



Veggies on Wheels



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"Veggies on Wheels" (edited by Wolfgang W.) generally appears around the beginning of every month.

Dear Pfenning's Food Box Community,

We made it to February!

January went by in what seemed like a breeze, and here we are in **February** – the month of Groundhog Day, Valentine's Day, and the Chinese New Year.

Groundhog Day, traditionally to be celebrated on February 2nd, marks the midpoint between the winter solstice in December and the spring equinox in March (at least here in the northern hemisphere) and goes back all the way to Celtic times. There appears to be much more historic background to this day than merely observing the antics of a measly marmot – which can actually only boast an accuracy of 39% when it comes to predicting the expected duration of winter. It has come to be accepted that if the Groundhog – in our circles that would be **Wiarion Willie** – sees his shadow, we'll have six more weeks of winter; whereas if he doesn't, it'll be six weeks until spring. Go figure, as if we would be seeing anything close to spring in our neck of the woods by mid-March. Give it another month or two and we'll be fine.



Valentine's Day, nowadays always celebrated on February 14th with flowers, chocolate and love, goes back all the way to Roman times and the celebration of human fertility and the beginning of the growing year in agriculture. This pagan festival of fecundity was maintained in a modified form in the Roman Empire when it was Christianized in the 4th century. According to one legend, it got its name from a priest named Valentine, who was martyred and executed in the 3rd century by then emperor Claudius II for secretly marrying soldiers in defiance of the mandate of celibacy, so they could be spared from going to war. Another legend cites a certain Valentine as having befriended and healed his jailer's daughter from blindness, and subsequently signing a letter to her with "from your Valentine." Later, in the 5th century, the pope gave Valentine saint's status and

February 14th was designated as St. Valentine's Day. Its romantic side continued to be celebrated in the Middle Ages in Britain and throughout parts of Europe. Today, St. Valentine endures as the Patron Saint of love, lovers, affianced and engaged couples, happy marriages, young people... and bee keepers – something I will have to share with Mike and Erika (née Pfenning) Roth of **Nith Valley Apiaries** – whose extraordinary, local honey products you will happily find in our **Honey department**.

As for the New Year, in China, the **Chinese New Year** begins on the date of the second New Moon after the winter solstice, which takes place in late December. Thus, the Chinese New Year can occur anywhere between January 21st and February 20th. This year, the New Moon happens to occur on Friday, February 12th, also ushering in the Chinese Year of the Ox – which (for all you horoscopists) means career advancement, success in business, prosperity, and wellness for all zodiac signs.



Finally, some good news! (*found all this revelatory February info in the online "Old Farmer's Almanac"*)

Bringing Light into Winter

Just recently, I was inspired by some thoughts on the lethargy, low mood levels and downright winter fatigue we can find in northern countries during the short days of winter. As we have all heard, this may end up leading to “seasonal affective disorder” (SAD) in many people as the cold, dark winter drags on; and lockdowns or stay-at-home orders don’t make it any easier. This encouraging view (*which you can read in its entirety here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybpas3fc>*) came from someone who spent a winter in Norway in a town two hundred miles north of the arctic circle, just about at the northern tip of the country – which corresponds roughly to the latitude of the middle of Baffin Island. The people living there need to cope with no direct sun from mid-November to mid-January, with only two to three hours of indirect sunlight during these darkest periods of the polar night. However, interestingly, save for some sleep disturbances due to the absence of the daily rhythm of the rising and setting sun, the wintertime depression one might expect was absent in the inhabitants of this dark, northerly hamlet.

How do they do it? may be a valid question on all our minds. According to the findings of the health psychologist who published his findings after his wintertime stay in northern Norway, the main factor empowering the dwellers of the north was a particular mindset or attitude. What it boiled down to was simply perceiving the challenges of a long, dark winter not as threatening, but rather as an opportunity to learn and adapt to adverse circumstances and – quite simply – make the best of it. That may sound like oversimplifying it, but studies have demonstrated that if you approach a certain situation with a specific mindset, the outcome is strongly influenced by the quality of this mindset, that is whether it is positive or negative. Regardless of the general circumstances, consciously aiming to focus on the positive potential in a given situation – such as seeing the thrills, opportunities, beauty and coziness of winter, rather than its limitations, challenges, harshness and unpleasantness – will already have a bearing on one’s wellbeing. The lesson to be learned here in short seems to be that your basic attitude or mindset will end up determining how good or bad you will feel. Simple, eh? As long as it helps to bring some light into winter, it’s all good.

Wintertime Food Box Contents and Delivery

As winter drags on, we are still dealing with sub-zero delivery temperatures, especially for you customers receiving your deliveries in the early morning hours. **THANK YOU** for leaving out your coolers, blankets and sleeping bags for us to put your orders in and keep them from freezing before you bring them inside. If you have a garage or enclosed porch or shed, we will be happy to leave your delivery in there for protection against the cold. Get in touch with us if this is an option for you or to get some more ideas.

As you will also have noticed, there are sometimes last-minute changes to the Food Box contents. This may happen due to supply issues, when an item planned in does not show up, or quality issues, when an item has such overwhelming imperfections that we prefer not sending it out. Please, keep watching the upcoming Basket Contents list to keep up-to-date as to what you will be receiving.

Have a Grand Groundhog Day, a Valiant Valentine’s Day, and a Charming Chinese New Year,

Wolfgang, and Maxi – our cool cat on the couch

