



Berkshire Food Co-op

Quarterly Newsletter
Fall 2018

The
ANNUAL REPORT
EDITION

We were founded by and for families in the Berkshires to bring good food to our friends and neighbors.

Everything we sell has been thoughtfully chosen so you can rest assured it's good for you and for our community.



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The **ANNUAL REPORT**
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board of directors



Betsy Andrus



Leslie Davidson



Molly de St Andre



Jake Levin



Michael Maguire



Jen Salinetti



Dan Seitz



Erica Spizz

leadership team



Jessica Bosworth



Amie Decker



Cian Dalzell



Daniel Esko



Robbin Ezinga



Joel Liu



Jill Maldonado



Ted Moy



Jenny Schwartz



Adam Sugarman



The Year in Review— Growing Our Impact

Daniel Esko
Outgoing General Manager

When we release this report to owners every year, we like to summarize our annual community impact so you know what your equity and patronage supports. Cooperative businesses play such an important role in creating vibrant local economies and that is certainly true for the Co-op. We use the vehicle of a community owned grocery store to generate approximately \$12 million of local economic activity annually in the Berkshires. As the Co-op enters this next chapter in its almost 40-year history, we should take every opportunity to celebrate the Co-op's enduring positive impact on the community and economy of Berkshire County and beyond.

I would like to touch on a few notable Co-op impact highlights over the past year. On April 1st, we overhauled our wage scale and raised the Co-op's minimum wage from \$11.00/hour to \$12.00/hour. We made a commitment to continue revising the wage scale each year as we chart the course for \$15.00/hr. by 2021. We employed 61 people last year, with almost 40 of them working full time. We paid those employees (your neighbors!) \$2.2 million in direct wages and benefits.

We supported over 198 local businesses with \$1.5 million in direct patronage. Usage of our local currency Berkshares increased by over \$20,000 to \$95,149. We welcomed 189 new owners to the Co-op and increased our percent of sales to owners. We paid out \$61,000 in interest to our owner lenders. We

"We use the vehicle of a community owned grocery store to generate approximately \$12 million of local economic activity annually in the Berkshires."

hosted, organized and sponsored over 300 events in the community and provided over \$20,000 in direct cash donations to local nonprofits, including joint sponsorship of the SNAP doubling program at the Great Barrington Farmers' Market. Last, but certainly not least, we provided almost \$50,000 in discounts to 300 of our neighbors in need through our healthy food access program.

It's important to remember this impact is guided entirely by our ends policies developed by your democratically elected board of directors, and they aim to broadly

define the results (ends) we want to achieve organizationally and in our community. The General Manager is tasked with interpreting and reporting on these policies which I was able to complete in April and August respectively. Simply put, we aim to grow the Cooperative Economy, provide Real Food to the community and do Real Good in the community. The activity of the cooperative is entirely in service of these ends, with the ultimate goal of creating a happier and healthier community for us all.

But every end starts with a mean and that is where our operational vision comes into play. This year we adopted a new operational vision or what we call our B.I.G. Direction (Business is Good). When working on this we understood that in order to achieve the positive impacts we desire, we needed to run a strong business and embrace business success as the means to our ends. And in order to be sustainable and rooted in co-op values, we realized that we needed to be fully committed to fair, human scale economics. As such, management will operate the business of the cooperative with a deep commitment to balancing fair prices for customers, fair wages for staff and fair prices for producers. This is our B.I.G. Direction. The beauty of this is that our social mission is now woven into our business strategy.

But the work wasn't over after that. We knew we needed to create the right workplace culture to support our operational vision. Through a process

of staff engagement we started by identifying the positive and negative aspects of our current store culture. We all decided we wanted to shed the negative aspects of our current culture and build on the positive aspects. Once the work was complete we all made the commitment to a culture of service rooted in more generosity, accountability, teamwork and cooperation. While this may seem a bit abstract, our operational vision and store culture come to life in the store and in our community every day of the week with the result being the positive impact we are able to have in the community.



This year also saw us make tangible progress towards the opening of our new store. The project is entering an important phase as the new building is taking shape. The foundation is completed and the structural steel is being put into place. Major pieces of equipment have been ordered,

and the general contractor will soon mobilize to commence the interior fit out. We anticipate the new store opening sometime in the first quarter of 2019. In the meantime, it is important to acknowledge that construction on site has proven rather disruptive at times and has had a negative impact on customer traffic and sales. We are making every reasonable effort to improve the experience, and now more than ever, it is incredibly important to the Co-op's future that we all do our best to support the Co-op during this transition, even if that means dealing with a little inconvenience. The silver lining is that the majority of the disruptive site work will soon be complete and the remaining work will stay relatively contained within the building site itself. This means it should become easier to support the Co-op in the final phase of new store construction.

One of the most exciting accomplishments of the year is the long awaited rebrand we have been talking about for quite some time. After pausing the process in order to narrow our focus on the store expansion, particularly with raising owner loan funds, we started back up this past spring with a new firm, Bullhorn Creative out of Lexington, KY. Bullhorn came to us highly recommended as they had done branding work for other food co-ops and food based businesses, and we really loved their work. As a result of a thorough process of discovery and engagement, we have arrived at a new brand that captures the

DIY spirit of the Co-op, and renews and refreshes our image in the community while staying true to our roots. The new brand is colorful, playful and incredibly flexible. I mean who wouldn't love a pink cow?

Perhaps the most notable change however is with our name. With complete alignment among the board and key staff involved in the rebrand, we decided to change our name to Berkshire Food Co-op. During the rebrand process, owner survey data

"The name Berkshire Food Co-op is a natural evolution that more accurately describes who we are and what we do. And coolest of all, food is now quite literally our middle name!"

showed that most people refer to us as "Berkshire Co-op" or more simply "the Co-op" when talking about the store. The name Berkshire Food Co-op is a natural evolution that more accurately describes who we are and what we do. And coolest of all, food is now quite literally our middle name! I hope you love the new brand as much as we do and we can't wait to introduce it to you all over the course of the next several months.

Looking to the future, I am so hopeful and excited for the Co-op, our staff and owners, and our community. Our community impact will continue to grow as we move into our new, expanded store in early 2019. We plan to hire at least 10 new staff members, bring in many great new

local products and grow our total economic impact in the Berkshires and beyond to \$18 million by 2023. As we grow, we will never forget that we were created by and for families in the Berkshires to provide real food to our friends and neighbors. We will maintain our commitment to thoughtfully choosing everything we sell so you can rest assured that it's good for you and our community. We will continue to use the economic vehicle of a natural foods grocery store to create a happier and healthier community.

As I reflect on the past year and look to the future there are also changes in store for me and my role here at the Co-op. As some of you may have heard, I recently announced that I will begin devoting my full time and attention to managing the Co-op's expansion project by assuming the role of Project Manager. This comes following my recognition that the demands of running the day-to-day operations of the Co-op, combined with the extensive work necessary to manage the expansion project as it enters the next critical phase, were simply too much for one person. Together, the board and I made the decision to redirect my focus and energies to the successful completion of the project.

To support this change, Luke Schell from St. Paul, Minnesota is now serving as the Interim General Manager. Luke's work experience includes management positions at Whole Foods Market, General Manager at Linden Hills Co-op in

Minneapolis, and as a consultant for CDS Consulting Co-op. At Linden Hills, he helped lead the organization through a successful store expansion as well as an historic merger with a landmark twin cities food co-op The Wedge. More recently Luke served as the interim General Manager at the People's Food Co-op in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

I want you to know that I am incredibly committed to the Co-op, all of you, our community, and of course this expansion project. It has truly been an honor to serve you all these past several years. I am also incredibly excited for the opportunity to focus on the project in this manner, and the Board and I look forward to continuing to work with one another, with the interim GM, and with all of the Co-op's stakeholders and partners to make the new and expanded Co-op the very best it can be. I look forward to seeing many of you at the store as we move through this change. In the meantime, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me at desko@berkshire.coop or to the board of directors at board@berkshire.coop.

Sincerely and In Cooperation,





Coming Together to Make Our Voices Heard

Jake Levin
Board Member

Fall is a time of change that can be quite fraught with dread and anxiety. The long care-free days of summer are over, school has started, the trees are beginning to lose their leaves, reminding us that the dreary winter months are around the corner. Many of these changes I can't do anything about. I cannot affect the drop-in temperature, or when the sun sets and rises. These changes happen, and we find ways of making the best of them. But some changes that happen in the Fall I can affect.

Every fall, in conjunction with the end of the fiscal year, the Co-op organizes an annual meeting open to all of its owners. At this meeting the Co-op leadership team including the General Manager and the Board of Directors presents the state of the Co-op including a financial report, a highlight of the various activities that have been going on, a report on the ways in which the Co-op has fulfilled its ends. Also, at this meeting is the election for the three of nine Directors of the Board. It is this meeting that sets Co-op part from other grocery stores. The Co-op is not just a crunchy feel good grocery store that specializes in local and organic food. It is a democratically organized and run institution that

is held directly accountable to its owner. This is radical! In a time when so many things feel out of our control this an opportunity in which you can make your voice heard and affect change directly. So please join us the annual meeting and let your voice be heard.

Meanwhile, you might as well make the best out of fall, and cook with some of my favorite fall produce like sage and winter squash.



Pasta with Ricotta & Squash

Ingredients

- 1 lb of pasta of your choice
- 1 lb fresh ricotta
- 1 medium butternut squash
or another winter squash like Delicata, or Acorn, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 large bunch of fresh sage (or 1 loose cup)
- vegetable oil
- salt and pepper

1. In a large roasting pan, spread the squash out in one layer. Dot with butter, sprinkle with salt, and roast at 400 degrees for about 1 hour.
2. In an unheated heavy duty pan, pour the vegetable oil so it is about ¼ inch deep. Place pan on high heat and let heat up for a minute or so. Put about half of the sage in the oil and let sage fry for about a minute. Remove the sage and put it on a paper towel to drain. Repeat with remaining sage.
3. Boil salted water for the pasta in a large pot and cook pasta to the package's directions. When cooked, drain the pasta and put in serving bowl. Toss with the fried sage, roasted squash and ricotta. Salt and pepper to taste.

Co-op Staff Fall Faves!

Is there anywhere in the world more beautiful than the Berkshires in the fall? We don't think so! Whether you're looking to pumpkin-spice up your life, or local apples are at the top of your pie-orities, hiker, baker or leaf peeper, there's something for everyone to do (and EAT!) in our lovely shire when the leaves start to turn.

Apple Picking at Windy Hill

Windy Hill Orchard is Ahnaka's favorite place to go apple picking with her family. Located on route 7, north of Monument Mountain and just south of the Stockbridge town line, Windy Hill is an area favorite. We love them for their heirloom varieties, well-labeled trees and easy terrain. Oh yea, there's also cider and cider donuts. Mmmm... Ahnaka enjoys helping her mom make apple pie with their annual haul (if by "helping", you mean "eating"). On a crisp fall day, she also likes to wrap her hands around a nice warm cup of peppermint tea. We like the way you think, Ahnaka!



Fall Movie Marathon

Devorah's favorite fall ritual is picking up some cider donuts from Home Sweet Home Doughnut Shoppe and enjoying them with homemade

hard cider while she snuggles up on the couch for a Fall Movie Marathon. Her favorite flicks? *Hocus Pocus* and *Nightmare Before Christmas*, of course! Hey Devorah, our schedules are pretty open, if you want some company!

Fall Farm Family Fun

Michele & Amie both love to bring their families to local farms to have some fall fun. Michele especially loves Taft Farms where there's an ah-mazing corn labyrinth, cider doughnuts and perfect pumpkins. Amie likes to go to Whitney Farm, plop her kid in the pumpkin patch and capture all the cuteness with her camera.



Halloween Hijinx

Katie's a kid at heart and Halloween is her favorite thing about fall. Every year, she makes her own costume while she looks forward to bobbing for apples! We asked her to share her apple-bobbing technique with us, but she decline to disclose her subaquatic secrets.



Day Dreaming On Top of Monument Mountain

We have a lot of outdoors-y folks on staff here at the Co-op and Jeremy might JUST be king of the club! When we asked him his favorite fall activity, he said he likes to hike to the top of Monument Mountain and dream about the first flakes of snow falling so he can wax his skis and get down to the business of being the ripper that he is—mastering the pow pow on the local slopes.



Hit the Trails & Peep at the Leaves

When the leaves start to turn, Cindy likes to hit the trails to do some hiking or go running on Monument Valley Road where there's lots of natural beauty to admire while she puts in some miles. She's a little camera shy, but when it comes to her enthusiasm for enjoying the great outdoors, she's pretty outspoken!



Bike the Byways!

If Jessica's not working, you'll probably find her biking! She goes hither and yon, cycling across the Berkshires, Hudson Valley & CT. Along Route 7, she enjoys the beautiful farm lands and farm stands. She'll take a break at the perfect picnic place—the Stockbridge boat launch. Her favorite fall food? Winter squash of course!

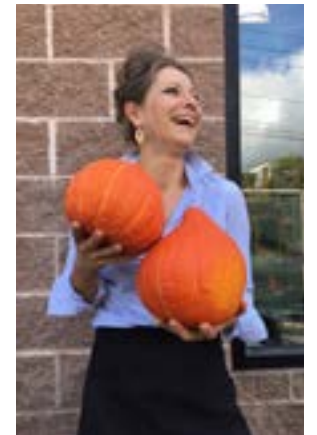




Illustration by Jenny Schwartz

financial review

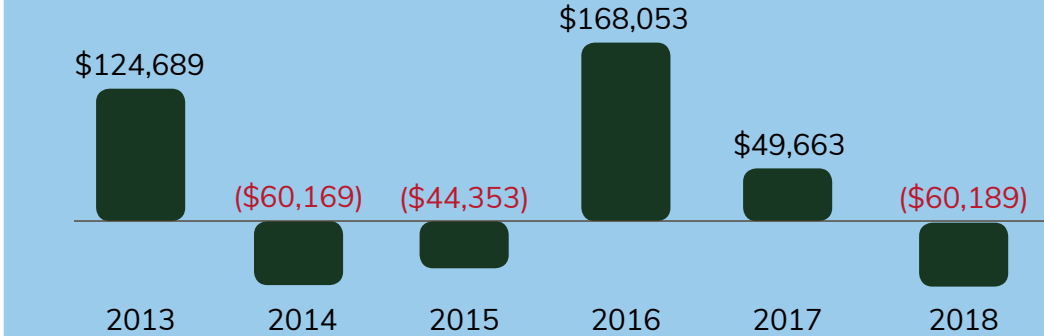
FISCAL YEAR 2018 ended June 30. It saw the Co-op make visible progress toward opening a new store, particularly with securing additional owner loan financing and making subsequent capital investments in the planning phases of expansion. Sales dipped by about a ½ percentage point from the prior year with almost 200 new owner shares sold. The Co-op officially made the transition from the tax basis of accounting to the GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) basis of accounting in fiscal year 2018.

Income Statement

Sales	\$ 7,976,695	101.6%
Less discounts	127,708	1.6%
Net Sales	\$ 7,848,987	100%
Cost of Sales	4,838,281	61.6%
Gross Profit	3,010,706	38.4%
Wages - All	1,809,383	23.2%
Benefits and Taxes	329,169	5.0%
Total Labor Expenses	2,199,552	28.0%
General and Administrative	848,475	10.8%
Depreciation	12,031	0.2%
Total Expenses	3,060,058	39.0%
Net Operating Loss	(49,352)	-0.6%
Other Income	\$11,762	0.1%
Other Expenses	(44,691)	-0.6%
Loss Before Provision for Taxes	(82,281)	-1.1%
Provision for Income Taxes	(22,092)	-0.3%
Net Loss	\$ (60,189)	-0.8%

Sales (before discounts) decreased from prior year by \$36,384 (-0.5%) to a year end total of \$7,976,695. This is mainly due to increased competitive pressure (brick and mortar and online), as well as decreases in customer count in the last two quarters when new store construction began. Gross profit % (less discounts) decreased slightly to 38.40% of sales due to inventory losses caused by failing equipment, supplier increases in cost of goods, and an increase in sales of lower margin items. Total personnel expense was up \$21,814 largely due to the wage increases enacted over the past two years and an increase in workers comp expenses. General and administrative expenses were managed closely throughout the year and only increased by \$2,663 to 10.90% of sales. Approximately \$60,000 in capital expenses from previous fiscal years were also written off this year. Overpayment of taxes in the amount of \$22,000 helped bring our total net income/loss for the year down to -\$60,189.

Net Income



Cash Flow

Net Loss	\$ (60,189)
Depreciation	12,031
Gain on sale of asset	(664)
Deferred taxes	1,672
Decrease in inventory	12,330
Patronage dividends received as investments	(5,684)
Increase in Other Current Assets	(32,444)
Decrease in Other Current Liabilities	(1,111)
Cash Flows Used in Operations	(74,059)
Cash Flows from Investing Activities	
Increase in Fixed Assets	(9,265)
Increase in Other Assets	(162,479)
Cash Flows used in Investing Activities	(171,744)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities	
Increase in Long-Term Liabilities	667,000
Increase in Equity	20,730
Cash Flows provided by Financing Activities	687,730
Total Cash Flow	441,927
Beginning Cash	924,923
Ending Cash	\$ 1,366,850

Cash flow was net positive for the year at \$441,927 in additional cash generated largely through financing activities (proceeds from owner loan funds). Total investments were \$171,744, a majority of which was capital investment related to new store planning and design. Despite the net loss for the year of -\$60,189, end of year operating cash (less capital funds) was more than adequate to cover all short term cash obligations.

Balance Sheet

Cash	\$ 1,366,850
Inventory	227,526
Other Current Assets	91,297
Current Assets	\$ 1,685,673
Property and Equipment, Net	22,237
Other Assets	657,132
Total Assets	2,365,042
Current Liabilities	501,622
Long-Term Debt	1,351,550
	\$ 1,853,172
Owners' Equity	511,870
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$ 2,365,042

The balance sheet at June 30, 2018 shows total cash on hand of \$1,366,850 with \$1,070,809 earmarked for capital investment and the balance as operating cash. Other current assets increased by \$20,179 mainly due to an increase in prepaid taxes and expense. Other assets grew by over \$204,622 as we continued to make capital investments related to our expansion, namely design, legal and other consulting fees. Total assets were \$2,365,042 at year end. Current liabilities increased by \$39,534 as a portion of owner loan debt became current and wages payable increased. Long term debt increased as we closed on the final portion our owner loans in the first quarter of the fiscal year. Paid in owner equity grew by \$19,700 as 189 new owner shares were purchased over the course of the year. Total Owner equity decreased by almost \$500,000 as we wrote off the entirety of our accumulated leasehold improvements at 42 Bridge Street as part of our conversion to GAAP accounting. Total Liabilities and Equity were \$2,365,042 at year end.

Disclaimer: The summary financial statements provided are based on a preliminary financial summary by Brazee and Huban, CPAs. Our financial statements were audited by Wegner CPAs this year and the audited financial results will be available subsequent to the publishing of this report. A complete copy of the audited financials are available to co-op owners upon request.



Greetings!



Luke Schell
Interim General Manager

I am excited about being at the Berkshire Food Co-op in the role of Interim General Manager and having the opportunity to strengthen the Co-op.

I want to express my gratitude to Dan for contributing his skills and experience in the Project Manager role.

My initial impression of Great Barrington is filled with positive reactions; a beautiful and vibrant downtown, many friendly faces, and amazing natural beauty. A perfect setting to "live, work and play". It is a pleasure and honor to have the possibility to work with so many dedicated Board Members, Staff and Owners.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the store.





DIY Drinks...These Brews are Truly Trending

Jenny Schwartz
Education & Outreach Coordinator

Millennials are drinking less—alcohol that is. Out are the boozy drinks and in are the beneficial ones. Drinks like kombucha, botanical spritzers, herbal elixirs, vinegar drinks—you get the idea. Thinking back, I remember drinking ginger ale to help aid the occasional stomach bug. Much to my surprise, there wasn't anything in there that was really going to cure me. Nowadays, every other drink in the grab and go section of a health food store will benefit or promote a healthy life.

Last summer, I researched how to make ginger ale to give as a gift to a dear friend. I was amazed at how easy it actually was. Grated ginger, sugar and water. These three ingredients work together to begin the fermentation process for ginger ale. I cleaned out a mason jar in preparation for the process. Then, I went shopping at the Co-op. I purchased organic ginger (grown locally at Et Cetera Farm in Ghent, NY) sugar and filtered water. I took it all home and got my ginger bug started.

Stomach bug, ginger bug? Was this thing going to eat us alive?! The answer is no. The good bacteria and wild yeasts on the skin of the ginger/

sugar in the mixture. Then, they release CO₂ making the mixture effervescent thus becoming a "ginger bug." One key to the success of this process is to use organic ginger. This will ensure that the good yeast and bacteria needed for fermentation will be on the skin of the root. In the warm summer months, the fermentation process only takes about three to four days. Upon the third or fourth day, you will notice lots of bubbles fizzing on the top when you give it a gentle stir or shake. The right environment and food (organic ginger and sugar) are most important. If it is too cold or too bright, the fermentation process doesn't work as well.

Once your ginger bug is ready, you can create a ginger tea which consists of ¼ cup grated ginger water and sugar. Bring it all to a boil, let it cool completely and then you add your ginger bug to the mix. The probiotic juice from the ginger bug will inoculate the ginger tea with the beneficial bacteria and yeasts it needs to begin fermenting. Strain all the ginger bits from the tea and bug mixture and then bottle your ginger ale.

When I first did this, I bought cute flip top bottles because I wanted it

to look nice for gift-giving. I would recommend waiting to do this once you get proficient at the ginger ale-making process. Instead of the glass bottles, go ahead and use old plastic seltzer bottles. Give them a good rinse and then fill with your your ginger brew. Let it sit in a cool dark place for about two weeks. The yeasts and bacteria in the ginger bug tea will continue to digest the sugar and create CO₂. Lucky us! This means that the tea will become carbonated! Check on it daily and squeeze the bottle to see if you can feel the pressure of the CO₂ accumulating. When you do, unscrew the cap slightly to release some of the pressure—aka burping the bottle. Be care not to let too much oxygen in as that could become problematic to the fermentation process. You can see how a problem could arise if you forget to check on the glass flip top bottles. Luckily, I didn't have any issues but it is important to mention the risks of making your own soda.

When the two weeks are up, give your ginger ale a taste. If you think it is too sweet, let the fermentation process continue. If you think it's good, start drinking it! Or, you can place it in the refrigerator to slow down the fermenting process. Keep in mind, it won't stop it completely.

If you have extra ginger bug leftover, keep it in the refrigerator. When you are ready to make another batch of ginger ale, take it out and let it get to room temperature. Once it is at room temperature, you can begin feeding it with equal parts ginger and sugar. If you don't want to risk explosion, drink them within a week. At any point of this process, if it smells, looks or tastes unusual (a little taste won't hurt you), toss it and start fresh. If the ginger bug ever gets moldy, toss it as well.

The process of making ginger ale is not for those who enjoy instant gratification. This is something that



you need to take care of and tend to like a pet. When it's done, you feel such a sense of accomplishment! It's a great feeling to take a taste and conclude that it is the best tasting ginger ale you ever had. Plus the fact that it contains probiotics that are beneficial to your digestive process.

The ginger bug is the starter to many natural sodas. Once you have become proficient with the first ferment, you can go onto a second ferment. The second ferment is adding other flavors such as watermelon, apple, rhubarb, raspberry.... So many different options. The fruit can be fresh, frozen or dried. This fall, I am looking forward to visiting Windy Hill Farm and picking apples to make an apple ginger ale.

Are you pumped to start making your own ginger ale now? You can definitely do this. Remember, you can buy all the ingredients you need at the

Co-op. Feel like you need a resource? Here are some great books that will tell you everything you need to know in regards to making fermented soda:

Homemade Soda: 200 Recipes for Making & Using Fruit Sodas & Fizzy Juices, Sparkling Waters, Root Beers & Cola Brews, Herbal & Healing Waters & Floats, & Other Carbonated Concoctions by Andrew Schloss

True Brews: How to Craft Fermented Cider, Beer, Wine, Sake, Soda, Mead, Kefir, and Kombucha at Home by Emma Christensen

The Wildcrafting Brewer: Creating Unique Drinks and Boozy Concoctions from Nature's Ingredients by Pascal Baudar

Wild Fermentation: The Flavor, Nutrition, and Craft of Live-Culture Foods by Sandor Ellix Katz



Make Your Own Hand Sanitizer

Determined to do what you can to stay healthy this winter? Here is an easy recipe to make some afternoon with your kids.

Here's the breakdown of what's in the recipe and why:

Witch Hazel: Has antibacterial properties. Be sure to get the alcohol free kind.

AloeVera: Will help to keep your skin from drying out. Dry skin can be the result of store bought sanitizers.

Aura Cacia's Medieval Oil: Thanks to the recommendation from our Wellness Team Leader, Cian Dalzell, I chose to use this oil blend for my recipe. Medieval oil is a blend of sweet orange, lavender, lemon, red thyme, tea tree, eucalyptus and rosemary oil. All of these oils contain some or all of the following: antiseptic, antimicrobial, anti-viral, anti-fungal and anti-bacterial. It makes this essential oil a great choice for your homemade hand sanitizer.

Look in the Wellness Dept. for empty bottles if you're looking to gift this to your friends and family for the holidays. Got lots of friends? Take advantage of our Owners-only buying club and purchase them in bulk! (Not an Owner? Stop by the front desk - it's quick, easy and only costs \$30 to get started!)

Be on the lookout for more DIY

recipes that will teach you how to make different recipes with similar ingredients. It will help to make your initial investment for ingredients go a long way!

For a 2 oz bottle of hand sanitizer...

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon witch hazel
2 teaspoons pure aloe vera gel
15-20 drops of Medieval Oil
filtered water

Directions:

Measure ingredients into a small bowl. Mix well.

Filter into a 2 oz spray bottle.

Keep in your car, the kids' backpacks, or wherever you think you'll need to combat germs!

Take care of your kids' teachers by gifting this sanitizer to them. It works well and smells great!



The Supply Chain Connects Us All...

Our very own David Kelly, Grocery Supervisor and long time Co-op staffer, was recently invited to travel to Peru to visit Equal Exchange coffee and cacao farmers. David was one of only six people in the entire country invited to take this life-changing trip. David snapped over 500 photos while he was away and he's chosen just a few to share with us. Thanks David!



The Oro Verde Cooperative joins 1,687 small cacao farms to share resources and negotiate better prices for all.



It's a 2 1/2 hour hike up the mountain to Leslie's cacao farm. Heavy rains render the roads impassable for vehicles, so farmers carry supplies up and harvests down the mountain on foot. The farm is simple, with no running water. Being a part of the cooperative has allowed Leslie to earn enough so his family could move into town where his children can attend school.

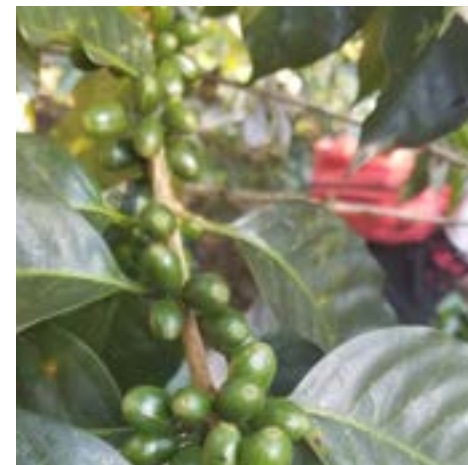


Cacao begins as a flower with tiny pods that grow to be as large as 6-10 inches in length. This variety has a bright red skin with 30-40 beans inside. The white flesh surrounding the beans is edible.



After the cacao beans are carried down the mountain, they come to this processing facility where they're dried, fermented and packaged for export.

This sign, which hangs in the facility assures that everyone is welcome "If you're different, it's no problem." Male, female, native, handicap, gay, white, or brown. All are welcome!



Beyond pictures and stories, what David brought home from his trip is a profound sense of how interconnected we are, from the shoppers & cashiers, Co-op staff who stock the shelves & do the ordering, to the folks at Equal Exchange and the farmers and their families half a world away whose lives have been drastically improved by the cooperatives within which they work.

We're cooking Thanksgiving so you don't have to!

We've got your favorite sides, pies, and holiday goodness! Order what makes sense for you—individual plates, a la carte items or complete family meals!

Order on our website at berkshire.coop/thanksgiving or stop by the store and place your order at the front desk!

We'll accept pre-orders until 8pm on Sunday, November 18th.



Everything but the Bird

Serves 4-6 adults

\$50/box

Maple Glazed Yams
Green Beans Amandine
Classic Mashed Potatoes
Traditional Herb Stuffing
Home-style Poultry Gravy
Cranberry Relish
Dinner Rolls

(Vegan options available)

Traditional Plate

Individual Servings

\$15/person

Roasted Turkey
Maple Glazed Yams
Green Beans Amandine
Classic Mashed Potatoes
Traditional Herb Stuffing
Home-style Poultry Gravy
Cranberry Relish
Dinner Rolls

Vegan Plate

Individual Servings

\$15/person

Mushroom Walnut Loaf
Maple Glazed Yams
Green Beans Amandine
Vegan Mashed Potatoes
Vegan Herb Stuffing
Mushroom Gravy
Cranberry Relish
Dinner Rolls

Thanksgiving a la carte...

Pick and choose your favorites to create exactly the meal you want!



Entrées

Roasted Turkey Breast

Vegan Mushroom Walnut Loaf

Side Dishes

Classic Mashed Potatoes
Vegan Mashed Potatoes
Traditional Herb Stuffing
Vegan Herb Stuffing
Maple Glazed Yams
Green Beans Amandine
Cranberry Relish
Home-style Poultry Gravy
Vegan Mushroom Gravy

Pies

Traditional Pumpkin*
Vegan Pumpkin*
Traditional Apple"
Apple Crumb
Cranberry Walnut*
Pecan*
Chocolate Banana Cream"

* Available wheat-free for an additional \$2



Statement from the President

Erica Spizz
President of the Board of Directors

We arrive at this year's Annual Meeting with a poured foundation for a new and expanded store, a committed leader focused exclusively on the successful completion of the building project, and an experienced general manager ensuring our staff and systems are ready for the new store. These are exciting times for our Co-op.

On behalf of the board, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Dan Esko, whose dedication and capable leadership have readied us for our expansion. In this Annual Report, he highlights an impressive list of accomplishments from the past year alone. From a demonstrated commitment to a living wage to support of local farmers and food producers to active efforts to educate community members about real food, he and his team have much to be proud of.

We also enthusiastically welcome Luke Schell, and look forward to introducing him in person at the Annual Meeting. We are fortunate to have him contributing his experience and skills to our Co-op at this critical time. Luke will be with us in an interim capacity through the new store opening, and over the coming months, we

will conduct a national search for the next General Manager who will lead the Co-op in the next phase of our growth.

This is also a critical time for the cooperative movement. Our Co-op, which involves a group of people coming together to meet our shared needs and those of our community, bucks the trend of major corporations concerned with little other than maximizing profits for shareholders. As we expand and strengthen our store, we will also expand and strengthen our commitment to a triple bottom line, in which people and the planet are as important as profit.

I am so grateful to shop at a place where a team of trusted professionals has vetted the products to ensure that they are wholesome and ethically produced, and contribute to individual health and a sustainable food system. Our support for the store—during the building project and after the new store opens—is crucial. It also makes an important difference, and I'm excited about our shared future and the impact we can have in Great Barrington and beyond by building an economy based on community, cooperation, justice, and inclusion.

Berkshire Food Co-op

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