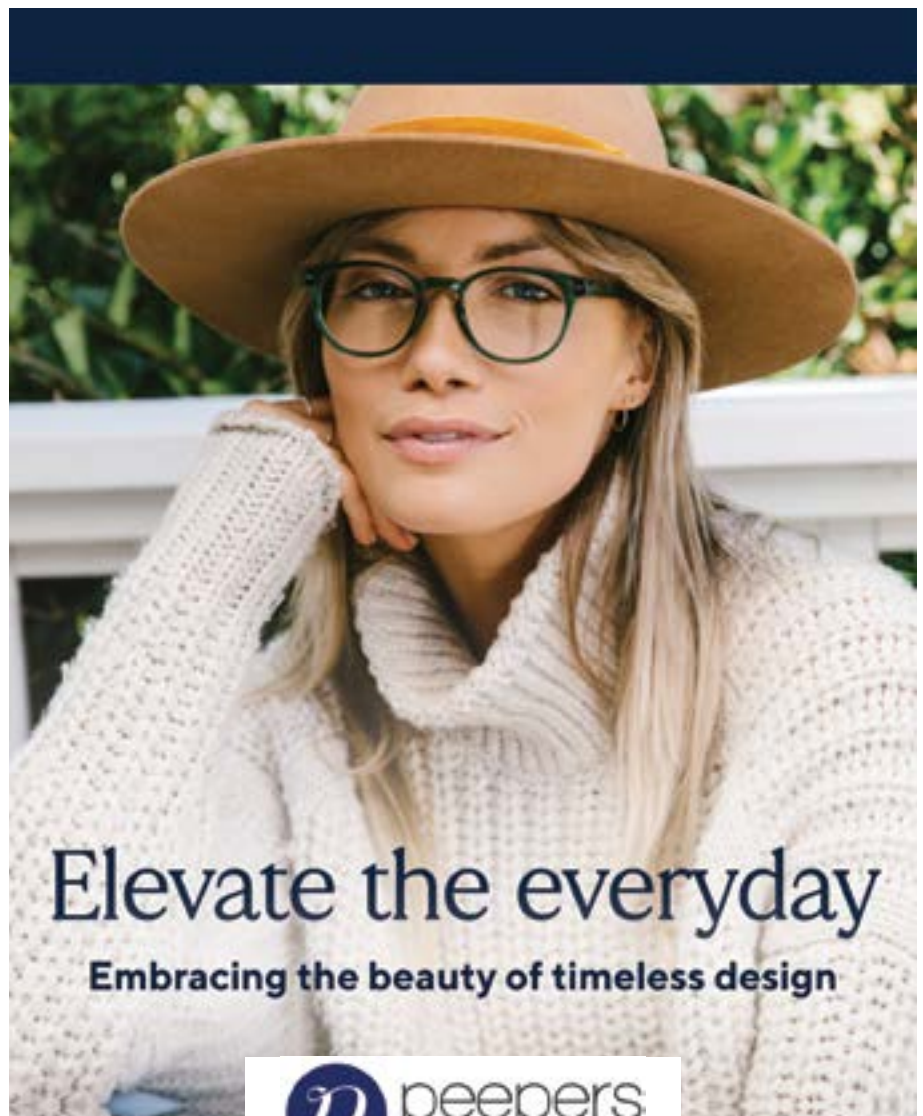


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EMERGING PAYMENT TECHNOLOGIES FOR RETAIL

By ADRIANA SANDERFOOT



In today's fast-paced retail environment, staying ahead of the curve with payment technologies is crucial for businesses looking to enhance customer experience and streamline operations. As we navigate through 2025, several emerging payment technologies are set to revolutionize the retail landscape. Here, we explore some of the most promising innovations and how they can benefit both retailers and consumers.

1. Contactless Payments

Contactless payments have gained significant traction in recent years, driven by the need for faster and more hygienic transaction methods. Utilizing Near Field Communication (NFC) technology, contactless payments allow customers to simply tap their card or mobile device to complete a purchase. This not only speeds up the checkout process, but also reduces physical contact, enhancing safety and convenience.

2. Mobile Wallets

Mobile wallets, such as Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Samsung Pay, are becoming increasingly popular among consumers. These digital wallets store payment information securely on a smartphone,

enabling users to make purchases with a simple tap or scan. Retailers who adopt mobile wallet technology can offer a seamless and secure payment experience, attracting tech-savvy customers and fostering loyalty.

3. Biometric Authentication

Biometric authentication, including fingerprint scanning, facial recognition, and voice recognition, is emerging as a secure and convenient method for verifying transactions. By leveraging unique biological traits, biometric authentication reduces the risk of fraud and enhances the overall security of payment processes. Retailers can integrate biometric systems at checkout counters or through mobile apps to provide customers with a frictionless and secure shopping experience.

4. Cryptocurrency Payments

Cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, are gaining acceptance as legitimate payment methods in the retail sector. By accepting cryptocurrency payments, retailers can tap into a growing market of digital currency users and offer an alternative payment option. This can also attract international customers, as cryptocurrencies provide a borderless and efficient means of transaction. Note that cryptocurrencies do pose some risks. They are highly volatile, which can lead to significant fluctuations in value. Additionally, the regulatory environment for cryptocurrencies is still evolving, which can create legal and compliance challenges for retailers.

5. Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) Services

Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) services, like Afterpay and Klarna, are transforming the way consumers approach purchasing. These services allow customers to split their payments into manageable installments, often with little to no interest. Retailers who offer BNPL options can increase sales by making high-ticket items more accessible and appealing to

budget-conscious shoppers.

6. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning

AI and machine learning are playing a pivotal role in enhancing payment technologies. From fraud detection to personalized payment experiences, AI-driven solutions are helping retailers optimize their payment processes. By analyzing transaction data, AI can identify patterns and anomalies, providing real-time insights and improving security measures.

Conclusion

As the retail industry continues to evolve, embracing emerging payment technologies is essential for staying competitive and meeting customer expectations. While these innovations offer numerous benefits, it's important for retailers to carefully evaluate and implement the right solutions for their business needs. Community banks like American National Bank can provide valuable guidance and support in navigating these technological advancements, ensuring that retailers are well-equipped to thrive in the digital age.

By staying informed and adaptable, retailers can leverage these emerging payment technologies to enhance customer satisfaction, drive sales, and secure their place in the future of retail.

Adriana, Vice President of Retail Banking at American National Bank, is dedicated to creating meaningful connections and helping individuals achieve their goals. She actively volunteers with Junior Achievement and the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Outside of work, she enjoys golfing, hiking, and traveling with her husband.



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Ashwagandha

AS A FUNCTIONAL FOOD

By ANGELA HALDERSON

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) is an ancient herb commonly used in Ayurvedic medicine, renowned for its adaptogenic properties. Adaptogens are natural substances that help the body resist physical, chemical, and biological stressors. As interest in functional foods grows, ashwagandha has earned its place as a functional ingredient that can be added to various recipes to provide significant health benefits such as:

1. Stress Reduction and Adaptogenic Benefits

Ashwagandha is perhaps most famous for its adaptogenic properties, which help the body cope with stress. Chronic stress can negatively impact physical and mental health, leading to issues like anxiety, fatigue, and even immune system dysfunction. Ashwagandha helps regulate cortisol levels, providing a calming effect that helps reduce stress and promotes mental well-being.

2. Improved Sleep and Relaxation

Ashwagandha has been traditionally used to promote restful sleep, thanks to its ability to reduce cortisol levels and support the nervous system. For people who struggle with insomnia or poor sleep quality, ashwagandha may be an excellent functional food ingredient to include in recipes such as in a warm cup of milk or herbal tea to promote relaxation and improve sleep quality.

3. Boosting Cognitive Function and Mental Clarity

In addition to its stress-reducing properties, ashwagandha has been

linked to improved cognitive function, memory, and focus. Studies have shown that this herb may help protect the brain from neurodegenerative diseases and support mental clarity, concentration, and overall brain health. Consider supporting brain health in afternoon snacks by adding it to smoothies or energy balls.

4. Supporting Hormonal Balance and Reproductive Health

Ashwagandha is often used to support hormonal balance in both men and women. It has been shown to regulate thyroid function, improve testosterone levels in men, and support fertility in women.

Ashwagandha is combined with gluten-free ingredients to create a functional food. Herbs like ashwagandha can easily be incorporated into recipes to help support stress levels during the day.

Ashwagandha Chocolate Chip Cookies

One egg

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ cup coconut oil, melted and cooled

½ cup coconut sugar

1 cup almond flour

2 teaspoons cinnamon

2 tablespoons of ashwagandha powder

¼ cup coconut flour

½ teaspoon baking soda

½ cup chocolate chips

Instructions:

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Combine the dry cookie ingredients together. Add the wet ingredients and form a thick dough. Fold in the chocolate chips.

Spoon cookies onto parchment paper and press down slightly.

Bake: Bake for 10-12 minutes, or until the edges are golden brown. Be careful not to overbake as the cookies will continue to firm up as they cool.

Ashwagandha is more than just a trendy herb — it's a functional food with a range of potential health benefits. When added to recipes, ashwagandha can help reduce stress, improve cognitive function, promote better sleep, support hormonal balance, and enhance overall vitality. By incorporating this powerful adaptogen into your meals, you can support both physical and mental health in a natural and holistic way.

Whether you're blending it into a smoothie, stirring it into a cup of tea, or adding it to baked goods, ashwagandha offers a simple way to make your meals not only tastier but also more beneficial for your well-being.

To learn how to incorporate more herbs into everyday foods, visit my blog at www.strongmeridian.com/blog/



Angela Halderson is the owner of Strong Meridian, a natural healthcare practice focusing on the root cause of disease. She is a dietitian trained in functional medicine, energy medicine, homeopathy and herbalism. When you are tired of being sick and tired, reach out to angela@strongmeridian.com for a virtual visit or call 920-427-2311.

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UPFRONT

Chris Mehring

Broadcaster,
Media Relations
Wisconsin Timber Rattlers

By TIM FROBERG

Chris Mehring was looking to make a name for himself on the diamond when he tried out as a walk-on for the University of Wisconsin-Platteville baseball team.

"It was the second practice, and they told me to get into the batting cage and they were going to give me 30 pitches off the pitching machine," said Mehring, a fine prep baseball and football player at Waterford Union High. "I think I made contact twice."

Mehring found another way to fulfill his baseball dreams: as a broadcaster.

Mehring serves a dual role with the Timber Rattlers, doubling as the team's director of media relations (since 2000). His previous jobs include play-by-play announcer and media director for the Green Bay Gamblers (1998-2003).

The veteran broadcaster received a shout-out in 2022 from the late great Bob Uecker, who congratulated Mehring during a Brewers' broadcast for going 20 years without missing a Timber Rattlers' broadcast.

When he's not tending to his Rattlers' duties, Mehring enjoys playing poker (he enters tournaments whenever possible) and television. He is a big fan of classic 1960s detective shows like "Mannix," "Cannon" and "Ironside."

Photo by Ashley Schmit
Debbie Daanen Photography

FEEL THE EMOTION

"I remember going to a Brewers-White Sox game at County Stadium when I was maybe 8 and seeing Bob Uecker and Harry Caray on the field during batting practice. I thought that was so cool. I would always look up to see who was in the press box. As a kid, I listened to Uecker, Eddie Doucette, Jim Irwin, Pat Foley, who was the Chicago Blackhawks announcer, Ted Moore, who did Badgers basketball broadcasts, Paul Braun, who did Badgers hockey, and Jim Ross, who does pro wrestling. You could feel the emotion behind all those guys, whether they were calling a game or a match."

FUTURE BIG LEAGUERS

"The two players I've seen come through our (Midwest) league that stand out are Albert Pujols, who was with the Peoria Chiefs, and Mike Trout, who was with the Cedar Rapids Kernels. Corbin Burnes and Freddy Peralta were here (with the Rattlers) in 2016. Adam Jones was here in 2004 and Asdrubal Cabrera in 2005. The first pitching staff I had a chance to cover in 2000, four of the five guys in the rotation – J.J. Putz, Rafael Soriano, Matt Thornton and Cha-Seung Baek – all made it to the major leagues. Putz, Soriano, and Thornton turned out to be very good relievers in the majors and Baek won some games as a starter. So, I got spoiled early."

A WILD ENDING

"The craziest play I've ever seen was a three-run, walk-off strikeout in a 2018 win over Burlington. The Rattlers were down 6-4 in the bottom of the ninth with the bases loaded and two out. Nic Pierre was at the plate, and he swung and missed for the third strike, but the ball got past the catcher. He had to throw to first base for the strikeout, but he threw wildly down the right-field line and all three runs scored. So, we won that game on a walk-off strikeout."

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GOOD STUFF

By MEGAN REINHOLD



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urbanmodernkitchen.com



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tipsytacoandtequilabar.com



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daveandbusters.com



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heckrodtnaturecenter.org



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gbbg.org



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TODAY

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SPRING IT ON.

THINGS TO DO.

By TIM FROBERG



37 FUN THINGS TO DO THIS SPRING

by TIM FROBERG

SPRING INTO A NEW SEASON IN THE FOX CITIES

CONGRATS, FELLOW CHEESEHEADS. YOU HAVE SURVIVED ANOTHER BRUTAL WISCONSIN WINTER CULMINATED BY A SNOWY MARCH THAT FELT MORE LIKE A DECEMBER.

March Madness is supposed to be about basketball – not angst over the weather. But somehow the calendar has slowly flipped to May and spring has finally arrived.

It's time to store that three-pound winter parka in the far corner of the coat closet and swap the wool beanie for a baseball cap. Isn't that a nice feeling?

And while I'm at it, isn't it an awesome sight to see the actual sun in the sky more than just once every two weeks?

Spring is a time of rebirth and regeneration. Buds are back on trees, flowers are blossoming, and the migratory birds are returning from the south.

Even our mental attitudes seem to reset during the spring. Winter can be a bleak, dark and depressing period – a pessimist's paradise just because it's so cold and nothing grows in the snow.

Spring, though, is a time of hope, optimism and energy. Feel free to dive into this eagerly awaited season of change and allow me to assist with the transition. Here are 37 fun things to do this spring in our little neck of the woods. This is a fun list – not a chores list – so I'm leaving out the joys of lawn mower preparation, yard cleanup, and all the other buzzkill burdens associated with spring.



1. TAKE A HIKE. Walking is a terrific, low-impact cardio exercise that keeps you trim at a price (there is no cost) everyone can afford. The Fox Cities is loaded with first-rate walking trails that are finally free of ice and snow, and the sun no longer disappears at 4 p.m. So, there is no excuse for those cobwebs collecting on your sneakers. Absolutely bring the kiddos and the pooch. They need exercise, too.

2. START A JOGGING PROGRAM. Many Midwestern runners either run inside on treadmills or take the winters off. Treadmills are fine, but running in the great outdoors connects you to nature and is far more interesting. You don't need to enter marathons or be a Forrest Gump and run across the great state of Wisconsin. Just set modest goals and be consistent. You will feel so much better mentally and physically.



3. MAKE A FOUR-LEGGED FRIEND. If you're considering adding a dog to the family, spring is an excellent time to do it. It's easier to house train your pooch when your backyard isn't buried in snow. Settling into an exercise routine with your dog is also less problematic in the spring months. Visit a local animal shelter and save a life.

4. CATCH A TIMBER RATTLERS GAME. The family-friendly Rattlers – the High-A minor league affiliate of the Milwaukee Brewers – are one of the best bargains in the Fox Cities. Rattlers baseball is an affordable and entertaining mix of high-quality hardball blended with fun, light-hearted activities sure to put a smile on your face. Perhaps this

is the summer you exchange high-fives with Fang or catch a bratwurst shot out of the famous Bratzooka.

See our Voice and Upfront stories in this issue on Timber Rattlers President/CEO Rob Zerjav and Rattlers' radio announcer Chris Mehring.



5. HIT A BREWERS GAME. A road trip to Milwaukee's American Family Field is a far more expensive outing than a Timber Rattlers' game. But it's the big leagues, baby, and it's not every day you get a chance to watch the likes of Shohei Ohtani, Juan Soto, Aaron Judge, or Ronald Acuna Jr. American Family Field (it will always be Miller Park to me) is a first-rate modern venue loaded with amenities. The retractable roof takes rainouts out of the equation and practically guarantees an umpire will bellow "play ball" at the scheduled game time.



6. GET THAT GARDEN STARTED. Everyone loves veggies fresh from the garden. Settling on a planting date depends on soil conditions, climate and the type of plants involved, but cool-season crops can usually be planted in early spring and warm-season crops in late spring and early summer. See this month's "In the Garden" feature with our gardening expert, Holly Boettcher, who takes a deep dive into the spring growing season.

8. GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNING. If you own a motorcycle, chances are you are itching to hit the road. Just make sure your big two-wheeler is in top condition. Change the oil and filters and inspect the brakes and tires. Plan that summer or fall bike trip you have always dreamed about.



9. PUT YOURSELF IN A PICKLE. PICKLEBALL – a fusion of tennis, ping pong, and badminton – is America's fastest growing sport and it's body-friendly and easy to pick up. Many local tennis courts have adapted and created options for pickleball players. Or perhaps you just want to stick with tennis, a terrific fast-moving game that slays calories and can be played well into the senior years.



7. GO FOR A BICYCLE RIDE. Biking is a sensational cardio exercise that is faster and more fun than traditional spring exercises like walking or jogging. Get your tires and brakes checked at a local bike shop like Wheel and Sprocket or Chain Reaction prior to your first ride. And wear a helmet. Plan a fun summer ride like "Bike to the Beat" on Aug. 2.

10. HIT THE LINKS. Golf is a frustrating game to learn, but once you catch the bug, it can be addictive. Golf is a lifetime sport that is gentle on the body but still offers good physical activity, especially if you choose to walk the course. Outagamie County is filled with many well-regarded public courses like Reid, Chaska, Winagamie, North Shore, Bridgewood, Countryside, and High Cliff. Take advantage of them.

11. CATCH A SPRING SHOW AT THE FOX CITIES PERFORMING ARTS CENTER. “A Beautiful Noise” celebrates the prolific work of the great Neil Diamond and runs from April 29-May 4. The jukebox musical has drawn rave reviews. I’m pretty sure Diamond fans like myself are going to hear “Sweet Caroline,” so get your ‘bah-bah-bahs’ ready. The acclaimed Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra never disappoints and performs on May 10. Fans of the Fab Four should check out “Rain: A Tribute to the Beatles” on May 11. I’ve seen Rain before and it’s an incredible show. If John, Paul, George, and Ringo had doppelgangers, these cats are them ... and they can play.

12. SUPPORT SPRING HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS. Do it by attending a local prep baseball or softball game, a track and field meet or a tennis, soccer, or golf match. Did you know the Kaukauna girls’ softball program is one of the best in the nation? The Ghosts are five-time state champions and had a remarkable 108-game winning streak snapped in last year’s WIAA state semifinals.



14

GO FOR ICE CREAM. Many shops close for the winter, so it’s a treat to be able to scream for ice cream when their doors swing open again during the spring months. One large Mackinac Island Fudge waffle cone, please.

15. TAKE A FEW CUTS AT A LOCAL BATTING CAGE.

Visit a sports recreation park like Play it Again Sports or Badger Sports Park and get your aspiring ballplayers ready for the upcoming Little League seasons. Or you can step into a cage by yourself, summon your inner Christian Yelich and swing away.

16. BE A BIRD BRAIN. One of the most soothing pleasures of a Wisconsin spring is to see and hear so many gorgeous birds that have returned to our area. You don’t have to be a full-blown birder to enjoy the bright colors and gentle chirps of these wonderful creatures. Help them with their meal plans by putting up a bird feeder in your backyard.



16

13

GO FISH. Wisconsin is an angler’s paradise with thousands of fresh-water lakes, rivers, streams – all teeming with bass, trout, salmon, walleye, and pike. May 4 is the opener for most species (without restrictions). Fishing is a chill sport – one of the most relaxing activities known to mankind – and Wisconsin waters are an ideal place for rod and reel enthusiasts.

17. HAVE A CATCH WITH THE KIDS. Playing a simple game of catch with a baseball or softball is one of the oldest, most basic sports interactions between adults and children. It can build a strong parent-child bond and foster physical development among kids. Just don’t expect friendly ghosts to come strolling into your backyard like Ray Kinsella’s dad in “Field of Dreams.”



18. GET THE GRILL OUT. Some Midwesterners grill year-round, but for most of us, it’s an exciting spring tradition to wheel the grill out of the garage and fire that sucker up. Even culinary morons like me, who are banned from most kitchens, can become grill masters and whip up tasty meals with the flip of a spatula.

19. GO FLY A KITE. Most of us will never fly an airplane, but all of us can fly a kite. Wisconsin’s spring season is the best time to launch a kite because winds tend to be stronger and more consistent than the other three seasons.

19





20

ROLL OUT A SOCCER BALL. If soccer is your game or you just want to experience the whole Ted Lasso thing, drop by a local park with friends and roll out that white leather ball for some futbol.

22. REWATCH THE COMEDY CLASSIC “MAJOR LEAGUE.” Pay homage to the late, great Bob Uecker with another look at one of the funniest sports movies ever made. My favorite Uecker line? It’s when Willie Mays Hayes steps to the plate and Uecker – playing the role of Indians’ broadcaster Harry Doyle- remarks: “We’re not sure where Willie played last year, but we’re sure he did a hell of a job.”



23

PLAY DISC GOLF. Disc golf is a lot easier to learn and play than real golf and it’s flat-out fun. Plamann Park in Appleton has one of the finest 18-hole disc golf courses you will find. Telulah and Pierce Park also have fine courses for flinging Frisbees.

PLAY MINI GOLF. I don’t believe I have ever met a person who didn’t like playing mini golf. Visit Funset Boulevard or Badger Sports Park for some enjoyable courses.

24



21

GET OUT THE KAYAK OR CANOE. Yes, summer is the optimal time for both these activities due to warmer air temperatures and proper water levels. However, most kayakers and canoers can’t wait to hit the water and that’s just fine. Just remember the levels at most Wisconsin waterways are higher during spring months due to the snowmelt and are much colder. The combo presents potential dangers if the watercraft capsizes.



25

DROP BY A LOCAL FARM WITH THE KIDS AND PET THE ANIMALS. Many are closed for the winter before reopening in the spring. Mulberry Lane Farm in Hilbert just opened its barn doors in May and is a fantastic place for families to interact with friendly pigs, goats, sheep, chicken and donkeys. And yes, there are always plenty of opportunities to milk the cows.



28

PICNIC AT AN AWESOME LOCAL OR STATE PARK LIKE HIGH CLIFF OR HARTMAN CREEK IN WAUPACA.

Let's face it: You just can't do this in January, right?

BE A STAR GAZER. Sure, you can look at the stars in February, but the cold temperatures will drive you inside within a few minutes. That's not the case in the spring. The springtime evening sky is also clearer with less atmospheric turbulence and full of spectacular stars and constellations that are easy to view.



27

26. TAKE MOM OUT FOR BRUNCH, DINNER,

OR A DRINK. She made plenty of sacrifices for you, so don't forget to show her your appreciation on Mother's Day (May 11). The Fox Cities is loaded with quality restaurants and bars, but don't wait until the last minute to make a reservation.

**27. PAY TRIBUTE TO OUR VETER-
ANS.**

Memorial Day is May 26, and it should be more than just a day off from work. Attend a local ceremony honoring veterans who died fighting for our country's freedom. Visit Jack Voight's Vietnam Veterans Wall – open 24/7 along Richmond Street in Appleton – which provides names and pictures of Wisconsin veterans who died in the Vietnam War.



29

30. CONNECT WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS. Winter has a way of keeping folks cooped up indoors. Once the snow melts, everyone wants to get outside and that's a good thing. Spring's arrival helps launch conversations between neighbors who really haven't seen one another since October.



31. PLAY CORNHOLE IN YOUR BACKYARD. This is a fun, casual and easy-to-play game that can be enjoyed by everyone – and with your favorite beverage. Cornhole sets can be purchased for anywhere from \$75 to \$140.



GRAB A CHAIR AND SIT OUTSIDE ON A SUNNY DAY. Sometimes, it's nice to just kick back and read a book, magazine, or even content on your iPhone while sitting outdoors with the sun shining and the birds chirping. Try doing this in January and it gets ugly.

33. SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA AND MUSIC DEPARTMENTS. Do that by attending a spring play or concert. There are some incredibly talented thespians and musicians in our schools. If you haven't attended a recent play or concert, you might be surprised by the high quality of the productions and performances.



34. TOSS A GAME OF HORSESHOES. This may seem like strictly an old-school activity, but throwing horseshoes is fun, takes a fair amount of skill, and is beverage friendly. Find a horseshoe court and let those bad boys fly. Before you know it, you will be ringing 'em up.

35. TAKE YOUR KIDS TO A LOCAL PLAYGROUND. The swings, slides, and merry-go-rounds are no longer buried with snow and the kiddos are bursting with energy and ready to cut loose.



36. JOIN A SOFTBALL OR VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE. These are mainly summer activities, but you can't wait until June to sign up or register a team. Consider those May practices to be spring training.

37. SLIP ON A PAIR OF SHORTS. Wisconsin's spring season is often cold and wet, so those shorts won't be a spring-stable. But it's nice to be wearing them again – if only for a short period until Wisconsin's summer kicks in.

FOX VALLEY MUSICIANS ARE WELL REPRESENTED AMONG **WAMI FINALISTS**

By JIM COLLAR

Wisconsin's musicians are gearing up for another busy summer season. But before providing the soundtrack to all our fun in the sun, the time has arrived to celebrate the very best from the year behind us.

The Wisconsin Area Music Industry will hold its 45th awards show on May 4 at The Deco in West Allis. The Grammy-style WAMI Awards program honors musicians from across Wisconsin as well as other important players in the Dairyland's music scene including lighting and sound professionals, recording studios, radio stations, and more.

The Fox Valley once again has strong representation among this year's cohort of awards finalists. That includes one of our own.

Tyler Sj – also known as Tyler Sjostrom to readers of "Appleton Monthly's" One More Thing column – was named as a finalist in six WAMI categories this year. The singer and guitarist received plenty of love from voters after a productive year with nominations including Best New Artist and Best Singer/Songwriter. His new Christmas album, "A Little Peace," received nominations in the Best Unique Album and Album Artwork categories.

Duo 7000Apart also stands out this year, having been named a finalist in the best pop album, pop song, and video categories. Other musicians from our region up for multiple WAMIs this year include Kurt Gunn, Copper Box, Michael Grabner, Tom Thiel, and Luma Knotty.

Popular local acts nominated for key awards include Appleton-based Nashville Pipeline, which is a finalist this year for Best Country Artist. The jazz category has strong representation from the Fox Valley area with Erin Krebs, Kate Voss & the Hot Sauce, Kelvin Kaspar, and the Water City Jazz Orchestra among finalists.

Ask Your Mother and Boogie & the Yo Yoz are vying for the Best Cover Band award while The Glam Band and That 90s Band are up for Best Tribute Act. Local venues up for awards include Appleton Beer Factory, Deja Vu Martini Lounge, Gibson Community Music Hall, and the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center.

In addition to award presentations, the annual awards



show features Hall of Fame inductions and performances from a variety of Wisconsin-based bands.

WAMI is a nonprofit organization formed to recognize and support Wisconsin's music professionals. They also offer youth scholarships. Each year's awards cycle starts with a nomination process in which anyone is welcome to participate. Award finalists and winners are then determined through voting among members of the organization, which include musicians, industry professionals, educators, and even fans.

While the awards program is meant to honor the great talent around our state, their annual list of nominees and winners also provides an excellent means to discover new music and appreciate the unfolding artistry here at home.

Live music fosters community and provides a centerpiece for celebration whether you're enjoying a night out at the club or spending a day at your favorite festival. Our musicians work incredibly hard at their craft and deserve our support. Best of luck to all of those with a chance to bring home some hardware.

And here's to a great season of live music ahead – whether you're on the stage or listening in front of it.

Jim Collar is a journalist, lifelong resident of the Fox Cities and a supporter of our local music scene. He previously worked as a reporter for The Post-Crescent and The Oshkosh Northwestern.

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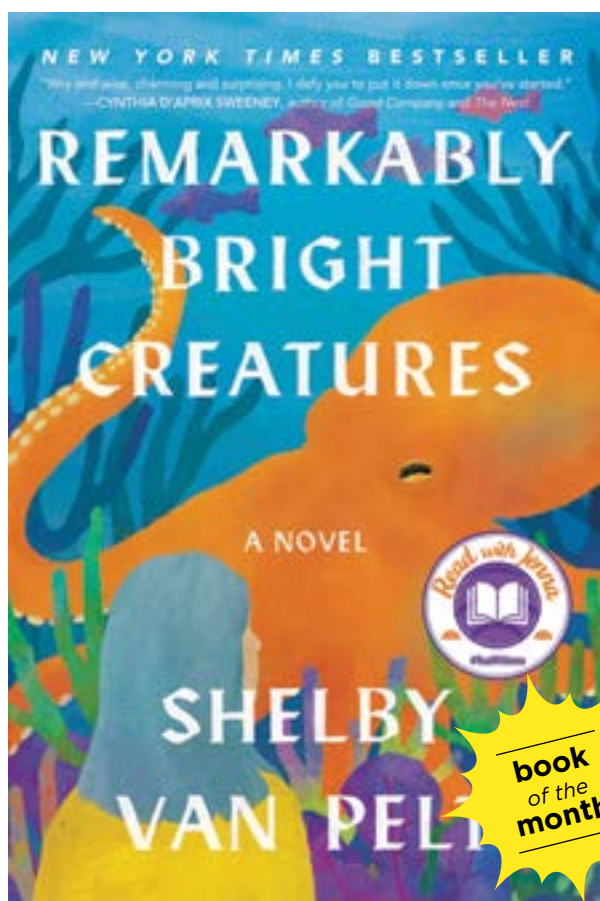


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Shelby Van Pelt

Remarkably Bright Creatures

LITERARY FICTION

Tova Sullivan is a quiet widow who works the night shift cleaning the Sowell Bay Aquarium. Staying busy helps her cope after losing her husband and the pain of her son mysteriously vanishing over 30 years ago. One night, she notices something unusual: a highly intelligent Pacific octopus named Marcellus sneaking out of his tank. As it turns out, Marcellus knows far more about Tova—and her past—than she could ever imagine.



Nicola Sanders

Don't Let Her Stay

PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

Joanne's life seems picture perfect: a loving husband, a sweet baby girl named Evie, and a beautiful home. Then Chloe, her husband's estranged daughter from a previous relationship, shows up after years of silence. She claims she's ready to reconnect and meet her baby sister, but Joanne can't shake the feeling that something's off. Is Chloe really here to make amends, or does she have a hidden agenda?



Ali Hazelwood

Deep End

CONTEMPORARY ROMANCE

Scarlett, a focused student-athlete and elite platform diver at Stanford, has one goal: med school. With a past injury still weighing on her, she keeps relationships at an arm's length until she meets Liam, a world-champion swimmer with Olympic golds and secrets of his own. When the two discover an unexpected connection, what starts as a casual fling could turn into something deeper... if they let it.

Lucinda Berry

Keep Your Friends Close
MYSTERY/SUSPENSE

The President of the Hollywood Moms Club is found dead in her own pool—and it's clearly no accident. With secrets swirling and social ties fraying, everyone's a suspect in this glitzy, high-stakes whodunit.

Sydney J. Shields

The Honey Witch
FANTASY

Marigold is ready for a fresh start when her grandmother whisks her away to take on the role of the new Honey Witch. There's just one tiny catch: no one can fall in love with her. A whimsical and bittersweet tale full of magic, mystery, and the ache of what might never be.

Freida McFadden

The Inmate
PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

Brooke is the new nurse at a maximum-security prison, and there's one rule she absolutely cannot break: never get close to the inmates. The problem? She already has.



Spring Bag Trends

by PHYLLIS COLLAR



**DESPITE THE FREEZING AND
WINDY WEATHER THIS
SEASON, SUNNIER DAYS
ARE FINALLY AHEAD.**

Let's talk bags for summer, since you will be out there enjoying fun in the sun. From hue to shape, texture to detail, a new bag can elevate and refresh your whole look.



This spring, one of the most prevalent new styles is the “east west bag.” Iconic as well as fresh new designs feature rectangular bodies wider than they are tall with long handles to make them easier to carry on your shoulder. Rather than focusing on details, the shape takes center stage.



The clutch bag, usually small in size, was long considered suitable only for weddings or nights out. Not anymore. This season these bags have gotten bigger and slouchier, both practical as well as stylish. Tuck one under your arm for a unique new look.



Texture can elevate any piece significantly. **With a touch of Western, a hint of Bohemian, and an element of summer, handbags replete with fringe are all the rage.** Whether made from strands of raffia or fine sections of leather, fringe adds a touch of movement and whimsy.



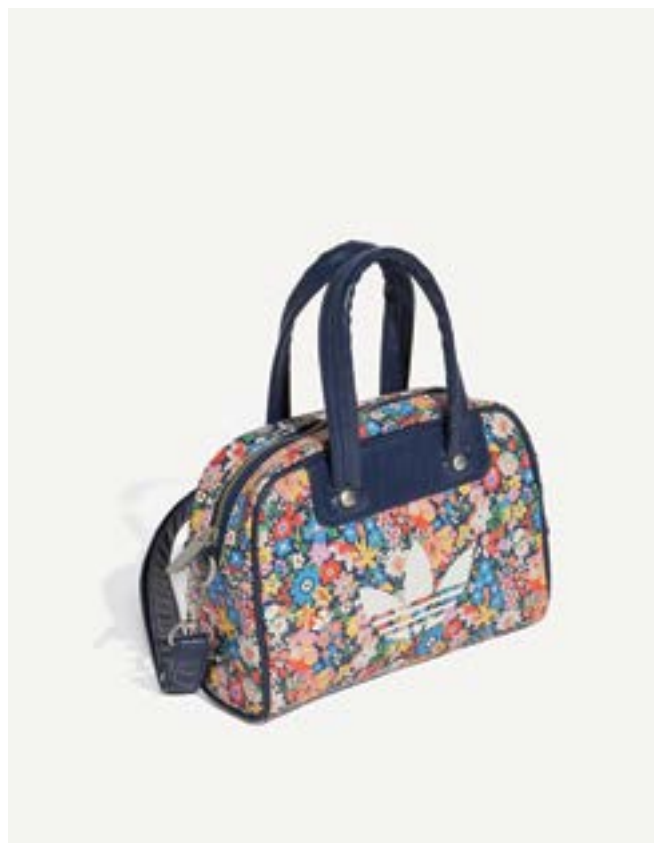
Speaking of leather, suede is not just for winter this year. Earthy neutrals such as tan and brown suede provide a popular contrast to spring's brighter shades and are suitable for wear throughout the year. Colorful iterations add pizzazz to any outfit.



Tote bags, both functional and fashionable, continue to feature prominently in this year's spring and summer collections. Classic canvas totes are an easy way to buy into this trend. Bucket bags, a key investment for the upcoming season, have also risen to the top of the fashion pyramid. Colorful or subdued hues, woven or embellished, totes and buckets hold it all and pack a dressy or casual punch.

Bowling bag shapes complement office outfits, provide a contrast with going-out clothes, and add convenience for weekend travel.

These come in various colors and textures while running the gamut from mini to weekender size. You can join the bowling trend without being on a team!



BAGS ARE AN EASY WAY TO BRING A FRESH FEEL TO YOUR LOOK WITH MINIMAL EFFORT.

ADDING A POP OF COLOR OR A UNIQUE SHAPE INTO YOUR OUTFIT THIS SEASON IS A SUREFIRE WAY TO REFLECT YOUR PERSONAL STYLE!



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ASK TAMMI

Got questions for Tammi?



It seems like so many stores ask for tips or charitable donations. Some are even preprogrammed percentages. Should I feel obligated to give every time I make a purchase?

—Joe W.

DEAR JOE W.: Absolutely not! The tipping expectation has gotten a little out of hand. I was buying popcorn at a sporting event concession counter and the venue did not accept cash. When I paid with my credit card, I was given a screen to choose a tip, with a minimum option of 20%. I did not tip for my \$8 popcorn.

I am a bit old school. When I waited tables many moons ago, we were tipped based on the service we provided to customers. I do tip well, however, I don't like to be told how much to tip. As a rule, I tip somewhere between 18-25% and I base it on how the server treated me. I do not base it on the food quality since the server has less control. If I am purchasing something from a service counter, like at a coffee shop or bakery, I put cash in the tip jar. If it is a place I frequent, I tend to tip more.

As for charitable donations, it depends on the charity being presented and if it resonates with me. But I prefer to donate directly to the charity to ensure all the money goes to the organization. You should never feel obligated to tip or donate.



I have a friend who is very verbal about her political views on social media. I don't share her opinions, and we don't have deep discussions about politics in person. I noticed she recently posted a message indicating if you voted a certain way – “don't ever talk to her again.”

Should I address this with her? —Shelly F.

DEAR SHELLY F.: I used to enjoy social media to see my friends' family pictures, vacation highlights and stories about their lives. It was such a wonderful way to keep in touch (or feel like you were).

However, I do have strong opinions about the very issue you raised ... and unfortunately, I have reduced my time on social media accordingly. Sadly, some people use it as a podium to promote their own agendas. If this friend is a valuable person in your life, by all means reach out and try to communicate your feelings to her. If not, I think she has been very clear about her stance, and it may be best to put the friendship in the past.

Send your questions to Tammi, email at tammi@appletonmonthly.com



My husband and I were invited to a friend's retirement party. The invitation stated “no gifts,” but I feel like we should bring one anyway. Should I respect the host in this situation? —Jenny L..

DEAR JENNY L: Emily Post might have disagreed with me, but I am always in favor of bringing a gift. Depending on the event and your relationship with the person being celebrated, you can choose to make it simple or even a gag gift of sorts. Someone wise once said, “It's not the gift, it's the thought that counts!”

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Summer! & SO MUCH MORE!

June 20th marks the first day of summer 2025! People will be looking forward to getting out and about, shopping and dining at their favorite establishments and discovering new places throughout the Fox Cities. **Appleton Monthly's SUMMER GUIDE** has it all and will be a must-read! There is so much to do this summer!

YOUR GUIDE TO FUN!

Concerts, festivals, music, weekend escapes, outdoor dining, events, fireworks, fairs, and so much more!

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THE SCENE

Top 10 reasons to fill up your calendar this month

By MEGAN REINHOLD

1. BLOCK OF BOOKS - LOCAL AUTHOR FAIR

Meet 50 local authors at this awesome event hosted by The Book Store in Appleton on May 31. The Block of Books Local Author Fair is your chance to support indie writers, chat with authors, and maybe find your next favorite read.

[allevents.in/appleton/
block-of-books-local-author-fair](http://allevents.in/appleton/block-of-books-local-author-fair)

3. HARBOR HOUSE AMAZING RACE FUNDRAISER - MAY 3

Get ready to race around the area—just like the TV show! Teams will compete in challenges during this action-packed fundraiser for Harbor House. It's all happening May 3, and it's going to be a blast. harborhousewi.org/events

5. BARK IN THE PARK - MAY 15

Take your pup out to the ballpark! Bark in the Park is back on May 15 for the 6:40 p.m. Wisconsin Timber Rattlers game. Dogs get in free, and humans can enjoy \$3 brats and craft beers. It's a win-win.

milb.com/wisconsin/tickets/promotions



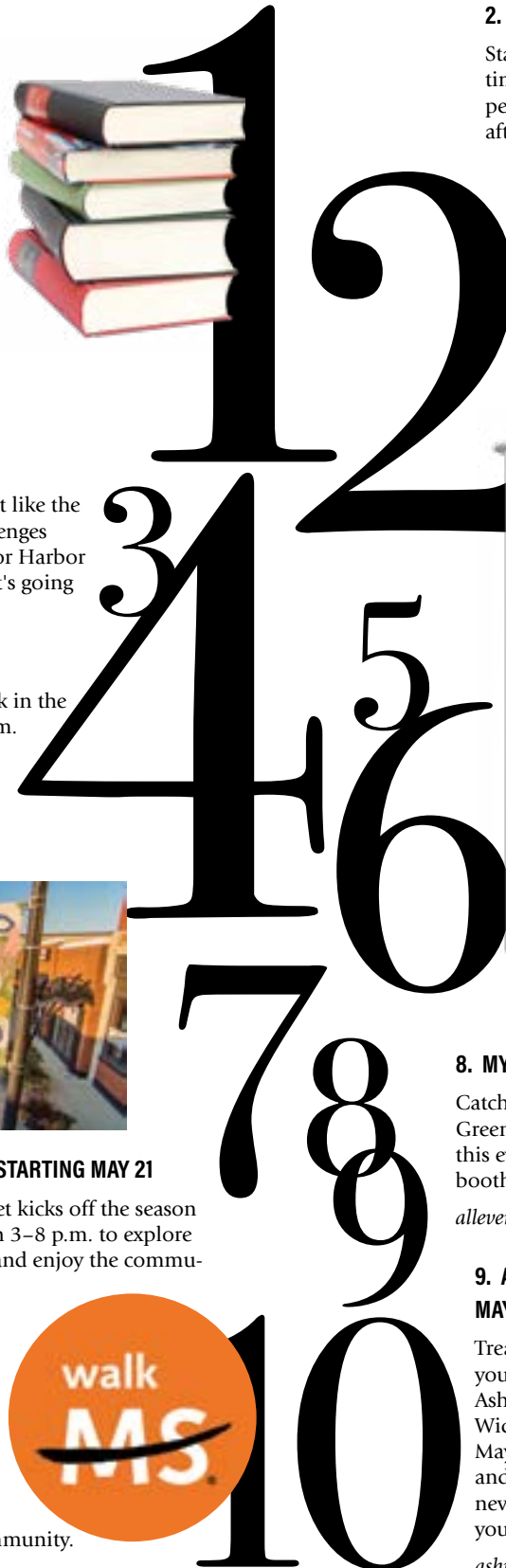
7. FARMERS MARKET ON BROADWAY - STARTING MAY 21

It's back! The Broadway Farmers Market kicks off the season on May 21. Swing by Wednesdays from 3–8 p.m. to explore over 120 vendors, grab local goodies, and enjoy the community vibe. downtowngreenbay.com

10. WALK MS APPLETON - MAY 10

Love walking? Why not walk for a good cause! Join the MS Walk at Neuroscience Group Field (Fox Cities Stadium) on May 10 at 10 a.m. Choose between a one-mile or three-mile course, and help raise awareness and support for the MS community.

events.nationalmssociety.org



2. STORY TIME AT THE PLAZA - NEENAH

Start your week with a cozy (and totally free!) story time at The Plaza & Globe Coffee in Neenah. It happens every Monday at 10 a.m. and there's an activity after the story to keep the little ones entertained.

While you're there, grab a drink or snack to support the biz!

neenah.org/event/storytime

4. OSHKOSH COMIC & TOY SHOW - MAY 24

Comic book fans, rejoice! Head to the Oshkosh Comic & Toy Show on May 24 starting at 10 a.m. Tons of vendors, collectibles, and adventures await!

[oshkosharena.com/event/
quad-con-oshkosh-toy-and-comic-show/](http://oshkosharena.com/event/quad-con-oshkosh-toy-and-comic-show/)



6. APPLETON MEMORIAL DAY PARADE - MAY 26

Honor those who served by attending the Appleton Memorial Day Parade. It kicks off at 9 a.m. and pays tribute to the brave men and women who gave their lives for our country.

[riversidecemeteryappleton.com/events/
appleton-memorial-day-parade](http://riversidecemeteryappleton.com/events/appleton-memorial-day-parade)

8. MYSTIC SPRING MARKET - MAY 31

Catch the good vibes at the Mystic Spring Market in Green Bay! Happening May 31 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., this event features local artists, food trucks, and a photo booth for some insta-worthy pics.

allevents.in/green%20bay/mystic-spring-market

9. ASHWAUBENON VILLAGE-WIDE RUMMAGE SALE - MAY 15-17

Treasure hunters, mark your calendars! The Ashwaubenon Village-Wide Rummage Sale is May 15–17. Grab a map and get rummaging—you never know what gems you'll find!

ashwaubenon.gov



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Jul. 12: Kid's Fishing Day



Aug. 16: Touch a Truck Event



Sep. 27: Pumpkin Decorating



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BREW CREW

HAS BARGAIN IN TALENTED CHOURIO

By TIM FROBERG

The NFL draft and the NCAA's Big Dance are history, and we have shifted into the baseball season.

Here are a few thoughts, facts, and observations on what used to be called America's pastime.

- As unbelievable as it sounds, Juan Soto – the obnoxiously rich slugger who landed a jaw-dropping 15-year, \$765 million contract with the New York Mets – is getting paid roughly \$89,000 per bat and \$320,000 per game this season. Let's stop calling them the Mets and modify that nickname to something more appropriate like Met Juan's Price or the Amazin' Money-Spending Mets.
- Considering the way the Milwaukee Brewers have been stripped of major assets like Corbin Burnes and Willy Adames due to high salary demands, it's only fair that Milwaukee may have MLB's best bargain for some time with the insanely talented Jackson Chourio. The Brewers made headlines in 2023 when they bet on Chourio – who had yet to play his first MLB game – by handing him an eight-year, \$82 million contract that locks him up through 2031. Chourio has the talent to eventually put up Soto numbers and the small-market Brewers won't have to pay through the roof for him – at least until the next decade.
- The success of the home-run launching torpedo bat has been the buzz of early-season baseball. Basically, it's a bat with a unique barrel design, featuring a thicker, meatier area closer to the hitter's hands. Never has a piece of wood been more scrutinized since Roy Hobbs was knocking them out of the park with his "Wonderboy" bat in "The Natural." The bat meets all specifications, and I hope the home-run surge continues because pitching duels don't excite me. I find it amusing that MLB sluggers are hacking at pitches with something that looks very much like a bowling pin.
- First baseman Blake Burke is the biggest name on the 2025 Wisconsin Timber Rattlers' roster. Burke was the 34th overall pick in the 2024 MLB draft and is ranked



No. 15 among Brewers prospects by "MLB Pipeline." The big fella (6-3, 236) has major power and could threaten the team's single-season home run record of 22 (shared by Khris Davis and Victor Roache) if he stays the entire season.

- Fans of "Seinfeld" and "Happy Gilmore" (count me in on both) might want to check out a few special Timber Rattlers' theme nights this summer. Actor Christopher McDonald, who played the villainous Shooter McGavin in "Happy Gilmore", will make a stadium appearance on Golf Night (July 10). John O'Hurley, who portrayed blowhard boss J. Peterman in "Seinfeld", will drop by on Aug. 14 for Sitcom Night.

- Complete games in pro baseball are getting to be like Bigfoot sightings: rare and hard to believe. The 2024 season marked the fewest complete games (28) in MLB history and that included the pandemic-shortened 2020 season. The pitch clock has certainly sped up the game, but the overuse of the bullpen has helped neutralize the faster pace. Baseball's all-time leader in complete games is none other than the great Cy Young, who logged an amazing 749 complete games in an amazing 22-year career.

- If you dig into Young's career, you will find some incredible facts.

Young won more games (511) than any pitcher in MLB history but also lost the most games (316). What's even more interesting is that Young didn't wear a glove – which was common at the time – until his sixth season in the majors. He didn't pitch at the present mound location of 60 feet, 6 inches from the plate until his fourth season when it was moved back five feet. Young was one of the first dominant overhand pitchers because, amazingly, pitchers threw underhand until the mid-1880s when the overhand motion was legalized. His real first name was Denton, but he was given the nickname Cyclone (later shortened to Cy) because of his explosive fastball.

Tim Froberg is a professional writer who covered the Packers Super Bowl appearances in New Orleans (1997) and San Diego (1998), and has written several feature stories for various Packers Yearbooks.

TASTE

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By JENNI EICKELBERG
Photo by CARLY CERNIGLIA

The Sweet Life

The Fox Cities are experiencing a delightful transformation, one that's filling the air with the mouthwatering aroma of freshly baked bread, pastries, and sweet treats. From Neenah to Kaukauna, local bakeries are rising to the occasion, bringing a wave of culinary creativity and community spirit to our beloved home. Whether you're a lifelong resident or a curious visitor, there's never been a better time to indulge in the bakery boom that's sweeping through the region.

The bakery surge is not just about delicious treats; it's about the community connection. Many of these establishments are family-owned, passed down through generations, and have become cherished local landmarks. They're more than just places to buy bread; they are integral parts of the local fabric, serving as gathering spots where neighbors catch up over coffee and a pastry, where kids eagerly choose their favorite cookie, and where the community comes together to support local businesses.

While tradition is important, the Fox Cities' bakery scene is also embracing innovation. Many bakeries are experimenting with new flavors, ingredients, and techniques to create exciting and unexpected treats. From lavender honey macarons to matcha green tea cupcakes, the inventive creations are endless and have locals buzzing with excitement. The blend of tradition and innovation ensures that there's always something new and delightful to discover.

Next time you're out and about, take a moment to visit one and you'll be supporting a local business, connecting with your community, and treating yourself to some of the best baked goods Wisconsin has to offer. After all, life is too short to skip dessert!

By JENNI EICKELBERG

Vande Walle's Candies

Vande Walle's Candies

400 N. Mall Drive, Appleton, WI 54913
(920) 738-7799

Vande Walle's Candies in Appleton is renowned for its award-winning bakery items that delight customers with every bite. This family-owned business offers a wide range of delectable baked goods, including cookies, brownies, cakes, and pastries. Each item is crafted with the same attention to detail and commitment to quality that made their chocolates and confections famous. Their bakery treats, such as the triple chocolate cake and seasonal specialties, are perfect for any occasion. They are also known for their irresistible caramel apple pie, a favorite among locals. With over 30 years of experience, Vande Walle's continues to be a local favorite, providing delicious baked goods that make every visit a sweet experience.



Whisk & Arrow Sugar Studio

Whisk & Arrow Sugar Studio

819 W. College Ave., Appleton, WI 54914
(920) 815-3645

While tradition is important, the Fox Cities' bakery scene also embraces innovation. Many bakeries are experimenting with new flavors, ingredients, and techniques to create exciting and unexpected treats. Whisk & Arrow in Appleton is a prime example, offering a modern twist on classic desserts. Their lavender honey macarons and matcha green tea cupcakes are just a few of the inventive creations that have locals buzzing. Additionally, Whisk & Arrow offers creative gourmet cakes, available as whole cakes or sold by the piece, along with cheesecakes and cookies. Stop in soon, whether you're looking for a single treat or a cake to share. Honestly, their bakery items are so tasty, you might not want to share them at all!



Hilltop Bakery

Hilltop Bakery

100 E. Seventh St., Kaukauna, WI 54130
(920) 766-1771

Over in Kaukauna, Hilltop Bakery has been serving the community for over 100 years, offering everything from classic doughnuts to specialty cakes perfect for any celebration. Known for their made-from-scratch desserts and old-fashioned recipes, Hilltop Bakery delights customers with a wide variety of treats, including cookies, muffins, bars, brownies, and their famous triple chocolate cake. Their peanut butter and jelly doughnuts and elephant ears are local favorites, and their friendly staff and wonderful service make every visit a pleasure. Hilltop Bakery also offers seasonal specialties and custom orders, guaranteeing every occasion is catered to with delicious, high-quality baked goods.

Happy Bellies Bake Shop

Happy Bellies Bake Shop

2107 N. Richmond St., Appleton, WI 54911
(920) 730-2253

Another innovative spot is Happy Bellies Bake Shop in Appleton, which specializes in gluten-free and vegan baked goods. Their commitment to inclusivity means everyone can enjoy a delicious treat regardless of dietary restrictions. From their rich chocolate brownies to their fluffy lemon poppy seed muffins, Happy Bellies proves you don't need gluten or animal products to create mouthwatering desserts. They offer a wide variety of baked goods, including doughnuts, cakes, cupcakes, and cookies, all made from scratch with natural and organic ingredients. Seasonal specialties like pumpkin spice doughnuts and peppermint mocha cupcakes add to the charm, making every visit a delightful experience.





Manderfield's Home Bakery

Appleton East

W3176 Springfield Drive, Appleton, WI 54915
(920) 731-2181

Menasha

811 Plank Road, Menasha, WI 54952
(920) 725-7794

Appleton West

5100 W. Michaels Drive, Appleton, WI 54913
(920) 882-6500

With one location in Menasha and two in Appleton, Manderfield's has been a staple in the community for over 80 years. Their commitment to quality and tradition is evident in every bite, from their famous butter cookies to their beautifully decorated cakes. Manderfield's offers a wide variety of bakery items, including classic breads like rye and French onion, specialty breads such as cheddar jalapeño leaven, and delicious desserts like tortes, cheesecakes, and cookies. My favorite is their Bailey's Irish Cream torte. It's a place where memories are made, and every visit feels like coming home. Bring a bakery item from Manderfield's to your next party, and you'll be the hero of the celebration!

Just Dzuricks Cheesecakes

Just Dzuricks Cheesecakes

214 W. Wisconsin Ave.,
Neenah, WI 54956
(920) 312-1319

If you love cheesecake, then you'll love visiting Just Dzurick's Cheesecakes in downtown Neenah! This small shop is a local gem, specializing in custom-made cheesecakes perfect for any occasion. Their menu features over 50 creatively scrumptious flavors, including Oreo caramel, Bailey's Irish Cream, and pumpkin spice with a chocolate crust. Whether you're craving a classic New York cheesecake or something more adventurous like a Fruity Pebbles cheesecake, Just Dzuricks has you covered. They offer cheesecakes in various sizes, from personal 4-inch rounds to large 10-inch squares, ensuring a perfect option for every celebration. The shop also offers seasonal specialties and custom orders, making it easy to find the perfect cheesecake for your event. With such a wide variety, every visit promises a new and delightful experience.



Simple Simon Bakery

Simple Simon Bakery

218 E. Wisconsin Ave., Appleton, WI 54911
(920) 733-4351

Family-owned Simple Simon Bakery in Appleton has been a beloved local bakery for over 50 years, offering a wide range of delicious baked goods. Known for their award-winning wedding cakes, Simple Simon Bakery also delights customers with breads, buns, gourmet cupcakes, and sweet treats. Their menu features a variety of items, including doughnuts, cookies, pies, and pastries, all made from scratch with high-quality ingredients. Seasonal specialties like peppermint patty doughnuts and a wide variety of homemade pies, such as apple, cherry, and French silk, add to the charm, making every visit a delightful experience. Simple Simon Bakery also caters for special events, so every occasion is celebrated with delicious, high-quality baked goods.



The Main Celebration

The Main Celebration LLC

137 W. Main St., Suite A, Little Chute, WI 54140
(920) 423-7000

The Main Celebration in Little Chute is a beloved bakery known for its delightful array of cakes, cupcakes, and other sweet treats. This charming bakery has become a local favorite for its creative and delicious offerings, focusing on quality and customer satisfaction. Whether you're celebrating a birthday, wedding, or any special occasion, The Main Celebration will make every event memorable with their beautifully crafted confections. Its specialties include rainbow cakes, limoncello cakes, and custom cupcakes. The bakery also hosts special events and promotions, making it a vibrant part of the community. With its dedication to excellence, The Main Celebration continues to bring joy to their customers.



The Marketplace

**The Marketplace
Ascension St. Elizabeth Campus**

1506 S. Oneida St., Appleton, WI 54915

You can get to The Marketplace from the Hospital's Fremont Street entrance, just off of Oneida Street.

Even though it sounds crazy, saying “Let’s go to the hospital to eat!” is a reality. Who knew that hidden inside Ascension’s St. Elizabeth Campus is a gourmet restaurant and bakery called The Marketplace? This spot features mouthwatering homemade food and bakery items enjoyed by hospital staff, visitors, and the public. Holly Minkebig, the heart of The Marketplace, has worked there for 42 years, creating gourmet treats like cookies, homemade ice cream, dessert bars, tortes, pies, scones, and sweet breads. Everything is made from scratch, including dessert toppings like ganache and white chocolate cream cheese frosting. Holly’s dedication to quality and creativity makes every visit delightful. The bakery also offers seasonal treats like chocolate-covered strawberries and puppy chow, making it a must-visit for anyone in the area. You won’t believe the items Holly bakes, all offered at reasonable prices.

Uncle Mike’s Food Emporium

Uncle Mike's Food Emporium

**3860 W. Wisconsin Ave.,
Appleton, WI 54914
(920) 278-2280**

Uncle Mike's Food Emporium in Appleton is famous for its award-winning kringles, a traditional Danish pastry made with 36 layers of dough and butter. Their kringles come in a variety of unique flavors, with a special flavor of the month that keeps customers excited for new tastes. Popular flavors include sea salt caramel pecan, raspberry, and almond. Some of their monthly specials have featured delightful combinations like chocolate raspberry, strawberry margarita, and pumpkin cheese. In addition to kringles, Uncle Mike's offers a wide range of baked goods, including cookies, brownies, cakes, and pastries, all made fresh daily. Brighten your co-workers' days by bringing in a kringle from Uncle Mike's Food Emporium to the office – it's sure to be a hit!



GREEN GODDESS SALAD

WITH CHICKEN RICOTTA MEATBALLS

By CARLY CERNIGLIA

This fresh and bright Green Goddess Salad with Chicken Ricotta Meatballs is a delicious way to welcome spring! The meatballs are packed with herbs and a lemony kick, and the dressing is refreshing and light. This salad is the perfect make-ahead lunch, as the recipe makes a bunch of meatballs (if you don't eat them all immediately).

INGREDIENTS:

For the Chicken Ricotta Meatballs:
(serves five to six)

- 1 pound ground chicken
- 2/3 cup panko breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup ricotta
- Three garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons lemon zest
- One egg
- ½ ounce fresh chives
- Half of a 2.5 ounce container fresh basil, leaves only
- ½ bunch of fresh parsley, leaves only
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons oil for frying

For the Green Goddess Dressing:
(makes 4 salads)

- 1/3 cup plain greek yogurt
- 3 tablespoons mayo
- Two garlic cloves
- Half of a 2.5 ounce container fresh basil, leaves only
- Half bunch fresh parsley, leaves only
- ½ ounce fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon salt, to taste
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/8 teaspoon onion powder
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- Pinch sugar
- 2 tablespoon water

For the Salad:

- Mixed greens
- Cucumber
- Radish
- Tomatoes
- Shallots



Photo by Carly Cerniglia

DIRECTIONS:

In a food processor, add garlic, lemon zest, chives, parsley, basil, and ricotta, in that order, for the meatball ingredients. Process until the herbs are chopped fine. In a medium-sized bowl, mix together panko, salt, pepper, and egg. Add chicken and ricotta herb mixture and combine until everything is even. Divide into 1-inch meatballs (about 56).

Heat a large skillet over medium high heat and add 2 tablespoons of cooking oil. Fry the meatballs, turning once golden, until cooked through to 165 degrees F. Set aside and let cool.

To make the dressing, add all dressing ingredients to the food processor and blend until smooth and herbs are chopped. Salt to taste.

Arrange meatballs, sliced radishes, sliced cucumbers, sliced shallots, and tomatoes on a bed of mixed greens. Drizzle with dressing and enjoy!

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STRAWBERRY TRES LECHES

By CARLY CERNIGLIA



Photo by Carly Cerniglia

Spring is springin' and so is this springy, strawberry-packed cake!

Now if you ask me, Tres Leches doesn't need any improvement, but the addition of strawberries in every layer of this cake is ah-mazing! The cake takes a couple of steps, but they're all relatively simple and worth the extra time. Topping the cake with edible chamomile flowers and fresh sliced strawberries also adds the cutest touch for a party or just because you're worth it!

INGREDIENTS:

For the Cake:

1.2 ounces freeze dried strawberries, divided, see below

1 ½ cup flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

¾ teaspoon kosher salt

Three large eggs

1 tablespoon vanilla

1 cup sugar

½ cup whole milk

For the Strawberry Milk:

1 cup whole milk

1 cup diced fresh strawberries

Freeze dried strawberries* see below

1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk

1 12-ounce can evaporated milk

For the Frosting:

1 ½ cup heavy whipping cream, cold

4 tablespoons powdered sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

freeze dried strawberries *see below

Fresh strawberries and chamomile flowers for garnish

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 9x13x2 (recommended) or an 8x8x2** baking dish.

Pulse the freeze-dried strawberries in a food processor or blender until powdered. Set aside.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, add eggs, sugar, and vanilla. Beat on medium high for 10 minutes.

In a medium sized bowl, mix flour, baking powder, 1 tablespoon strawberry powder, and salt. Set aside.

Once your egg mixture is light and fluffy, add half the flour mixture on low until incorporated. Add ¼ cup of the whole milk until combined. Add the remaining flour mixture and combine. Scrape sides of bowl and ensure everything is well mixed together. Pour into your chosen baking dish.

Bake for 25-40 minutes for a 9x13x2 or 40 minutes for an 8x8x2, or until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean.

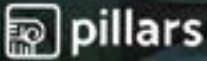
Remove it from the oven and let cool in the pan for 30 minutes.

In a blender, mix 2 tablespoons of strawberry powder and the remaining Strawberry Milk ingredients. Set aside. Once your cake is cool, using a chopstick or other small stick, poke holes in your cake. Gradually drizzle the milk mixture over your cake, cup by cup, waiting for each addition to soak in. **For an 8x8x2, reserve 1 ½ cups strawberry milk for another use (milkshakes or iced coffee!), and the soaking process will take longer. It took me about an hour to get all the milk to soak in. ** Cover with plastic wrap and place it in the refrigerator overnight (minimum 4 hours).

When ready to serve, in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whisk heavy cream on medium high speed until soft peaks form. Add vanilla, 2 tablespoons strawberry powder, powdered sugar, and vanilla extract and whip until stiff peaks. Spread over cake and garnish with sliced strawberries and chamomile flowers. Enjoy!

Store leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

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Hybrid Brews

By STEVE LONSWAY

Craft brewers are always looking at new brews to add to their brewing catalog. This has brought many new and interesting styles to the table, from hop forward creations, to strong malt beers and literally everything in between. But for the purpose of this article, we are going to shed light on two hybrid beer styles, Kölsch and altbier. These styles tend not to be in the mainstream of craft, but brewpubs far and wide will occasionally boast an offering or two. Walk down the German import aisle at your favorite beer retailer and you'll probably discover a few traditional examples.

I'm not quite fond of Kölsch beers. They are lighter gold in color, brilliantly clear, and pour with a dense head. Hoppy tones are noticeable, and the malt profile is pronounced. A gentle, fresh corn flavor shines through and some say the finish is dry and almost chardonnay-like. To be a Kölsch in the European Union, it must meet strict criteria and be backed by protected geographical indication (PGI), meaning that it must be brewed within 50 kilometers of Cologne, Germany. The beer also must fall in with certain parameters for the style and be brewed in accordance with Reinheitsgebot, which is the German Purity Law from 1516. It states all beers must be brewed strictly from malt, hops, yeast, and water. Kölsch is brewed with an ale yeast so it is top-fermented, then the beer is allowed a cold aging period known as lagering. Because of this, Kölsch is a hybrid by definition. Rogue Brewing Company of Oregon produces a honey Kölsch which is a great fit and Schlafly Kölsch from St. Louis is a must-try.

Another fine example of a hybrid beer is altbier. Altbiers are dark copper colored and pours with a thick head. A certain fruitiness is evident in the taste due to the characteristics from the ale yeast and its fermentation process. Hops are moderate and usually balanced with the malt flavors. The finish is very similar to a lager due to its cold ageing process. Although this style is not protected by the PGI, to be considered an alt it needs to be brewed near the city of Dusseldorf, Germany. Altbier also maintains a history in the Netherlands, more specifically in Venlo, and sightings across the globe are becoming more frequent. A couple commercially available representatives of the alt style would be Alaskan Amber from Alaskan Brewing Company in Juneau and Schmalz's Alt from Schell's Brewing Company of New Ulm, Minn.



Steve Lonsway is the brewmaster and owner of Stone Arch Brewpub in Appleton. His passion shows in the beers he creates and in the national recognition he receives for them.



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GREEN TEA SANGRIA



Finally, there are signs of spring sprouting up all around us and it's rejuvenating to see all the bright colors and flavors. This sangria recipe is bright and refreshing, using lemon and sweetened with honey. While most sangrias are heavy on the sugar, this drink uses a natural sweetener and you get metabolism-boosting properties with the green tea and lemon. Enjoy throughout the spring and summer months.

INGREDIENTS

One bottle white wine
4 cups water
Six bags green tea
1/3 cup honey
Three lemons, sliced
20-25 mint leaves

DRINK

DIRECTIONS

In a large pot, bring 4 cups of water to a boil. After the water is boiling, take off the heat and add in all the green tea bags. Let steep for 5 minutes.

Remove tea bags and stir in the honey. Let cool for 30 minutes to an hour before mixing the sangria.

When the tea is slightly cooled add to a pitcher along with the bottle of white wine, lemon slices and fresh mint leaves. Refrigerate for 2-4 hours before serving.

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Focus on Foxes

By JOHN VAN DEN BRANDT



The Fox Rocks!

PHOTOS AND STORY BY JOHN VAN DEN BRANDT

**Faster than a speeding rabbit, more powerful hearing than any dog,
able to leap tall fences in a single bound...**

Sly, crafty, and intelligent are just a few of the well-earned words often used to describe foxes. These resourceful hunters are adaptable, thriving in diverse habitats from fields and forests to under urban porches and decks. Although quite common throughout the Fox Cities, their elusive nature and nocturnal habits make fox sightings uncommon. May is perhaps the best month to catch a glimpse of these amazing creatures. With hungry newborns to feed, foxes can be spotted hunting at nearly any time of day. Frequent feeding trips to their den increase your chances of a fox encounter. When scouting for den sites, look for areas of fresh digging, often on a sunny slope that features loose or sandy soil. If you're successful in discovering a den, observe from a distance with binoculars to avoid disturbing the foxes. Keep the family dog far away. If you're quiet, distant, and patient, you might witness the mother fox cautiously shepherding tiny balls of fur out of the den to enjoy the warm mid-morning sunshine. It's a moment that will turn any ordinary spring day into a lifetime treasured memory.

1. *(previous page)*

Foxes typically give birth to a litter of four to six kits in March or April. The kits go outside for the first time about three weeks after birth. Both parents help raise the kits, with the mother looking after them while the father hunts. Kits stay with their parents for about seven months.

2.

Cross foxes occur when a red fox mates with a silver fox. They primarily reside in Canada where this variation makes up about a third of the red fox population. Cross foxes are far less common in the U.S. but are still occasionally spotted, especially in the northern portions of the country along the U.S.-Canadian border.

3.

The contrasting shades of this beautiful pelt identify this animal as a cross fox. A color variant of red foxes, cross foxes are usually black or grey with some red or orange showing through. Darker fur often runs down the back and across the shoulders sometimes creating a cross pattern. Such furs were sometimes worn by high-ranking clergy to show the importance and prestige of their position.



4.

Foxes hunt even when not hungry, hiding or “caching” their food for future meals. In spring, when faced with the challenge of feeding up to a dozen offspring, red foxes sometimes create a “hoarding cache” – a large hidden supply of extra food. I discovered such a cache one spring, perfectly concealed under a nearly seamless blanket of moss. It was a very shallow 2-foot-square hole containing two rabbits, some birds, and at least a dozen meadow voles, all neatly arranged in rows as if in a deli window. If not for the moss being slightly curled up on one corner, the cache would have been completely undetectable.



5.

The fox is thought to have the best hearing sensitivity of any mammal. Known for its “mousing” skill, a fox creeps slowly through fields with ears cocked and alert to the tiniest sounds of mouse movement. Once detected, the fox will freeze, slowly tilting its head back and forth to pinpoint the sound before suddenly springing straight up and pouncing on the unsuspecting prey. Recent research suggests that foxes also use the earth’s magnetic field to aid in the uncanny accuracy of their leaps.



5

6.

Foxes are considered the most widely spread meat-eating mammals on the planet. The most populous species is the red fox. Found in all 50 states, their population is estimated to number more than 1 million in the U.S. Despite steady encroachment on their habitat by human development, the red fox’s resourcefulness and ability to coexist in close proximity to humans has kept their population numbers very stable. The average life span of a red fox in the wild is 3-5 years.



6



7

7.

Baby foxes, or kits, emerge from their den in a tangled ball, anxious to play in the warm sunshine. Life is difficult for young foxes. In addition to being vulnerable to predators like coyotes and birds of prey, foxes also succumb to human threats like roadkill, trapping, shooting, and poisoning. Overall, red foxes face a 60% mortality rate on the road to adulthood with some studies declaring the number to be closer to 75%.



8

8.

A red fox is silhouetted against the setting sun as it begins a night of hunting. Equipped with excellent night vision as well as the ability to hear a watch ticking from 40 yards away, foxes are masterful predators. Rodents and rabbits comprise the majority of their diet, but foxes are omnivores; also eating eggs, birds, fruit and vegetables, insects, fish, reptiles, and human-sourced food like garbage scraps and pet food left outside.

9.

There are 12 varieties of “true foxes” (genus *Vulpes*) but numerous subspecies are also considered to be members of the fox family. Fox examples include (clockwise from top left) the bat-eared foxes (Kenya), the crab-eating fox (Brazil), the silver fox (Newfoundland), and the Arctic fox (Nunavut, Canada).



John Van Den Brandt is a professional wildlife photographer and owner of Wild Wind Images LLC (wildwindimages.com). His wildlife images have appeared in numerous articles, websites, textbooks, and ads. John's fine art prints grace the walls of homes and businesses across the country. His calendars have sold more than 100,000 copies. Van Den Brandt makes his home in Appleton with his wife, Jean, who he says “takes me from having a dream job to having a dream life.”

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GROWING Season!



HOLLY BOETCHER
MASTER GARDENER

GIVE YOUR GARDEN A HEAD START

by HOLLY BOETTCHER

DOESN'T IT FEEL LIKE SPRING TOOK FOREVER TO ARRIVE THIS YEAR? WINTERS ARE LONG IN WISCONSIN, AND WITH SUCH A SHORT GROWING SEASON, EVERY MOMENT COUNTS. SO WHY NOT TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE AND DISCOVER WAYS TO EXTEND IT?

There is one simple method (besides starting seeds indoors) that helps jumpstart your garden. That's right, it's easy – give your seeds a soak in water before planting them.

When you think about it, after you plant seeds, you normally water them to accelerate the germination process. Have you ever noticed that planting in damp soil that was moistened by a warm spring rain encourages your seeds to sprout much more quickly than if you plant in dry soil? I know, it's an ah-ha moment!

Inside each seed, a plant embryo that is protected by the hard outer coating awaits. This outer coating is nature's way of preserving the seeds until the perfect environment is present for them to sprout. This outer coating can protect them from drought, fire, and trauma, and can even pass through the gut of a cow or bird! It makes sense to give them a little help with a bath, so the plant embryo can burst out of dormancy and start growing sooner in your garden. When you soak the seeds, the hard outer shell softens, allowing them to use their energy to split open instead of trying to emerge. In our short growing season, these few extra days can make quite a difference helping your vegetables to reach maturity.

Not all seeds benefit from this process, so I've broken it down at the top right portion of the page.

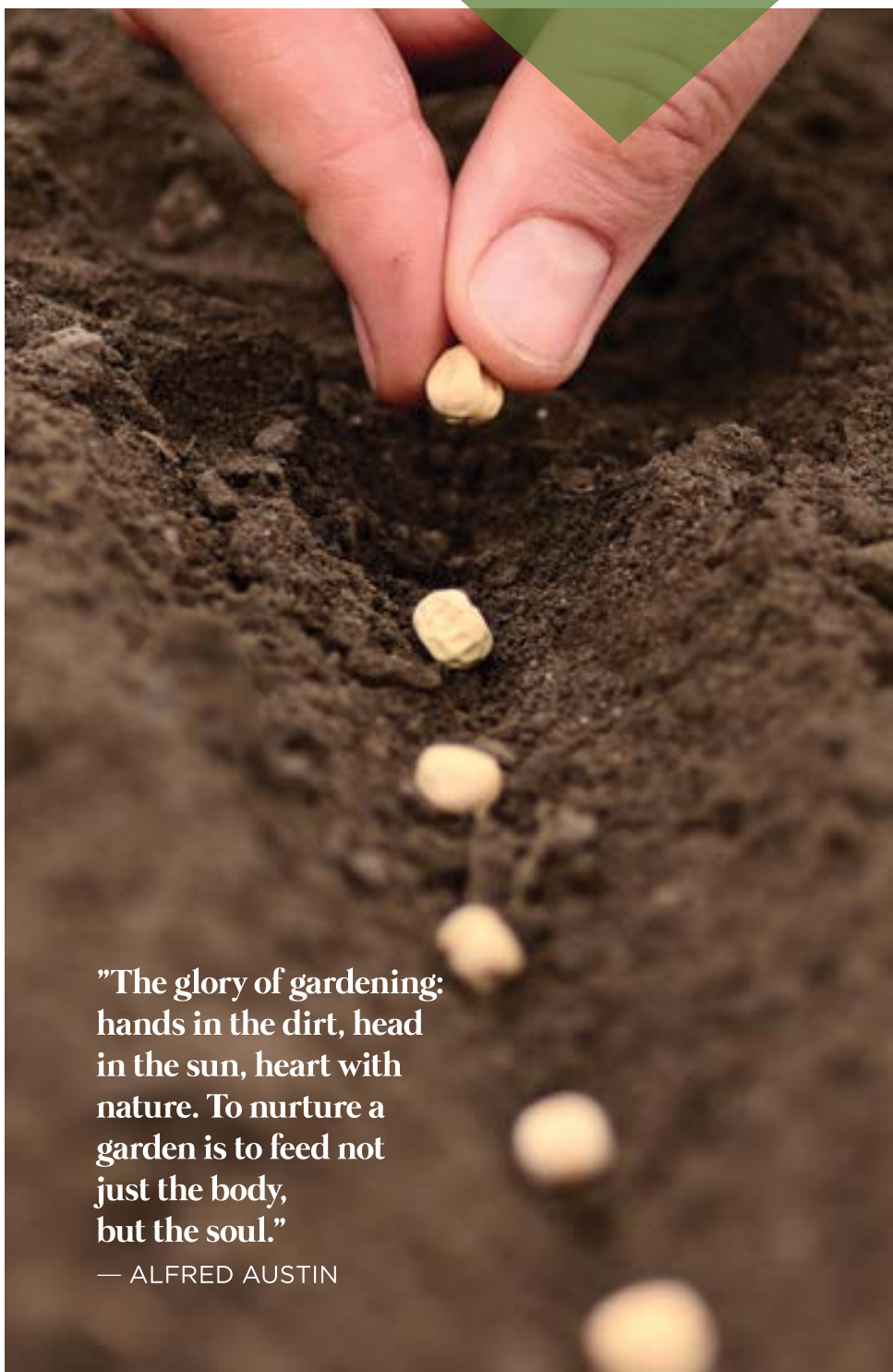
PRE-SOAK

VEGETABLE SEEDS: BEETS, PEAS, PUMPKIN, BEANS, CORN, SWISS CHARD

FLOWER SEEDS: SUNFLOWER, LUPINE, NASTURTIUM

NO NEED TO SOAK

CARROTS, KALE, ZINNIA, BASIL, LETTUCE, WATER-MELON, RADISH



**"The glory of gardening:
hands in the dirt, head
in the sun, heart with
nature. To nurture a
garden is to feed not
just the body,
but the soul."**

— ALFRED AUSTIN



Holly's Tip

STRATIFICATION:

Other seeds such as milkweed need to go through a process called stratification which mimics Mother Nature as she goes through periods of cold and wetness. I use this method when planting dill and milkweed.

How to Soak Your Seeds

PLAN AHEAD

Select the seeds you want to begin this “quick start” germination process. One day (and no sooner) than you are ready to plant, shake them into a shallow bowl with a few inches of warm water. Set them in a room-temperature location away from direct sunlight.

LET THEM SOAK

Usually, an overnight soak will do the trick. Soaking longer can drown the plant embryo or cause them to rot. So do not extend this process for more than 24 hours.

LET THEM SINK

Keep only seeds that are sitting at the bottom of the water. If any are floating, discard them. I use a coffee filter or paper towel to strain them. After draining off the water, place them on a dry paper towel.

PLANT THEM NOW

Don't wait too long! Reminder: you have activated the seeds' germination system, making them eager to sprout. If you let them dry out, your time to jumpstart will not work. So, plant them right away!

Planting seeds using a head-start treatment can bring both efficiency and reward to your gardening experience. This technique not only accelerates growth, but also grants you the joy of seeing your garden flourish sooner.

Whether you are an experienced gardener, or just starting out, experimenting with this approach can make the difference to your gardening season. This year, why not join me and give this method a try?

Holly's Tip

SCARIFICATION:

Some seeds benefit from a process called scarification (scarring them) by rubbing the seed against a nail file or sandpaper. Examples are nasturtium, sweet peas, and beans.

Get Ready to Plant Your Garden

YOU'VE HEARD THE

BUZZ! Growing your own vegetables saves money, reduces trips to the store, and gives you access to unique produce that's not available at the grocery store or farmer's market. Plus, it's incredibly rewarding to nurture plants and reap the fruits (and veggies!) of your labor.

But, as exciting as it sounds, the idea of starting a garden from scratch can feel overwhelming and especially if you've never done it before. Don't worry! I've put together some simple tips to help you get started on growing your first vegetable garden.

START SMALL

If you're new to gardening, resist the urge to plant every vegetable you love all at once. Instead, begin with a small plot or a few containers. This allows you to get a feel for gardening without being overwhelmed by maintenance. Remember, this is supposed to be enjoyable!

BEGINNER-FRIENDLY VEGGIES TO TRY:

- *Tomatoes* – Perfect for sandwiches, salads, and sauces. And my favorite way to eat them – right off the vine!
- *Carrots* – Fun to grow and easy to harvest.
- *Lettuce* – Grows quickly and is perfect for fresh salads.



Holly's Tip:

Keep a journal of what you planted because it is easy to forget.

- **Zucchini** – Prolific and versatile for cooking and baking.

Carefully read labels and consider how much space each plant needs. Some vegetables, like zucchini, tend to sprawl, while others, like carrots, grow vertically. Use companion planting as a strategy, which means planting complementary vegetables side by side for better yields and natural pest control.

FOR INSTANCE:

- Tomatoes and basil grow well together and basil can help repel tomato hornworms. Ewww!
- Carrots and onions make great neighbors, as onions can help deter carrot flies.



CHOOSE THE RIGHT LOCATION

Most vegetables thrive in full sun, so pick a spot in your yard that gets at least six to eight hours of sunlight daily. Make sure the area has good drainage because plants don't like sitting in puddles!

If yard space is limited, no worries. Many vegetables thrive in pots or raised beds, or on a sunny balcony or patio. I've experimented with growing tomatoes, green beans, and potatoes in containers with huge success!

GET A SOIL TEST

Healthy plants start with healthy soil. Use a high-quality garden soil or compost mix to provide your vegetables with the nutrients they need. Here's the most frequently overlooked step – test your soil's potential hydrogen (pH) level. This important measure will ensure the soil is suitable for the veggies you're planting. The pH is measured on a scale that ranks the basicity or acidity of substances to one another. For most vegetables it should be between 6.5 and 7 (slightly acidic to neutral) for plants to be happy. The nutrients that your plants need become available or unavailable to them according to your soil's pH level. I know this sounds like a lot of extra work, but it truly is worth it in the end.

Holly's Tip: A pH test kit can be purchased at a garden center, or you can take a sample to your local Cooperative Extension Office. There is a small fee, but they will send your soil to a lab and you will get a full report which details possible deficiencies and how to correct them.

GATHER YOUR SUPPLIES

These include a shovel, rake, hoe, string, stakes, plant markers, garden gloves, and trellising. It works great to write with permanent markers on paint sticks

or use louvers from window blinds that are no longer usable from the shades of a window, or purchase labels. A length of sturdy string with wooden stakes tied to each end helps you make straight rows. If you are growing pole beans or peas, you need some type of trellising.

WATER WISELY

Consistency is key when it comes to watering your plants. Vegetable gardens need about 1 inch of water per week, either from rain or your watering can. Focus on watering in the early morning or late afternoon when the sun isn't at its peak since this keeps moisture from evaporating too quickly and prevents leaf burn.

STAY AHEAD OF WEEDING

Weeds compete with your veggies for nutrients, water, and for sunlight. Regularly check your garden for unwanted plants and pull them or dig them out from the roots. Repeat after me, "weeding is great exercise!"

CONSIDER MULCHING

Applying some organic mulch such as grass clippings or double chopped bark between your rows of seeds, or around your fresh plantings will help retain moisture and keep the weeds away. If applying around plants, do not allow mulch to touch the stems of the plants because that will encourage decay.

Holly's Tip: Add straw or chopped leaves to your garden after cleaning up your yard in the fall so it can break down over winter and add additional nutrients to your soil.

KEEP THE PESTS AT BAY

Pests are inevitable in any garden, but you can manage them without harsh chemicals. To keep my kale and cabbage from being devoured by cabbage loopers, I use a weekly application of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (aka Bt) which is organic and disrupts the pH level of a caterpillar's

gut. In simple language, their gut explodes. Neem oil is another great organic option. You can also plant flowers such as marigolds, which naturally repel pests. Consider homemade remedies, like a diluted soap spray, to keep bugs away.

Holly's Tip: Pay attention to your plants. Watch for yellowing leaves or holes which often indicate pest problems. It is helpful if you can address these before they worsen.

HARVEST, ENJOY, SHARE

Nothing beats the joy of harvesting your homegrown vegetables for the first time! Pick your produce when it's ripe and enjoy the satisfaction of knowing exactly where your food comes from. If your garden produces more than you can eat, share the bounty with friends, neighbors, or a local food pantry.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Starting a vegetable garden might feel like a big task, but it's truly a gratifying hobby. With a little patience, attention, and love, you'll go from a gardening newbie to a proud grower in no time. Plus, there's nothing quite like biting into a fresh tomato or crunching on crisp lettuce that you grew yourself.

What are you waiting for? Grab your garden gloves and start planning your vegetable garden.

Holly Boettcher is a Master Gardener & an aspiring Naturalist. Her love for the outdoors and nature shines through in everything she does. Holly & her husband own Whistler's Knoll Vineyard on Highway JJ near Hortonville.

Holly's Tip:

Water just the soil under your vegetables and avoid splashing the leaves of plants to reduce the risk of disease.



Acquiring the Wrong Pet

By DR. JIM ZIEGLER

New pet acquisition has been at an all-time high for a few years. There are several factors responsible for this, many of them having to do with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless, the number of people getting pets from a breeder or a rescue organization has climbed dramatically.

Unfortunately, the increase in pet acquisition has also led to an increase in the number of animals surrendered or rehomed. One of the most significant reasons for this is owners got pets that did not fit their lifestyles. What seemed like a good idea at the time turned out to be not so good of an idea in the end. A classic example would be a largely sedentary person adopting a high-energy puppy requiring a lot of exercise. So many people are surprised when a dog gets destructive because they are bored from not having any mental stimulation or physical activity. Another reason would be a pet requiring a lot of care. The French Bulldog craze has



done the breed no favors since many people getting them are unprepared to deal with their medical and surgical needs. They are cute until they need several thousand dollars of surgery to allow them to breathe normally (this is often true of all the short-faced breeds, not just the Frenchies).

A recent (sad) statistic indicated that 54% of the people who acquired a new pet regretted their decision. This does not mean that 54% of people get rid of the pet. Many deal with the

issues and work their way through it, and the pet is fine. However, there is a significant number of people who won't stay the course and will not keep the pet. This is sad, but not always a bad thing if the pet ends up in a home that will accommodate its needs better.

In the end, acquiring a pet needs careful consideration. The good and bad aspects of a life with a pet need to be carefully considered, and it cannot be a decision based on impulse. Unless a long-term commitment to a pet under a wide variety of circumstances is comfortable for an owner, it might be better to table the decision to get a dog or cat. Pets can be a wonderful part of life, but there is also a price tag associated with having them. They require and deserve a lot of commitment.

Jim Ziegler DVM joined the Fox Valley Humane Association in 2021 as the Medical Director following a 34-year career in private veterinary practice.

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Chico

Chico is a 5-year-old Australian Cattle Dog mix. He is ready to bring a little bit of spunk to someone's life! Chico is affectionate and enjoys receiving plenty of attention. He's highly intelligent and would thrive with older children and may enjoy a canine companion!



Luanne

Luanne is 11 years young and is looking to live out her golden years cozied up in blankets and with plenty of pampering. She is looking to find a home where she can be your only pet!



Marmalade

Marmalade is a 7-year-old cat with just the right amount of sass! Once she opens up and is comfortable, she is happy to lounge by your side. She has lived peacefully with other cats in the past.



Waffles

Waffles is a 2-year-old rabbit and is about as cute as they come! He is on the shyer side and would love a patient home that can help him come out of his shell.



Stihl RMA 460 Is Solid Residential Mower

By TIM FROBERG

Stihl does not claim that its RMA 460 V lawn mower will take care of business in a jungle.

However, homeowners with smaller lawns will likely be satisfied with this efficient mower.

The RMA 460 V is a reliable and affordable self-propelled, battery-powered mower that provides a quality cut. It is best classified as a residential mower and recommended for owners with small- to medium-sized lawns under a half acre.

Operators with larger lawns should look elsewhere. The RMA 460 V is powered by either an AK 20 or AK 30 battery. Most consumers opt for the AK 30 which provides a run time of 44 minutes on a single charge (about 3,440 feet or 12 football fields). The AK 20 has a run time of just 29 minutes (2,475 square feet) on a single charge. When mowing through lighter grass, the mower automatically reduces power consumption for a longer battery life.

The RMA 460 V kit comes with the battery and AL 101 charger.

Stihl has established itself as a reputable company that puts out long-lasting, well-engineered outdoor power equipment. The RMA 460 V is no exception. It is a smooth-running mower with self-propelled speeds ranging from 0.6 mph to 2.8 mph. The mower has a 19-inch steel mowing deck which provides a wide cutting path and is more durable than a plastic alternative. It can bag, mulch or discharge from the side and has a 15.85-gallon grass bag that minimizes stops for emptying.

The RMA 460 V has received good reviews. It is praised for its efficiency, lightweight size and maneuverability. Like most battery-powered mowers, it gets knocked for its relatively short run time.

"The Stihl RMA 460 is an impressive little battery-powered push mower," said a reviewer on the protoolsreview.com website. "It is very easy to maneuver, and the power is sufficient for typical yard growth.

"It suffers in the same area as most of the battery-powered mowers – in the run time department. A full AK 30 battery will only cut about 1/10 of an acre, 1/8 acre if you

really stretch it. However, Stihl is not touting the RMA 460 as a commercial mower. This is perfect for someone living in a downtown area with a small yard."

Another reviewer on the website gearadical.com stated: "The Stihl RMA 460 moves at a nice pace. With its 19-inch cutting deck, it makes short work of a normal-sized lawn. I live in suburbia and had no problem mowing my entire yard on one charge."

Ace Hardware and Northern Tool and Equipment are among the local retailers that carry Stihl products.

Price: \$599.

Power source: battery.

Max. cutting height: 3.9 inches.

Min. cutting height: 1 inch.

Start type: push button.

Rear wheel size: 5 inches.

Number of blades: 5.

Deck: 19 inch steel.

Warranty: 1 year.

ON THE RANCH

When my kids asked me the other day what the best job I ever had was, my first instinct was to say, “being your dad.” But because I didn’t want to inflate their young egos, and because I also want them to believe that their dad is a manly man, I decided instead to tell them the truth. “The summer after high school, I worked on a buffalo ranch. That was my favorite.”

Now that I’ve reached the “every day is exactly the same” stage in my career, I’ll admit that I find my mind wandering back to that single summer on the ranch with some frequency. As the summer jobs of our youth tend to go – impermanent, memorable, not too stressful – the bison ranch had it all. (I should note here that “bison” and “buffalo” aren’t *technically* the same, but anyone who would point that out is probably no fun at parties. I will use these names interchangeably, and you should as well.)

So, what made it so great? Was it the co-workers, which consisted of two other humans (including my lifelong best friend, Zach, and his stoic father, Keith, who managed the whole operation), two horrible rat terriers who wouldn’t last the summer, and a thousand docile beasts? Was it the long days outdoors, leading to a still-epic farmer tan and a still-raging affinity for the smell of manure? Or was it that this was my first taste of leaving home before college, where my tan would eventually even out but the smells would be worse?

I believe it to be some combination of these. My role was primarily that of shop gopher and all-around utilityman during haying season, when we’d head out into the prairie to bale the straw that the thousand aforementioned beasts would eat the rest of the

year. And, as if by some cruel joke, I was assigned a tractor with no cab and very unreliable hydraulics. This will be important later.

During our long days in the field, I’d chat by CB radio with Zach and Keith, mostly about nonsense. We created what is still known as “The Movie Game,” wherein one of us



ONE MORE THING

By TYLER SJOSTROM

would name two films, and the other two would take an actor from each before arriving at a movie those two actors had appeared in together. (For example, if I say “Titanic” and “Fight Club,” you’d take DiCaprio from the first and Pitt from the second, arriving at an answer of “Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood.”) We’d play this game off and on for hours, ruminating over our movie-buff credentials as day

turned to night. Simple as it sounds now, it’s one of my fondest memories.

But one day, I learned quickly why those who work the land command such respect. I was navigating my hydraulic hay rake through a field that had standing hay bales throughout, pulling the arms in and out as I went. But as I came up on one bale, the hydraulics jammed, and I caught the edge of the rake on a bale. I can still hear the sound of twisting metal as a very expensive piece of machinery crumpled before my eyes.

I called Keith on the radio and broke the news, expecting hellfire from a hard man who ripped the filters off his cigarettes and smoked them backwards. But that isn’t what I got. “Mmmyeah, I’ll be right over.” Twenty minutes with a wrench and a blowtorch and I was back in business.

When my boys are at an age where they might be looking for summer work, I’ll remind them of my time on the ranch. I’ll tell them to work with their friends whenever possible.

Get out in the sun and see what you’re capable of. And kids, don’t be afraid to get your hands dirty.

Believe me, this will be important later.



Tyler Sjostrom is an Appleton-based writer who will show you pictures of his kids whether you ask for them or not. Heckle him at tysjostrom@gmail.com or read more at tyler-sj.com.



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