

FALL 2013



NEWSLETTER

COOPERATIVELY OWNED

COMMUNITY FOCUSED

ANNUAL

MEETING

SPECIAL

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9TH
SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE!

EDITION

Visiting Tierra Farm

A tour of a local fruit & nut distributor proves to be educational in more ways than one.

By Matthew Novik, Communications Manager

If you shop at the Co-op, especially in the Bulk department, you have most likely heard of Tierra Farm. For years Tierra has been the store's primary supplier of nuts, seeds and dried fruits. And recently we began selling their coffee and nut butters as well. Tierra's selection is ample, their prices are fair, and their systems work with ours very well. Tierra Farm may be a primary supplier to co-ops and independent grocery stores across the nation, but they are also our neighbors, located just a half-hour drive from the Co-op in Valatie, NY. And until I visited in person, I had no idea what a great company they really are.

Tierra Farm started as a diversified organic vegetable farm in the Finger Lakes region of New York. The organic nuts and dried fruit portion of the business started in 1999 as a way to generate income in the slower winter months. That portion of the business thrived and eventually the entire operation was moved to Valatie in 2001. The farm

still grows vegetables, but primarily to feed the nearly fifty Tierra employees. Today they employ over fifty people and distribute to more than thirty states.

As soon as you pass through the front door, you know you're somewhere special. What acts as their lobby is actually a small gift shop that shows off all of their products. Shelves are stacked to the top with roasted nuts, seeds, coffee, granola, nut butters and chocolate-covered goodies. It's like a snack lover's paradise!

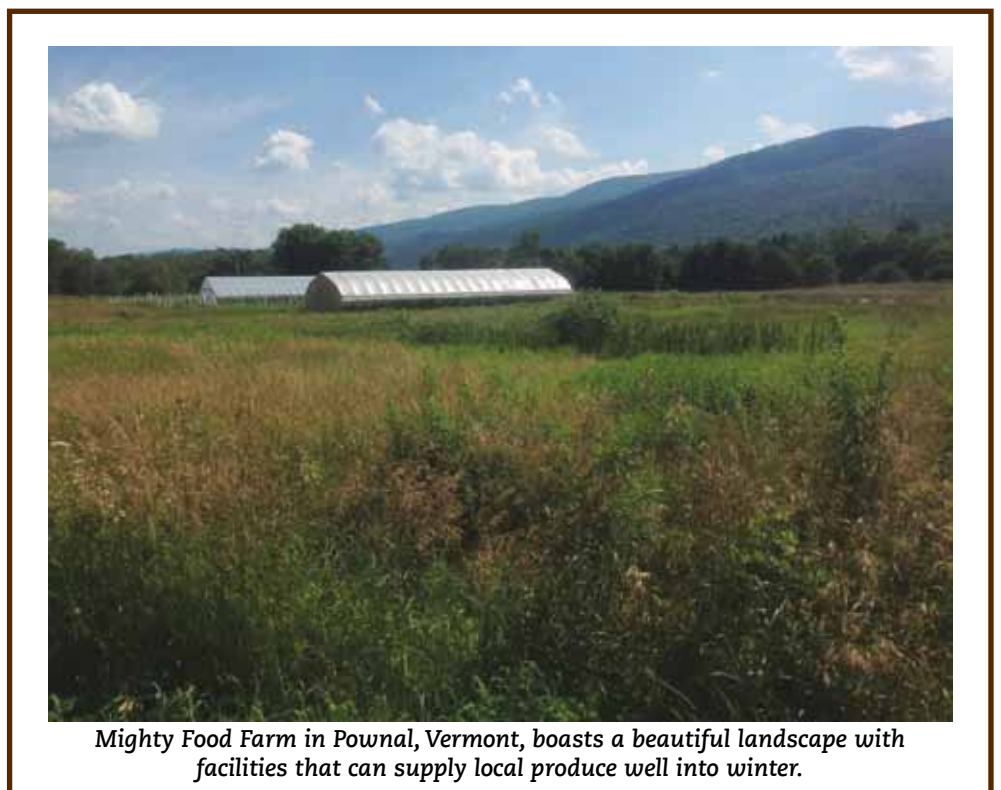
We were greeted by Annabel and Cameron, Tierra's sales representatives, and the first thing they did was offer us some fresh brewed coffee that was roasted on site. Obviously they knew the direct path to my heart.

We were there to get the full tour. And that started in what they called "the chocolate room." Tierra makes a full line of dark chocolate-covered fruits, nuts and coffee **TIERRA** Cont. on page 8



Getting to Know Your Local Food Suppliers

By Cian Dalzell, Special Projects Coordinator



Mighty Food Farm in Pownal, Vermont, boasts a beautiful landscape with facilities that can supply local produce well into winter.

Recently a lot of owners have asked me where I've been. What I tell them is that I'm around—working more often on the computers in the office than on the floor, where I had been in past years. This is absolutely true. My move into Communications and the newly minted Special Projects Coordinator position has had me planted in front of a computer far more than I used to be. However, it is not the whole story.

As Special Projects Coordinator one of my projects has been to visit the local farms that we work with. As many as possible, anyway, since we work with so many local farms that it might not be possible to see them all in one growing season.

FARMS Cont. on page 9

42 Bridge Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230
413.528.9697
www.berkshire.coop
Mon - Sat 8 am - 8 pm
Sunday 10 am - 6 pm



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NOTES FROM HQ: THE GM REPORT

By Art Ames, General Manager



I love fall. It's my favorite time of year here in the Berkshires. We are so busy in the summer that I appreciate the ability to simply take a deep breath, at least until the big holidays come our way. As many of you know, in my spare time I travel a lot to music events, and while I love festival season during the summer, it's still kind of nice to relax a bit right now. Speaking of music, I am now writing for a couple of magazines, reviewing music, and continue to broadcast a couple of radio shows, and having a blast. Thanks for your kind and supportive comments. On to the business at hand...

Store Changes

Nothing major to report. We did reset the frozen food case, and it now better reflects our Ends and your needs. We reduced the variety of frozen entrees and snacks, mainly because they are simply loaded with ingredients like sodium, and in our opinion, no matter how many disguising ingredients are put into the item, at best they taste adequate and cost a ton of money to buy. Actually, we think we can do better, and are just beginning to investigate the feasibility of being able to offer frozen grab-n-go entrees made here by our kitchen. Stay tuned. In the meantime, we've doubled the space for frozen locally produced protein items, specifically beef, pork, lamb, sausage and seafood.

We are shortly about to make the final changes to our Bulk department. We will condense our bulk herbs, spices and teas to one area and free up one more end-of-aisle "end cap" for value based sale items. If you can't find it, please ask. It's likely that we still have it, but have simply moved it. Speaking of bulk, we are well aware that some of you are less than pleased with the changes we made in our packaged bulk products. Most of them now come in recyclable plastic containers that are made from made 50% post-consumer waste and are in the grocery aisle near cereal. Generally, prices came down for most items or stayed the same, and we were able to add nutritional information. We are working with our local supplier to increase the selection of four-ounce containers, offering smaller portions. We felt that we had to make this change for a variety of reasons. Now we can offer you more ingredient information; we've handed over the packaging to an industry standard clean facility instead of burying an unfortunate Co-op employee at a back table, and have stabilized costs in a category that we expected would rise dramatically otherwise. Thanks for your patience as we bring in smaller container sizes and fine-tune our ordering to cut down on out-of-stock issues.

Product Update

I'm amazed. At one point this year our Produce department was carrying over 90 local items! Wow! Aside from tropical and citrus fruits, just about everything was local and regional, and it's still going strong.

You all know that we've been making major changes in the Produce department, and while we still aren't quite where we want to be, I am delighted by the progress. We've been able to track what went on this season so that we can meet with our amazing growers this winter and be even better prepared for next year. We used our truck to source hard-to-find produce out of the Pioneer Valley and to supply ourselves with ample stone fruit and apples out of Hudson Valley, and even helped another co-op increase their local participation by assisting with transportation. This winter we'll work to develop a better use of our truck to reduce our carbon footprint and support our local growing community even more.

inventory controls to continue to improve efficiency. These are the types of things that we can do to get ready for the new store and either hold the line or lower the prices of our products for you. I'm not going to talk a lot about pricing. We compare prices just like you do, and based on the cost of goods we are more efficient than ever, and generally more competitive than ever. A few of you may not agree, but I assure you based on the quality and locality of the products that we sell, we are doing all that we can. By the way, we've put together two Q&A pieces in previous newsletters, one dealing with relocation and one with GMOs. Next edition, we'll do something similar with pricing. It's time.

the entire site, and won't have to rely solely on a cap process. Because the new process involves planning and testing, the process is taking a bit of time. We will have answers late in the spring of 2014, and will share our knowledge at that time. Regardless, I give you our absolute guarantee that we will not move toward making this our permanent home unless and until we receive all assurances from current partners and third party checks and balances that the site will be completely safe for all of us. Anything short of this will stop the project in its tracks. A few of you have vehement opinions, one way or another, about the varied clean-up processes, including capping possibilities. So are we, but we will rely on knowledge and expertise to make our decision, and not solely base it on emotion, although there's plenty of that to go around.

You may have read in a local newspaper recently that we have reopened the search for a new location. Let me be clear that based on our Ends, and the amazing benefits to the community that developing 100 Bridge Street would provide, it is still our preference that we open a new Co-op at that site, providing a store capable of allowing

“At one point this year our Produce department was carrying over 90 local items!”

It's exciting stuff, and I'd like to give a huge thank you to Jake, Asa and the rest of our produce team for making this all happen.

Austin has been developing new relationships with local meat and seafood providers, and I can't even begin to list all of the new and local protein choices that we now have. I've personally had a blast as an owner/shopper, being able to grab soft shell crabs during the season, or oysters, or even red fish for my own dinners. I'm picky. I admit it. I insist on fresh products, and have complete confidence in our seafood selections, an area that frankly has always made me nervous when shopping in other stores. As the holidays approach he'll turn his attention to fall and winter selections, including other cuts of meat, and our already strong cheese selection. I can't wait!

Finance

Our sales this summer were actually lower than last summer's sales, though a good deal higher than two summers ago. Speaking with other retailers in the area, it appears that many experienced similar results. We are one year removed from being named "best small town in America," and there seemed to be far more consumer traveling last year, as consumer confidence was higher than at present. I personally believe that the size of our store has caught up with us and that we simply can't bring you some of the selection that you want. There's a traditional sales pattern that looks like a bell curve. Sales steadily and sometimes rapidly climbed for six or seven years since moving to our location, and are now leveling off. Typically, this is the moment when retail stores renovate existing locations. In our case, we are relocating to a bigger store, eventually. We'll continue to get ready by focusing on better employee training, systems improvements and

“I can't even begin to list all of the new and local protein choices that we now have.”

Relocation

Based on a couple of recent owner observations, I think it bears repeating: We are working toward a new store not because we want to, but because we must. Our current building will need significant renovation and repair in the coming years, even if we are able to address the lack of sufficient parking. We always knew this would be the case, and from the first day we moved to 42 Bridge Street have been up-front about our eventual need to do this again. The time is here. Relocation is not being done just so that we can be fancier and bigger. Simply put, we will get far more for our buck and carbon footprint by moving and not renovating. If we wait much longer, the building will deteriorate. If we don't develop more storage space, we will fall victim as gas prices inevitably rise because we must receive product seven days a week. Grocery and other food prices will absolutely go up, even beyond cost-of-living adjustments, as we fall victim to peak energy issues. We cannot hide our heads in the sand, and just about all of you realize this.

All of us are cognizant of the fact that our preferred site, 100 Bridge Street, contains contaminants. We are delighted that it looks like we may be able to clean some, most, or

us to succeed through the next several decades amidst a changing world, along a river that will provide green space and community access. However, while we collect answers, we would not be doing our due diligence if I ceased to be proactive, and consequently I am looking at alternatives...just in case. I'll renew the discussion of expanding in the current location even though we strongly believe it makes more sense to move, and I will investigate the potential of new opportunities at the relatively dormant Searles/Bryant complex across the street. Our potential partners are closely aligned with our vision and values. This is a complicated and challenging project, and if there comes a point when the Co-op feels that the logistics or time needed or expenses involved indicate that 100 Bridge Street won't work, we want to be prepared for plan B. And we will be.

See you at Annual Meeting. I'm looking forward to talking with many of you, and am really looking forward to seeing our old friend Gar Alperovitz again. He's truly one of the smartest guys around and his speech is sure to be inspirational.

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DATES OF INTEREST

2014 OWNER APPRECIATION DAYS

10% OFF TO OWNERS IN GOOD STANDING

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18TH

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16TH

THURSDAY, JULY 17TH

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16TH

BOARD MEETINGS

HELD THE 4TH WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH
SCHEDULE CHANGES NOVEMBER & DECEMBER DUE TO HOLIDAYS
6:00 PM • BERKSHIRE CO-OP OFFICES • 307 MAIN STREET

Co-op owners are welcome to attend Board meetings. Owner-input time is reserved from 6:45 – 7 pm to speak on any topic. If you need more time or want to address something in more detail, you can request to be placed onto the meeting agenda. Please recognize that the agenda needs to be set and posted in advance of any meeting. Requests must be received at least two weeks prior to the meeting date.

Send requests to bod@berkshire.coop



OUR ENDS

(Developed By The Board of Directors)

The Berkshire Cooperative Association cultivates a sustainable local/regional economy and cooperatively builds a vibrant community.

To this end, the Berkshire Cooperative Association:

- E1. Operates a financially successful, community-oriented natural food store that specializes in consciously fresh food and meals, with reasonably priced options
- E2. Flourishes
- E3. Is a model of social and environmental stewardship
- E4. Is accessible, welcoming, inclusive and innovative
- E5. Fosters the growth of local/regional food systems
- E6. Develops an informed and engaged community
- E7. Promotes healthful living
- E8. Supports a sustainable environment

OPERATIONAL VISION

- To be a transformative force in the community
- To serve as a model of a sustainable business alternative
- To nurture social and economic well-being in an environmentally sensitive manner

Meeting the Meat: A Visit to Elmartin Farm

By Austin Banach, Meat & Seafood Manager

A few months back we started working with a new local farm, Elmartin, and brought in some great beef and pork products raised on their land in Cheshire, Massachusetts. We knew from the start after meeting brothers Kim and Shawn Martin that they were thrilled to be working with the Co-op and would help us expand our local meat selection. In return we would be committed to supporting their business, highlighting their products in our store, and helping them grow with us.

I should explain that when I wrote that it is a “new” local farm, I meant new to the Co-op. The Martin family has been farming in Cheshire, Massachusetts, since 1790. They are therefore very far from new. Elmartin Farm derived its name from the seventh generation owner’s initials and last name: Everett Lawrence Martin, better known as Gus. For more than fifty years the farm operated as a dairy and the glass bottles with the Elmartin logo were peddled throughout Cheshire, Adams and other parts of the Berkshires. The farm ended its dairy operation in 1984.

Today, brothers Kim and Shawn are the eighth generation of Martins to keep the farm alive and thriving. In 2011 they decided to revive the farm’s business by focusing on livestock, particularly beef and pork. “Farming was always in us,” recalls Kim. “We want to keep the tradition and values strong in our family and teach the next generation to appreciate and know where their food comes from.” After taking agricultural classes and receiving a grant from the state, the Martin brothers took what they needed to make the honest family business just what it had been for the 100+ years prior.

The Martins take animal husbandry very seriously. The utmost care goes into the health and welfare of the animals. The 430 acres of land with beautiful picturesque mountain views is undoubtedly enjoyed by the 50 Angus cows and 50 Berkshire-cross pigs on the farm. The cows are 100 percent grass-fed and the pigs receive a natural diet of vegetables and grains. No hormones or antibiotics are ever used on the animals. Also, to minimize stress on the animals, only two or three are transported to a slaughtering facility at a time.

A common misconception about local meat is that along with smaller scale farming and heritage breeds there comes a higher price. The Martins have worked with us to offer a fair price that benefits both them and the Co-op. For local grass-fed beef and pork, it is one of our better values.

Not only have the Martins been able to provide us with some great beef and pork cuts, they are also able to work with us to develop nitrate-free products including smoked ham, bacon and sausages. The ham quickly became a favorite among our staff and customers and now it is star ingredient in the café as well.

Another thing we are proud of is to have helped Elmartin Farm grow by introducing them to other co-op markets. Prior to doing business with Berkshire Co-op Market, Kim and Shawn were only selling from the farm, a few area farmers’ markets, and to restaurants. Soon Elmartin Farm will be selling their products to Honest Weight Food Co-op in Albany, New York, marking perhaps their largest client yet.

We are thrilled to have partnered with Elmartin Farm to bring the Co-op great local products at an affordable value with great people and stories behind them.

Elmartin Farm is located at 594 Windsor Road in Cheshire, Massachusetts, and can be reached at (413) 743-9154. Visitors welcome by appointment. www.elmartinfarm.com



Elmartin Farm in Cheshire, Massachusetts, raises 50+ Berkshire Cross pigs.



The farm has been running for over 100 years - first as a dairy and now as a meat producer.

This Thanksgiving Season

GIVE MORE THAN THANKS



In the month of November, the Co-op will donate \$1 to local food pantries for every Thanksgiving Preorder received. Call to order today.

TURKEYS - PIES - PLATES - SIDES

Education & Outreach Report: Another Great Summer

By Jenny Schwartz, Education & Outreach Coordinator

As summer gives way to fall, we transition back into the school year, looking forward both to working with a set of new schools and reconnecting with old friends. The end of the season was highlighted by Summerfest, a community street party in Great Barrington that returned this year a long hiatus. Summerfest was a new event for me and I geared up with excitement as I heard stories from years past. A fan of Great Barrington's holiday stroll in December, I was ready to relish the summer day, free of my parka, hat and gloves. Summerfest provided a welcome opportunity to bring the Food Adventures "Education Station" into the heart of Great Barrington. Summerfest allowed us to bring our programming—and the feeling of excitement about healthy foods—to another group of local children.

Over the summer we introduced Education Station at the new downtown Pittsfield Farmers' Market. We offered free five-minute, no-bake cooking classes. This was a perfect venue for connecting with the youth in that area, and for seeing some familiar faces that we usually only see during the school year. The Education Station has a growing fan club—each week parents told us how much their children looked forward to coming to the market and happily anticipated the new week's offering.

In addition to our Farmers' Market programs, Food Adventures taught 57 classes over the course of six weeks this summer. Together with Morgan Kulchinsky, a nutrition educator at the Nutrition Center of Pittsfield (TNC), we continued driving our "traveling kitchens" to several camp programs in this collaboration between Berkshire Co-op Market and TNC. We visited camp programs at BART Charter School in North Adams, continued our collaboration with IS183 and their program at Morningside Elementary School and Pittsfield High School, and held a two-week program at Muddybrook Elementary School in Great Barrington.

In the first sultry week of July we met with the fantastic (yet sweaty!) students of Morningside, who were ready for more Food Adventures. The summer's curriculum was focused on the idea of "Roots and Wings: All you need to Grow and Soar," another creative curriculum designed by IS183. Art was incorporated throughout as we met camp groups named after famous artists such as Monet, Van Gogh and Picasso. Our first week we focused on our roots—where we and our families come from and the types of foods eaten in different cultures around the world. This exploration resulted in making hummus from scratch, with carrots and corn tortillas for dipping. The kids then drew pictures of a memorable food experience such as Thanksgiving, birthdays and getting ice cream with a friend. The next week we focused on more literal roots. What is growing in the ground as we speak? What can we harvest and use to make a meal? After learning about cultures and planting our own roots, it was time to talk about what children need in order to grow into healthy adults. In the final class at Morningside, we discussed what activities would make us "soar." In this case, it meant the importance of eating a healthy breakfast each morning, and we finished by making a Food Adventures favorite: a breakfast burrito!

BART Charter School provided us with an opportunity to work with middle and high school students. We held a one-week course that focused on a variety of important topics: meal planning; eating a balanced meal; label reading; shopping on a budget, and other topics. The week concluded with the participants working in teams to develop their own balanced recipe with a budget of \$20. They looked through sales fliers to determine the most nutritious ingredients for their dollar. On the last day they went shopping and prepared their recipes. The kids got creative, sourcing from their own home gardens and pantries to help save money. This type of experience is invaluable as children learn to take responsibility for their own health and gain the skills they need to put their learning into practice.

In July we had the pleasure of working with soon-to-be high school students at Pittsfield High School. In four sessions we worked with four groups of teens and led them through hands-on cooking experiences. Similar to the lessons taught at BART, we included the power of food marketing, reviewing advertisements found in various magazines. We analyzed target groups and assessed them, noting which ads caught their eye and why. Pittsfield High School is complete with a certified commercial kitchen that the kids were able to use to make some great recipes in a professional setting. While we ate we engaged the kids in a mini-lesson. They were amazed at the amount of sugar found in Coca-Cola, which we demonstrated by measuring out spoonful after spoonful of the sweetener. We knew we made an impact when, in the last class, students asked where they could buy local produce in Pittsfield because they did not have the garden space to grow their own food. It was a gratifying experience to tell them about Berkshire Grown's Map-olicious (berkshiregrown.org/map-o-licious), a useful resource that connects consumers to farms in their area. Some students expressed interest in working on local farms.

With all of these great programs, and wonderful students, summer passed quickly, and before we knew it fall was here. With the new season came new classes, students, lesson plans and more! Food Adventures is excited to be at BART Charter School in North Adams in addition to Morningside Elementary School and Muddybrook Elementary School. For more information on our Food Adventures Program, contact Jenny Schwartz at jschwartz@berkshire.coop or Morgan Kulchinsky at Morgan@tnc413.org.

Thank you to the farms who hosted educational farm tours this growing season: Mead's Maple Syrup, Indian Line Farm, Rawson Brook Farm, McEnroe Farm, Sol Flower Farm, Klein's Kill Fruit Farm and Windy Hill Farm. And a big thanks to the Berkshire Co-op kitchen for seasonal recipes to sample at the conclusion of the tour. Your attendance matters, so please continue to participate! Visit www.berkshire.coop or contact Jenny Schwartz for more details on kids' workshops and farm tours at jschwartz@berkshire.coop or call 413-528-9697 ext. 33.



The final result of a group's recipe for the Iron Chef activity at BART Charter School. Garden Salad with sautéed tofu, homemade croutons and a berry smoothie.



A Morningside student's drawing of her Thanksgiving table drawn while learning about food traditions around the world. This was a drawing of her family food tradition.

UPCOMING KIDS WORKSHOP

Kids
Can
Cook!

DIY
Kids

DIY Kids: Found Object Thanksgiving Garlands
Saturday, November 9th, 2013 • 3:00 PM

Kids Can Cook!
Twice Baked Delicata Squash w/ Toasted Seeds
Saturday, November 23rd, 2013 • 10:00 AM

DIY Kids: 3rd Annual Make Your Own Snow Globes
Saturday, December 14th, 2013 • 3:00 PM

Kids Can Cook! Gingerbread People
Saturday, December 21st, 2013 • 10:00 AM

To sign up, stop by the front desk or call 413.528.9697

A Look At Life From the Farmer's Point of View

Seasonal observations from a local food producer.

By Amanda Hanley-Dalzell of Three Maples Market Garden

The conventional idea of “harvest season” doesn’t really apply to our small-scale CSA farming model. After all, we’ve been harvesting at least twice a week since May, so we chuckled a little this September when a cousin from New Jersey said, “So, harvest time! How’s that going?” But a week later we were bringing in bushels of freshly dug potatoes, laying out hundreds of winter squash to cure in the greenhouse, and cutting down the stalks of our small rice crop with a hand scythe. Suddenly that old-timey notion of the harvest didn’t feel too far off.

It’s been a good season; we grew a lot of produce and on the whole our CSA members are happy. Our first patchy frost came early this year and I wasn’t ready yet—wasn’t prepared to let go of the sweat and tomatoes of summer—so I was grateful that it only blackened a leaf here and there. It did send us scrambling to dig the sweet potatoes a little earlier than we had planned; after nursing the plants all summer, trying to produce a decent crop in this climate without black plastic mulch, I wasn’t about to lose those precious tubers to cold damage. We dug them over the course of an hour or so, struggling not to skewer them with the digging fork and sifting through the soil to make sure we didn’t miss any.

Now that the harvest is in, we begin the process of putting the garden to bed. Instead of pulling weeds, I’m pulling the plants I’ve tended all year, heaping them up in great big piles that I’ll haul off to the compost. In two years, the remains of this year’s crops will help to grow another season’s worth of produce.

We do another round of rock-picking, too, to collect all the big stones we’ve pulled from the beds and left in the paths. No need to worry—our glacial soil is sure to offer up another generous crop of rocks next year. Once the beds are cleaned up we’ll spread on a layer of compost, a down payment on next year’s harvest.

Since the garden has fewer immediate demands in autumn, we turn our attention to projects that have piled up all summer. Cian is turning a stack of pallets into shelving and a potting bench. We’re spreading tree mulch in the greenhouse, in the permanent pathways between the asparagus beds, around the perennials and even over compost in a small section of the garden for an experiment in no-till farming. We’re drawing up plans for a new washing shed, putting fencing around the young apple trees, and cleaning and stacking the seed trays and pots that grew this year’s seedlings so they’ll be all ready when we need them early next year. Inevitably some of the less crucial projects will fall by the wayside and be pushed back to spring or, more than likely, to next autumn, when they’ll take their turn at the top of the list.

As the season winds down and the days grow shorter, I find myself thinking less about what we will do next year and more about what I will do next month. Like sleep in, and cook big meals, and sit on the couch with a book and a cup of tea in the middle of the day. But come January, I’ll be bored with relaxing, and itching to end my long winter’s nap and start planning for another season’s harvest.



Winter Squashes at Three Maples Market Garden.

Remembering the Origins of Our Non-GMO Policy

By Matthew Novik, Communications Manager

By now, you probably know about the Co-op’s current policy on Genetically Modified Organisms. In short, we have refused to accept any new product if it contains nonorganic high GMO risk ingredients without third-party non-GMO certification. October is Non-GMO month, so I’ve been sorting through a lot of promotional items and rereading some emails from when this all got started. After reading a particularly nasty email from a customer to remain nameless, who thought that our current GMO policy wasn’t enough and demanded more action, I started to think about the whole story, how it started, and why we acted the way we did.

Back in 2011, GMO alfalfa had just been fully deregulated, rocking the organic community, and it looked like the rapid growth of GMOs was going to be even faster than before. At that time, the Co-op signed up to be a supporting retailer in the Non-GMO Project. With their support, we could at least label the non-GMO products in the face of GMO expansion and a complete lack of labeling laws.

After we signed up, Daniel (our Non-Perishables Manager) and I participated in a webinar produced

by Megan Westgate, the Executive Director of the Non-GMO Project. The presentation was an introduction to the project for new supporting retailers, and the information was plentiful and quite daunting.

Megan took us through the whole story. She defined the difference between genetic engineering and traditional crossbreeding methods. She told us about the history. She updated us on current trends. And she outlined the political landscape around Monsanto and food politics. As I said before, the information was daunting. But we both left that room thinking the same thing. That is one smart lady, and if anyone could lead the charge, she could.

The facts, however, were a lot to take in. The percentages of U.S. commodity crops that were GMO were staggering: 88% of corn; 94% of soy; 95% of sugar beets, 90% of canola. There were more unregulated products coming, but these alone represented four of the largest commodity markets in the world. And, of course, that means that they are in EVERYTHING!

What was our store to do? Our GMO policy then was a pledge to “not knowingly sell food with

genetically modified ingredients.”

But the truth was easy to see, and with GMOs flooding the market, that policy was fast becoming unsustainable. We have never had an all-organic food policy here. We chose instead to embrace a mixed approach to food retail using a food policy that declared our standards without restricting our options in too many ways. That allowed us to work with more local suppliers and to offer more affordable

foods when possible. To remove all nonorganic products at that point would have turned our store from an \$8.5 million business to a \$4 million one overnight. That change would have forced us to lay off two-thirds of the staff, drastically—if not completely—dismantle our outreach programs, and move the store to a smaller space. And, even then,



with crosscontamination concerns, we couldn’t guarantee a GMO-free store. It was painfully obvious that, while we knew consumers expected natural and organic products to be GMO-free, it simply was not that simple a problem to solve. But we had to do something.

A few months later, I found myself at a [GMO Cont. on page 11](#)

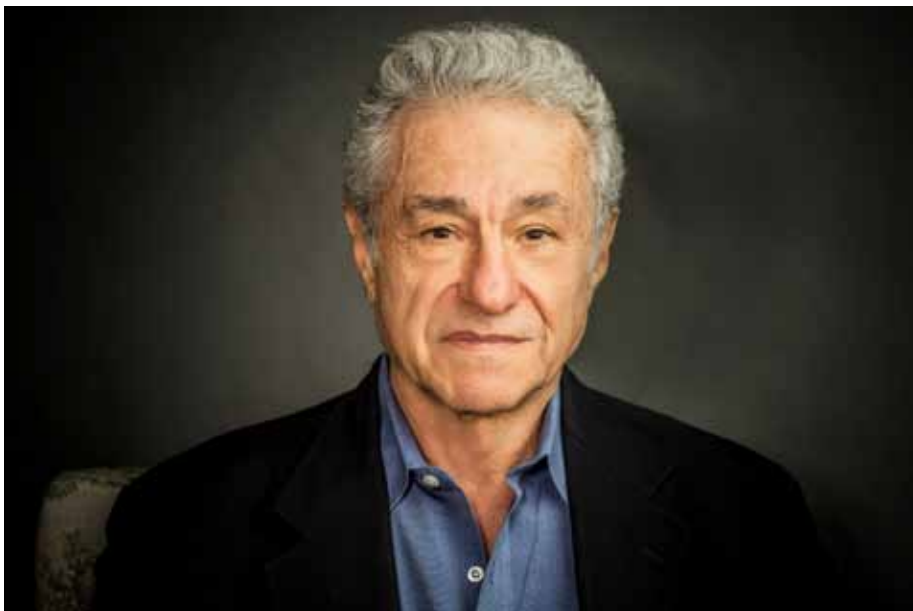
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2013

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: GAR ALPEROVITZ



Gar Alperovitz has had a distinguished career as a historian, political economist, activist, writer and government official. He is currently the Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland and is a former Fellow of Kings College, Cambridge University; Harvard's Institute of Politics; the Institute for Policy Studies, and a Guest Scholar at the Brookings Institution.

He is the author of critically acclaimed books on the atomic bomb and atomic diplomacy and his articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New Republic*, the *Nation* and the *Atlantic*, among other popular and academic publications. He has been profiled by the *New York Times*, The Associated Press, *People*, UPI and *Mother Jones* and has been a guest on numerous network TV and cable news programs.

In his most recent book, *What Then Must We Do? Straight Talk About the Next American Revolution* (published in 2013 by Chelsea Green), Dr. Alperovitz speaks about where we find ourselves in history, why the time is right for a new-economy movement to coalesce, what it means to build a new system to replace the crumbling one, and how we might begin. He also suggests what the next system might look like—and where we can see its outlines, like an image slowly emerging in the developing trays of a photographer's darkroom, already taking shape. He proposes a possible next system that is not corporate capitalism, not state socialism, but something else entirely—and something entirely American. Alperovitz calls for an evolution, not a revolution, out of the old system and into the new. That new system would democratize the ownership of wealth, strengthen communities in diverse ways, and be governed by policies and institutions sophisticated enough to manage a large-scale, powerful economy.



A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Welcome to our Annual Meeting special edition! I'm delighted that you are giving it the attention it deserves, and look forward to seeing many of you on November 9th. We've had to move the location again this year. Our previous location is booked, and consequently we'll need to ask you to drive just a tad farther away and join us at Eastover Resort in Lenox. The reality is that there are very few places that have the capacity to host our event. We think you'll love Eastover once you get there!

FREE MONEY!!!! Did I get your attention? I hope so. Each of the last four years I have been happy to start a paragraph off with those words. Once again, we will be issuing a Patronage Dividend to our owners. This year, just over \$20,000 will be returned to you. At this meeting, when you attend, we will hand you a check; same as last year. You may take it with you, we can cash it for you on site or you can sign it over to one of three community causes. The choice is yours. It's your money. Not only do we want you to have it and cash it, but if you do not cash the check, you actually hurt the Co-op! I know that I have explained this in previous newsletters, but it's important enough to repeat.

Your dividend check represents a portion of the profit that the Co-op made last year. The federal government allows us to return dividends to owners and to deduct the dividend from our taxable income. However, they also tell us that the checks issued must be cashed within three months or we lose the flexibility that they granted to us. Last year 108 checks remained unprocessed at the deadline, totaling \$790. The payout was 30% of the total dividend, meaning \$2,633 was returned to taxable income this year. To make it simple, we had to pay extra money to the federal government because some of you didn't cash your checks. Remember that we aren't looking for loopholes in paying our taxes. Instead, as a cooperative we have the ability to keep local currency within our local economy by giving it back directly to you. This is one of the reasons that we restructured as a cooperative a few years ago. So, please, do all of us a favor and cash those checks. If you really don't want or don't care about the money, then by all means, donate it, give it away, use the cash as a fire starter—whatever you want to do—because it's yours to burn.

As long as I'm in lecture mode, allow me to go over two more subjects. I want to talk briefly about the whole RSVP thing and how we deal with feeding so many people in one sitting. Yes, Annual Meeting costs money. However, it's also an opportunity for us to meet, celebrate and engage. Because it enhances and strengthens our little community, the money spent is an investment in our organization and in our community.

Every year, the biggest expense is the food that we need to order, prepare and serve. Consequently, we began an RSVP process a few years ago. This has really helped. The one catch has been that in years past too many of our owners told us that they would be coming and then were not able to attend. While I do not object to investing our funds, I don't want to waste them either. The final number of meals is made official a week before the event, so we had to pay for all of those no-shows. That's why we would like to let you all know, once again, that if you RSVP and then cannot attend, we will need to assess a service charge if we don't hear from you at least a week in advance. By the way, the charge is not even close to our actual cost, but merely a way to recoup some of the funds lost. I hope you understand why we need to do this.

I also feel obligated to point out that this is an Annual Meeting, required by law in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We must conduct the business of the Co-op, and feel it important that we have a good amount of owners attending to ensure proper representation. The food is our way of celebrating while we take care of the business at hand. We'll report on our financial status and have our external accounting agency available for your questions. We will also offer candidates for our Board of Directors for your consideration. This year we have three regular open three-year terms.

As it was last year, food will be served at the beginning of our meeting. There will no longer be a long line for food at the conclusion. In the past, some owners have showed up at the very end of our agenda expecting dinner. That won't be possible anymore and if indeed you arrive at the conclusion, dinner will be over, although you are welcome to have some dessert.

I am delighted that Gar Alperovitz will be speaking at our meeting. His biography is included elsewhere in this newsletter. He's an old friend who actually spoke at our Annual Meeting back in 2005, not long after we relocated to Bridge Street, and a few years before the national recession. His words were prescient then, and will be even more crucial to hear now.

Please note that registration starts at 4:00 and ends when the meeting starts, at 5:00. Please try to get there early. We'll have snacks, so don't worry about getting there too early. It's also a great time to mingle.

Because I can be long-winded, I'm going to summarize a few key points.

- If you RSVP and then find you cannot attend and do not notify us within a week of Annual Meeting, we will need to assess a charge for food.
- We will not be able to let you into the meeting, and consequently dinner, after 5:15 PM. You can join us after dinner for dessert if you wish. If you have a special issue and call us two days in advance, we may be able to work out something.
- We plead with you to cash your dividend checks. It hurts the Co-op if you don't.

Obviously I don't enjoy giving you a list of "don'ts." I also know that you understand that this not a traditional business and you are owners of our organization. As a result, you support us in our need to stipulate these necessary items. Annual Meeting is a chance to break bread together. We will have great food in a wonderful venue, an inspiring and relevant speaker and a surprise or two. I love Annual Meeting. Can't wait to see you all there!

Candidates for the



Betsy Andrus

SUMMARY OF PAST AND CURRENT WORK AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

Currently I am the Executive Director for the Southern Berkshire Chamber Of Commerce. Since taking this job almost two years ago, I have spent 50-60 hours a week working with local businesses, organizations, town officials, schools and towns people to promote commerce in our nine towns. We have achieved great success through our seminars, local events, networking and promoting of our members to make our communities stronger. I also manage both commercial and residential property for local and part time residents. In this role I over see everything from every day task to large additions and property projects.

In 1987 I was hired by S&A Supply, a plumbing, heating & electrical wholesale house, to create and manage the 2000+sq ft showrooms in two of their locations. During my 18 years there I was also responsible for all seminars, customer promotional activities, large specialty events, traveling for educational seminars and factory tours and the development of new product lines. In 2005 I went into business for myself, Betz Design & Consulting. This progressed quickly into a wide range of jobs including, new home & remodeling construction management, staging, property management, event coordinating, repurposing homes, estate liquidation and organizing of people's homes and businesses.

Along with my service on the Co-op Board, I also serve on the GB Task force, designed to improve communication in regards to construction during the Great Barrington Main Street Reconstruction Project. Along with the GB Parking Task Force designed to make Great Barrington more accessible to residents and visitors during the construction project.

Each year I help the Great Barrington Rotary with their annual Fly-In. This event raises money for their scholarships program. I assist with the event coordination and vendor layout and communication. I also volunteer at my church for many smaller events.

In 2009 I volunteered for the 250th Anniversary Committee and accepted the Co-Chair position. This committee has given me the opportunity to really get to know some truly great people in our town. I enjoyed the good and the challenging parts of each event. My reward was always the looks on the people's faces as they enjoyed each event. 2011 was a great year for our community.

WHY I WOULD LIKE TO SERVE ON THE CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

My feelings have not changed in regards to serving on the Board of the Co-op. Born and raised in Great Barrington, I follow a long history of family members active in our community and local business. I understand you have to commit to buying and supporting local businesses in order to have a thriving community

EXPERIENCES WITH COOPERATIVES:

22 years ago, due to health issues with a family member, I was encouraged to shop at the Co-op. I quickly fell in love with its coziness and the feeling of having someone watching out for your health and wellness. All these years later I enjoy my visits to the Co op on almost a daily basis. I know that the Co-op employees are spending many hours researching, testing, and coordinating local product to bring myself and my family the quality food and products that I feel we deserve, free of products that are unnatural and questionable in nature.

I was elected to the Board of the Berkshire Co-op four years ago. I am glad to be a small part of such a worthwhile organization. I wholeheartedly support the efforts with local foods, local farms, and local product. It's amazing what we have to offer in our area.

EXAMPLES OF WORKING COLLABORATIVELY AS A MEMBER OF A GROUP:

My entire day is spent working collaboratively with many different groups and organizations. If I had to guess I would say I have worked with approximately 90% of the organizations and businesses in our area. I have worked on large and small building projects, encompassing builders, sub-contractors, material providers, realtors and clients. I have developed and implemented large and small events, campaigns and programs. These have served small groups 25-50 people up to 2,000 – 4,000 people. I have worked with individual backers and multiple sponsors on projects and events.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND:

In the past I served on the Board for my company, I am currently governed by an 18 person Chamber of Commerce Board and I have served on the Co-op Board for four years.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The fact that I am the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce and the Co-op is a member of the Chamber I don't feel is a conflict but I will let the Board decide.



Lawrence Davis-Hollander

SUMMARY OF PAST AND CURRENT WORK AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

Currently I am designing, planting and maintaining ornamental and vegetable gardens, and writing articles for several publications about food plants including most recently Baker Creek's new Whole Seed Catalog. I coordinate programs at the Scoville Library in Salisbury Connecticut, which includes speaker engagement in wide array of subjects, creating collaborations and public relations.

I have for most of my life been deeply involved with plants and agriculture, trained as a botanist and then ethnobotanist, and worked in the field with Native Americans. In the late 1970's I started organic farming before it was fashionable, having been obsessed with the notion of organic gardening from the time I was 12. Later on I became Director of Horticulture at the Berkshire Botanic Garden and for a while interim Director, where I first started growing heirloom plants. In 1993 I founded Eastern Native Seed Conservancy to preserve rare heirloom seeds and promote their use amongst farmers, chefs and everyone else. I started food to table events focused on rare foods with prominent chefs from the Berkshires, New York and Boston. At the Conservancy I did everything from bottle washing to fundraising, PR and education.

Other recent professional work has included coaching, facilitation and mediation. Most recently I have conducted trainings for Multicultural BRIDGE and worked with separating and divorced individuals through the Divorce Dialogues.

WHY I WOULD LIKE TO SERVE ON THE CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

I have remained on the Board of the COOP for a long time because I love the organization, the store, the staff and all the people I work with. For me it is one of the most functional boards and organizations in our region. It is also one of the few non-profits (though technically it isn't) that make enough money to be able to help out all kinds of community and advocacy projects from underserved populations to schools and farms. The great benefits the Coop has upon its owners and the community as a whole continues to attract me. Now I want to see the organization through one more key expansion, hopefully our last. I have served on the Ends (Vision) committee of the Coop Board and am currently Board Development chair. I am also the chairman of Bartholomew's Cobble property Committee. Much of my past volunteerism has been as a Coop Board member though I have also participated in cleanups and helping Native Americans and others with garden projects. I was recently on the Board of the Tri-State Chamber of Commerce in Northwest Connecticut for several years.

EXPERIENCES WITH COOPERATIVES:

I first joined a coop in 1975 called Llama, Toucan and Crow which subsequently was bought by Northeast Cooperatives. That was the first of several cooperatives (now termed buying clubs) in which I participated by purchasing cooperatively and working for the coop by distributing food amongst its members. In the early 1980's I worked for several years in a variety of capacities at Erewhon health food store in Cambridge. I started shopping at the Berkshire Co-op in 1982 and joined as a member-owner when I moved to Berkshire County full time a few years later.

EXAMPLES OF WORKING COLLABORATIVELY AS A MEMBER OF A GROUP:

I can point to many examples of working collaboratively and the most outstanding example is the Coop board. While its composition has shifted over the years the ability to work together COOPERATIVELY while holding multiple viewpoints is wonderful. Our meeting style allows for everyone to have a voice, have that voice be heard, challenged, and the group wisdom arise and form to arrive at a new idea with new possibilities. It is so seamless we don't even realize how difficult this can be for other organizations.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND:

I have spent much of my adult life on the Coop board because I am dedicated and passionate about food, organic growing and products, nutrition, ingredients, farms, herbs, plants and much else the coop represents. I am also very interested in organizations and organizational development having worked or ran a variety of businesses and non-profits. I have also been through one coop expansion, and while it entails lots of work, our present store was always an intermediate step from the end of Rossiter Street to eventually serving as an even bigger community organization. I bring my understanding and experience about relocation and development projects. I want to continue to be part of that effort and vision, and bring my services again to the board, this wonderful organization, our owners, and the larger community.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

I have no conflicts of interest at this time.

Board of Directors



Bryan Ayers

SUMMARY OF PAST AND CURRENT WORK AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

Since September of 2009 I have been the CEO of Community Health Programs (CHP). Previously I consulted with organizations in small and rural communities across the country to help them collaborate in order to improve the health of the community. Prior to that I oversaw multiple programs within the State of New Hampshire Health and Human Services' that improved access to primary healthcare services in towns throughout the state. Before that I was the CEO of a small hospital in Kentucky.

I serve on the Board of the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers. I have also served as a volunteer on a number of emergency medical service organizations; as the Communications Manager of the Whitewater Canoe and Kayak venue at the 1996 Olympics, a local Zoning Board, assisted with Lee Founder's Day celebrations, and many other town events in Pennsylvania and New Hampshire.

WHY I WOULD LIKE TO SERVE ON THE CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

The Co-op and Community Health Programs envision a healthier environment and community. Creating opportunities to increase access to healthy food options is a key component of improving health outcomes. Serving on the Co-op Board would create more opportunities to collaborate with other organizations working toward the common goal of a healthier community.

EXPERIENCES WITH COOPERATIVES:

I have no formal experience working with cooperatives or natural food businesses, but have extensive experience working with human service and health businesses, as well as within the government, as a leader, board member, or manager.

EXAMPLES OF WORKING COLLABORATIVELY AS A MEMBER OF A GROUP:

On a daily basis, the CHP Senior Leadership Team collaborates to attain goals that are based on shared priorities. Whether it is the selection of one employee candidate over another, a policy decision, or a major programmatic change; each individual contributes his or her expertise to create the best decision that will further our shared priorities, rather than individual preferences.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND:

The Co-op is a great example of individuals investing time, energy, and other resources to improve the world around them. This is consistent with my personal and professional norms and I believe by diverse experiences will help to guide the Co-op through the next phase of growth and change.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

I am not aware of any actual conflicts. Art Ames is a Board member of CHP, which may be perceived as a conflict.



Michael Guthrie

SUMMARY OF PAST AND CURRENT WORK AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

I am now "retired" following 35 years of work within community mental health. The last 25 years were with The Brien Center's 60 Cottage Street office. The final seven years I served as the director at the clinic. I retired in October 2012. Currently, I am working as a psychotherapist in private practice with an office in Great Barrington.

Currently I am not involved in community service. My most recent community involvement was with the Berkshire Co-op from 1998 until 2006.

WHY I WOULD LIKE TO SERVE ON THE CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

My respect and appreciation for the Co-op and its role in the community has only increased since leaving the board in 2006. Our family has continued to be supporters via our shopping habits and participation in Co-op functions. Now appears to be an incredibly exciting time for the Co-op. Being a member of the board when the Co-op was moved from Rosseter Street to Bridge Street was a remarkable and very valuable experience for me. The wonderful feeling of contributing to the process of moving the store has been memorable and remains very rewarding. Particularly satisfying was the development of relationships with the members of the board and the manager of the Co-op. Working collaboratively with a diverse group of enthusiastic and committed board members taught me a great deal about what is possible when a group shares a common vision. It is for these reasons and so many more that I wish to be considered as a candidate to be nominated to run for a seat on the Co-op's board of directors.

EXPERIENCES WITH COOPERATIVES:

As noted above, I served as a board member on the Berkshire Co-op over a period of seven years. I attended many seminars and workshops that were offered to board members. Working with consultants and attending retreats brought me an appreciation of the merits and challenges of sustaining a cooperative effort. Additionally, during the early years of my involvement as a board member I learned and participated in the implementation and the use of policy governance. I believe that I learned what it is to be a board member and where the line is between management and a board of directors.

EXAMPLES OF WORKING COLLABORATIVELY AS A MEMBER OF A GROUP:

As a clinical social worker I have spent thousands of hours working within groups. As a staff member and later as a director I have developed a fine sense of the importance of actively listening, respecting the views and opinions of others and reconciling the many points of view with my own. I have learned to let go of my opinion or position in the face of the majority. I believe that I am fully capable of embracing the values and positions of colleagues and working with them towards a common goal.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND:

I believe that my career as a clinical social worker has trained me in ways that allow me to be productive and effective within a group. Further, I believe that my previous years as a Co-op board member provided me with a great deal of experience with the manner in which the board best serves its members. Having participated in moving the store from Rosseter Street to Bridge Street gives me an appreciation for the dedication that is required if a project is to be successful. Finally, I am currently partially retired and now have the time to give to the board.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

I do not believe that a conflict of interest exists. I am a stakeholder in the well being of the Berkshire Co-op. I do not own nor do I have a stake in any business or organization that provides goods or services to the Co-op.

ELECTION & VOTING PROCEDURE

Candidate information will be posted at the co-op and online

Candidates get an opportunity to speak at annual meeting

Ballots will be counted 30 minutes after the meeting is closed

Absentee ballots will be available at the Co-op until Nov. 8th

LOCATION

This year's meeting will be held at a new location:

Eastover Estate & Resort
430 East Street • Lenox, MA 01240

Directions (from the Co-op) - Total Trip 15.1 Miles

1. Head west on Bridge St toward Main St (0.1 mi)
2. Turn right onto Main St (0.6 mi)
3. Turn right onto US-7 N/State Rd
Continue to follow US-7 N (6.6 mi)
4. Turn right onto MA-102 E/US-7 N/Main St
Continue to follow US-7 N (5.4 mi)
5. Turn left onto US-20 W/US-7 N/Lee Rd
Continue to follow US-20 W/US-7 N (0.9 mi)
6. Take the 2nd right onto Housatonic St (0.5 mi)
7. Turn left onto East St
Destination will be on the right (1.1 mi)

AGENDA

- 5:00 – 5:05 Welcome
Daniel Seitz, Board President
- 5:05 - 5:15 Voting Procedure & Candidate Introductions
Matt Novik, Communications Manager
Candidate Statements
Betsy Andrus
Bryan Ayers
Lawrence Davis-Hollander
Michael Guthrie
- 5:15 - 5:20 Financial Reports
Marty Huban
- 5:20 - 5:30 The State of the Board
Daniel Seitz, Board President
- 5:30 - 5:40 The State of the Co-op
Art Ames, General Manager
- 5:40 – 6:40 Keynote Speaker: Gar Alperovitz
Owner Q&A & Discussion
Facilitated by Daniel Seitz, Board President
- 6:40 - 6:55
- 6:55 - 7:00 Wrap Up & Closing Remarks
Daniel Seitz, Board President
- 7:00 - 8:00 Dessert, Coffee/Tea, Mingle

DINNER MENU

Salads

Served Family Style at Your Table

Raw Kale

Local kale with Monterey cheddar, pine nuts, raw shaved beets & balsamic vinaigrette

Greek

Mixed greens with local roasted butternut squash seeds, roasted red peppers, and olives with lemon herb dressing

Gourmet Flatbread Pizzas

Choose one of the following with traditional or gluten-free/vegan crust
You will be asked to place your order when you RSVP

Kale Pesto & Sausage

Local kale pesto, Elmartin Farm sweet Italian sausage and sliced Tomato

Butternut Squash & Arugula

Roasted local butternut squash with arugula and ricotta cheese

Potato & Onion

Local potatoes, onions, tomatoes with olive oil and fresh rosemary

Classic Margherita

Tomato sauce, fresh basil and mozzarella cheese

Desserts

Vegan Chocolate Ganache Cake

Co-op Carrot Cake

Gluten-Free Magic Bars

A full ingredient list can be found at the Co-op or by clicking the front page Annual Meeting Link at www.berkshire.coop

PATRONAGE DIVIDENDS 101

The Co-op will be offering a patronage dividend for Fiscal Year 2012. By this process, we are able to give back a portion of our profits to our owners and convert those profits to tax-free income. While this is now old hat to some of our owners, we wanted to make sure that the process was clear to all. In this section, we hope to explain patronage dividends in as simple terms as possible.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

Step 1: THE CO-OP EARNS A PROFIT

In order for the Co-op to offer you a piece of the profit, there must be a profit in the first place. Patronage dividends are only eligible to be distributed in a profitable fiscal year.

Step 2: DECISIONS ARE MADE

Decision 1: The Board decides whether or not to declare a dividend. Factors that influence that decision include the amount of profit, reinvestment needs and financial stability. When the dividend is declared, it is the amount of profits earned from owner sales. Sales from nonowners are not counted.

Decision 2: The Board decides what percentage of the declared dividend to distribute. Cooperatives are required to distribute at least 20% of declared dividends. The remaining percentage of the dividends is not distributed to owners. It is retained by the Co-op in a nonrefundable equity account.

Decision 3: The Board decides on a minimum distribution. This year, the Board decided to not distribute dividends under \$3. For bookkeeping purposes, this is a vital step. Without it, we would be writing checks for pennies that would never be cashed.

Step 3: WE DO SOME MATH

Dividends per owner are decided based on that owner's percentage of total sales to owners. So, if your shopping for the year represents .025% of the total sales to owners, then your dividend is .025% of the total dispersed amount. You are then issued a check equal to the appropriate payout percentage decided by your board. The remaining dividend is reserved by the Co-op as unpaid equity.

EXAMPLES: Please keep in mind that the following numbers in no way relate to the numbers in this year's dividend. This is merely an example of how your total is calculated and has no bearing on this year's actual numbers.

	Your Purchases for the Year	+	Total Owner Sales	=	Your Distribution Share	×	Total Distribution	=	Your Dividend	×	30%	=	Your Check
Ex #1	\$2,500	+	\$4.25 million	=	.00058%	×	\$20,000	=	\$11.60	×	.30	=	\$3.48
Ex #2	\$5,000	+	\$4.25 million	=	.00117%	×	\$20,000	=	\$23.40	×	.30	=	\$7.02
Ex #3	\$10,000	+	\$4.25 million	=	.267%	×	\$20,000	=	\$47.00	×	.30	=	\$14.10

CASH YOUR CHECK !

We want you to process your check. In fact, we NEED you to process your check. Every check that is not processed within ninety days of issue will be returned to our tax rolls. The number returned to taxable income will be 100% of your dividend, not the percentage represented on your check. For example, if your check was \$3 last year and it didn't get cashed, we paid tax on \$10 as a result. Last year about \$900 worth of checks went uncashed. As a result, over \$2,500 was added to this year's federal taxable income. Here are some of your options.

GET YOUR MONEY! There will be cashing stations on site at the meeting. Simply visit us upon registration. Endorse your check, hand it over, and we'll cash you out.

DONATE IT! We will also offer you the opportunity to donate your dividend to a selection of recipients. If you're feeling generous, these are this year's options.

BERKSHIRE ORGANICS SEEDS (Sustainable Education Every Day for Students) is an organization that purchases food from local farms and delivers it to schools at cost. It is run by Berkshire Organics, a natural food store and delivery service located in Dalton. This year their goal is to offer the SEEDS service to all of Berkshire County. To date, SEEDS has worked with 12 Pittsfield Schools in addition to schools in Dalton, Adams, Great Barrington, Cheshire, and Williamstown, with interest from other area schools.

THE PEOPLE'S PANTRY is a local food pantry located in Great Barrington. Their mission is to reduce hunger in South County by distributing free food in a manner that preserves the dignity and self-worth of the shoppers. South County residents who feel they need help in feeding themselves and their families are welcome at the Pantry. There are no income guidelines.

GREENAGERS FRONT LAWN FOOD PROGRAM facilitates local youth to plant vegetable gardens to local families, elementary schools and day cares. The mission of Greenagers is simply stated: youth working to strengthen the environment and our community. The goal of Greenagers programming is to increase youth community engagement and raise awareness of environmental issues through productive labor in local agricultural and conservation work.

By Small Farmers, for Small Farmers

The Next Step in the Evolution of Fair Trade

By Phyllis Robinson, Education and Campaigns Manager, Equal Exchange

Farmer-Owned Fair Trade!



One of the many small coffee farmers that grow as part of the Las Colinas Co-op in El Salvador and sell to Equal Exchange

The first Fair Trade farmer-owned certification system, referred to as the Small Producer Symbol (SPP, for its Spanish acronym), will arrive this fall on Equal Exchange coffees in food co-ops and natural food stores across the country. Ten years in the making, the SPP certification system represents the small farmers' persistent attempt to ensure a more just trade system for their fellow farmers everywhere. The colorful SPP logo will initially appear on Equal Exchange coffee bags and bulk coffee bins, and will soon become more prominent throughout stores. While the SPP itself is just a little logo, in actuality, the real symbolism of this new Fair Trade seal is anything but small. This bold step forward reflects the fact that today the very folks for whom the Fair Trade movement was built are taking a leadership role in shaping their own destiny. The potential impact this new system will have on small farmers, their co-operative organizations, and the entire Fair Trade movement could be quite profound indeed.

The Roots of the Conflict

In the early 1980s, a division in the Fair Trade movement resulted in the creation of one international certification system with two distinct ideologies. The early founders of Fair Trade recognized that small farmer organizations trying to access the market were operating on an unfair playing field. The founders' goal was to create a system that could right the wrongs of hundreds of years of colonialism and unjust trade. Once the system was underway, other traders wanted a faster way to put Fair Trade products on the shelves and decided to open up the system to large-scale plantations. The fact that plantations have one owner (versus being owned collectively by a democratically run, small farmer organization), and generally have more access to resources, it is usually faster and easier for them to move products from origin country to market. This means that plantations, with their ease in accessing bank loans, infrastructure, market information, technical assistance, and networks, will almost always carry the same advantage over small farmers that Fair Trade was designed to address.

Eventually, the international Fair Trade certifying system, Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO), allowed plantations to become a source for almost all Fair Trade products, with the exception of coffee, cacao, and a few other categories. Small farmer coffee and cacao organizations, typically the most advanced and successful Fair Trade producers, have been living

with the fear since the division occurred that the Fair Trade system will one day open their products to plantations as well. Should this happen, many believe that they will once again become marginalized and lose their hard-won market access. After all, if it becomes easier to source coffee and cacao from large-scale plantations and still call it "Fair Trade," why wouldn't multinational corporations simply take the easier route and ignore the small farmer? In coffee, it took 15 years of Fair Trade before coffee farmers began to see a positive impact on their businesses and in their lives. Sourcing from plantations in tea and bananas has prevented the growth of a strong small-farmer movement in these two categories.

The farmers' fear became more of a reality ten years ago. At the 2003 annual Specialty Coffee Association of America conference in Boston, coffee certainly wasn't all that was brewing. Alongside the aromas emanating from the brewing of exotic coffees, big trouble was simmering as well. The foreshadowing of conflict was evident from the loud voices and angry faces of representatives of small-farmer co-ops, Fair Trade roasters, alternative traders, and other Fair Trade activists, all of whom were tightly packed into a room at the Hynes Convention Center listening to the words of Paul Rice, CEO of Transfair USA, FLO International's U.S. Fair Trade certifying agency (today known as Fair Trade USA).

Rice was lobbying for a change in standards; he believed plantations should be allowed in the Fair Trade system as sources of "Fair Trade" coffee. He claimed that large companies and corporations wanted access to plantation products and that there wasn't enough small-farmer Fair Trade coffee on the market. The crowd was wild with outrage. Most small-farmer organizations had far more coffee than they could sell on Fair Trade terms and many more organizations of small-coffee farmers were waiting for buyers to get themselves listed on the Fair Trade register of certified producers. Finally, against a storm of protest and outrage, Rice acquiesced and agreed to drop this controversial strategy.

Why a New Fair Trade Certification System is Necessary

Although Rice publicly backed down at the SCAA conference, small farmers, roasters and other Fair Trade activists knew it was just a matter of time before the issue came up again. The pressures to grow a system quickly, the needs of plantations and big corporations, and the money behind it all, were heavy reminders of how decisions are made and how trade typically occurs. Sure enough, in September 2011, Transfair USA announced its decision. Taking the name Fair Trade USA, the organization left the international Fair Trade system that had given it birth. Just days later, it announced its new strategy, "Fair Trade for All," with a certification system allowing plantations in the coffee and cacao markets.

Small-farmer organizations weren't idle. The Coordinating Body of Latin America and the Caribbean (CLAC) had been meeting for 10 years to strategize how to keep Fair Trade from being stolen out from under them. Finally, they had their solution: the Small Producer Symbol (SPP). CLAC has now created its own certification system, run by the nonprofit group the Foundation of Organized Small Producers (FUNDEPPO). The system is impressive, with General Standards incorporating four-dozen criteria for small-farmer member organizations, including maximum individual farm sizes and a maximum percentage of farm work performed by hired farm workers. Buyers who use the SPP must meet nearly three-dozen criteria, including a minimum of five percent annual volume growth in program purchases. Perhaps most impressive, the SPP is run and governed by the farmers themselves. After decades of this movement being essentially managed by offices thousands of miles away from source, farmers are now in the driver's seat.

This fall you will begin to see the first Equal Exchange coffee products appear with the SPP symbol on them. Trust that while other Fair Trade products may come from plantations, SPP coffee will never sell out. It will always be authentic. It will always be small farmer.



The SPP logo, now appearing on Equal Exchange Coffee, assures you that the product is Authentic Fair Trade

For more information on SPP and Equal Exchange visit EqualExchange.coop

Tierra Farm: Setting the Standard for Good Employers

Continued From Page 1

beans, and we were about to see where the process goes down. We met Chris, the man solely responsible for making regular food into chocolate-covered snacks—job application please!

The mixing machines they use looked like something out of the Woody Allen movie *Sleeper*. Part futuristic and part art deco, they were big stainless steel balls powered to turn slowly and join liquid to solid evenly. So simple, yet incredibly delicious.

On the other side of the room was Matt, the man responsible for producing the Tierra Farm nut butters. They produce hundreds of pounds of fresh butters out of two grinders just like the ones you see in some natural food stores. “There’s two sizes available,” Annabel told us. “These and one way too big for our needs.” We sampled some of their Maple Almond Butter, freshly ground. It was so good! I ended up leaving with a whole jar, and when I combine it with some local gala apples, I am one happy Co-op camper!

After just a few minutes, I was struck by how friendly and happy everybody was. The rooms were full of natural light and wonderful smells. And the staff worked while they talked to us, proud of the work they do and smiling all the way. It was obvious already; Tierra Farm is a good place to work.

Our next stop was the warehouse. Here is the center of shipping and receiving for the operation. While Tierra Farm maintains an active farm on the property, they obviously aren’t growing nuts and fruits in the Northeast climate. They source thousands of pounds of product from all over the world every week. One of Tierra’s stated core values has been to cultivate strong relationships with organic farmers. Every year they purchase an increasing amount of products directly from the farms and strive to create lasting relationships that ensure integrity and fair business practices throughout the supply chain. Annabel told us, “Gunther was originally an organic farmer. He still cares deeply about farmers and that runs throughout the organization.”

Next we were off to the roasting room. After all, Chris and Matt needed roasted nuts to grind and cover in chocolate. There we met Antonio. It was just 1:00 in the afternoon but they were basically done with their day. “It gets really hot in here,” he told us. “We start early, because once the sun comes up, the heat gets unbearable.” There are four or five large industrial ovens in the roasting room. I can only imagine the temperature they can produce. We sampled some freshly roasted cashews and then it was off to the next stop.

Tierra’s property is made up of several buildings. As we walked between them, we saw many freestanding solar panel structures. We knew that Tierra was dedicated to environmental sustainability, but I never knew to what extent. They get over 70% of their electricity from solar panels and recycle over 60% of their waste. Their boxes are made from recycled cardboard and their deli cup containers (which hold the dried fruits and chocolate products we sell at the Co-op) are made from 50% post-consumer waste.

The next part of our tour revealed some of why the workers all seemed so happy. When a sales rep invites you to lunch it usually means they are going to take you out to a restaurant. Annabel and Cameron gave us that option, but they also told us there was some great food right on site. “Monica cooks lunch for the staff three days a week,” Cameron told us. “She makes it all from scratch, uses veggies from our farm and even makes it gluten-free! It’s better food than any restaurant around here, for sure.”

So we proceeded to the break room. This area was flooded with natural light and boasted a deck and a beautiful view of the farm and the hills beyond it. Monica had prepared herb-roasted chicken breast, some gluten-free pesto pasta, and a green salad with freshly harvested veggies. It was fantastic. Over lunch, we ran into Tierra’s CEO, Darren Grout. We chatted with him about searching for containers with more recycled content, his general dedication to solid



More than 70% of Tierra’s electricity comes from solar panels placed throughout the property.



Kim was happy to pose for a picture as she packed the Co-op’s order of dried fruits.



A freshly roasted batch of Tierra Farms coffee cools in the roaster.



The machines that turn Tierra Farms nuts, coffee and fruits into chocolate covered goodies.



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relationships and happy employees and the movie theater they had just purchased in Albany.

After lunch, we still had to see the coffee roasting. But first we had to meet the chickens and the goat. Yes, aside from the many dogs that roam the farm, there are livestock as well. Tierra’s newest building, built just months ago, is made up of three sections. The first was the bakery, used for the baked goods at their two and counting Albany coffee shops. Plans are in place to make it a certified gluten-free bakery soon. The second room was a full gym, build for all staff to use whenever they wanted (Wow!) and the third was where the caffeinated magic is made!

Anyone who knows me knows that I’m a lover of all things coffee. At the final stop on our tour, I got to meet Dan and Evan, the men responsible for Tierra Farms coffee. It was the best smelling room so far, and don’t forget that the first stop was the chocolate room. Tierra owns two small roasters and sources their coffee from Fair Trade organic farms all over the world. They roast in very small batches and produce some of the best tasting coffee the Co-op sells. And they do it in a relatively small room, with two employees, two machines and the sound of chickens clucking from the farm outside their window. They just broke the 100,000 pounds of coffee mark for the year and hope to continue that growth as time goes on.

Our tour was complete. Our bellies were full and I now knew more than most about one of the leading distributors of dried fruits, nuts and seeds in the country. But I left thinking primarily about the people. Tierra has grown its business greatly over the last few years and they are looking to grow 25% more in the near future. I saw the employees smiling because they work for such a loving and invested company. And I saw that growth would lead them to hire more people. And I realized that our store would be a part of that growth. And I left Tierra Farm very, very happy.

Building Relationships with Farm Visits



Cheese aging to perfection at Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent, NY.



Crates of apples on their way to stores and markets from Klein's Kill Fruit Farm in Germantown, NY.



An unexpected road block at Vermont Shepherd in Westminster, Vermont.

Continued from Page 1

It is one of my favorite projects so far (I cannot count how many beautiful landscapes or baby animals I've seen), and it's also a really important job. A lot of stores tout their local products, but the Co-op has always gone a few steps beyond that to the real reason that local food is so important: the relationships that go along with it. The reason the visits are important is to build relationships with local farmers.

One week this summer, I planned to do some road trips and try to check eight farms off my list. It was one of the first sunny weeks and broiling hot for most of the week, which meant I was competing with some fine weather for making hay that is simultaneously the kind of weather that makes all animals uncomfortable and all greens wilt. As we say in my house, it was the kind of weather only tomatoes love. With that in mind, Austin, of Meat, Seafood & Cheese fame, and I packed a few water bottles into a cooler at 7AM on Monday and drove north.

Our first stop was to meet with Topher at Cricket Creek Farm. Cricket Creek has been a dairy for a long time under other management. Topher and his family took it over when the farm was being sold. They couldn't imagine the neighborhood without cows, so they brought in Jerseys (and eventually some Brown Swiss), along with a farm manager. After working with a couple of farm managers, Topher felt comfortable taking on the daily operations of his family's farm, and he took the time to show us around. He is one of those people who seems to have struck the perfect balance of management and caretaking; over our time there he fixed a tractor hiccup and showed tenderness to the calves in the barn and the fields. He brought us out into the middle of the herd of happily munching cows, stopping to pat a cow who had been sick and give her some words of encouragement. I could have spent all day at that farm and learned something each minute, but we had to extract ourselves.

On the way to Vermont we stopped in at Wild Oats Co-op in Williamstown and were treated to a tour of their store and storerooms. If you haven't made it up their way yet, you should. The building is cozy, and I'm sure you'll find the staff equally welcoming. Make a point of trying their red quinoa bread if it's in stock—it's incredible.

Once over the border we stopped in at Polymeadows Farm, a goat dairy in Shaftsbury whose milk, smoothies and yogurt you may be familiar with. It's run by husband and wife team Jennifer and Melvin, plus a staff of one. They milk dozens of goats twice a day and make the yogurt and cheese on site. They welcomed us to their farm with open arms, showing off the adorable kids on the way to their hardworking dams. Jennifer talked about their practices and philosophy, adding in stories about their children who live nearby and their grandson Brayden, who comes over when he's not at preschool to "help with chores" at the farm.

After that we swung by Berle Farm in Hoosick, NY. Berle Farm is 600 acres of beautiful hillsides

in the Taconics. Even though it was a haymaking day and Beatrice didn't really have time for us, she shoehorned in a walk through the yogurt and cheese house and brought us out to meet the girls. I know this shows how infrequently I read the yogurt containers, but I couldn't believe that all the yogurt and cheese from Berle Farm is from the milk of just seven cows! Her teenaged son tagged along (I think he was avoiding a chore or two) and told us an incredible story of how they became a dairy. They were having dinner and were out of butter. Bea adamantly refused to go to town for butter. She decided that instead of having to schlep back and forth to town for what they didn't produce on the farm, she should just start milking at the farm. Over time things have built from that initial push for more farm independence: more cows; a solar-powered cheese house; working with Demeter to design and polish their milking parlor and rotational grazing system.

Eventually we had to let Bea get back to her hay, and we had to head back over the border to Vermont to catch Lisa at Mighty Food Farms. We don't buy a lot of produce from Mighty Food during the high season, when the carrots and kale tend to travel under 15 miles from field to Co-op, but last winter the scale of Mighty Food and their root cellar meant that Lisa could take a drive every week or two down to Barrington and bring us a few hundred pounds of produce each time. Along with carrots and parsnips, Mighty Foods grows a ton of garlic and we showed up during the harvest. We drove into the field and Lisa broke away from the farm workers pulling and sorting the bulbs to talk to us for a few minutes. She gave us a run-through of what they grow and where, and encouraged us to walk through the greenhouses and barns while she finished the harvest.

On the ride home, Austin and I talked about the farms we'd seen. His department only bought from two of the four, but he was equally excited about the goat dairy and vegetable operation we'd seen. Austin was already into local food, and had been for years, but before that trip I don't think he had had the opportunity to see in one day where all of his food originated. We talked about the differences between organic certification and our version of naturally grown for vegetables and animal products. We talked about the incredible calm that the animals we had visited showed, and how the dairies had retrofitted their farms' structure around the needs of the animals first, trusting that healthy, happy animals would provide the best food (and they do). He also told me I was a madman for doing another 12-hour day later in the week. I had no defense for that accusation—I knew it was a ridiculous idea—although to me his plan of organizing the -10°F walk-in freezer was far stranger.

Thursday I geared up with a few extra water bottles and planned stops, and headed out. This time I was driving out to the Pioneer Valley and heading north from there, with just a Jules Verne audio book for company. I planned to stop at three farms and two co-ops and end up back in Berkshire County about 12 hours after leaving it. After a tour of Brattleboro, I headed up to Westminster.

It's hard to miss Harlow Farm and Westminster Organics if you're in the town of Westminster. The town itself is rural and tucked between the Green Mountains and the Connecticut River, and Westminster Organics is right along the broad street that runs through town. I walked through a couple of fields and among the greenhouses before finding Paul Harlow near the packing barn. He spent a few minutes talking to the staff in the packing barn about the rest of the day's work, then brought me on a tour of some of his fields, which required his jeep due to the scale of the farm and the fact that many of the fields are scattered around Westminster. The Harlow Farm, where the greenhouses and packing barn are, comprises the center of the operation—the farm on which Paul grew up and learned how to run a farm. His grandfather had started Harlow Farm, and his father took it on, eventually adding the neighboring farm when the farmers wanted to retire. Paul continued that tradition by buying other farms in town when they might otherwise sell for development, and converting them all to organic production.

Westminster Organics is more mechanized than the vegetable farms close to Great Barrington, and it was incredible to see a refrigerated truck parked beside a field of kale and chard, with a washing and packing station that's attached to a tractor and moved through the field with the picking crew. Paul explained the process and that having a mobile washing and packing station means everything picked can go from field to cooler in 15 minutes, which keeps the greens fresh and healthy as they are shipped all over New England. Everything then goes into the coolers in the packing barn and heads out again, often later the same day, to end up in stores. Paul explained some cooperative ventures he's going into with other local farms for updated infrastructure, and showed me the fields he lets a local beginning farmer use to get his business started. He invited me to spend some time talking to his crew but I had to bow out so I wouldn't be late visiting his friend Howard down the road at High Meadows Farm.

On the way to High Meadows I was stopped by a rural traffic jam. A shepherd was bringing her sheep from one field down the dirt road to access another. I knew I was right in the way, so I turned the car off and watched the shepherd and her dog keep scores of sheep together all the way to the new pasture. Every minute or two one sheep would try another route and the dog would correct her route immediately. There was a moment when I was surrounded by ewes on all sides. Once this scene passed and I was back on my way I realized that I was in the middle of Vermont Shepherd's cheese production and couldn't miss the opportunity to stop and check on this beautiful dairy. I would have missed out on this entirely if their staff of 250 ewes hadn't stopped me in my tracks.

When I arrived at High Meadows Farm Howard was, along with his crew, hanging garlic in their old tobacco barn to dry. They invited me to join them for a cider break before the tour. Then Howard took me out to see the fields. In addition to the incredible winter squash **FARMS** Cont. on page 10

Start a New American Tradition: Bring Bitters to the Table

Lessons from the Old World with Guido Massé RH (AHG) - Chief Herbalist at Urban Moonshine

Come early evening, around six o'clock, when the sun is still strong but a cool breeze begins to lift the heat of the day, Italians gather at the local bar for aperitivo. Sitting under striped awnings, they sip from wineglasses full of a light, sparkling drink made from seltzer water and mild bitter preparations. The glasses vary in color from dark brown, through red, and into an almost electric orange, reflecting the ingredients they contain. These drinks are preferred over strong cocktails, and are really the beginning of the evening meal as they support digestion and can help prevent indigestion and heartburn. After the aperitivo, a short walk through narrow streets leads to the main restaurant, where the real eating begins: three, often four courses featuring rich cream and meat sauces, lots of prosciutto and thin cuts of beef, plenty of seafood and crisp vegetables. Visitors are often encouraged try aperitivo, as the rich (and abundant) combinations of food can be too much for the digestion, and the bitter drinks before meals really help.

After dinner, many finish with a short glass of amaro, a stronger preparation that still features bitter roots and leaves. These formulas immediately relieve heartburn and over-fullness, ensuring a restful and pleasant night following the big meal. Aperitivo or amari have a standard template: something bitter like gentian root, or artichoke leaf or dandelion is combined with something aromatic like citrus peel, fennel seed or angelica root. Aperitivo often feature a little more of the latter: sour and warm chinotto oranges, orange peel of Campari, or clove and cardamom of Crodino. These aromatic ingredients serve to relieve nausea, relax the belly, dispel bloating, and, blended with bitters, get us ready to eat well. Amari are usually more bitter, helping to resolve symptoms that come from overeating, exposure to new or unusual foods, or just poor digestion.

It's interesting to note that this basic formula is hardly unique to Europe. Bitter oranges, still used for Italian aperitivo, are descendants of Chinese Citrus trifoliata, a classic aromatic-bitter remedy. In India, digestive remedies



are still prepared from chiretta (*Andrographis*) and fennel seed, combining a very bitter plant with a warm, relaxing aromatic. These combinations stimulate digestive function while also relaxing the belly, easing gas pains, and alleviating nausea. They are important cultural adjuncts to full, delicious, rich meals, and their use is valued to this day.

Guido Masé is a clinical herbalist, herbal educator, and garden steward specializing in holistic Western herbalism, though his approach is eclectic and draws upon many influences. Guido works clinically and teaches at the Vermont Center for Integrative Herbalism (vtherbcenter.org), holds the position of Chief Herbalist at Urban Moonshine, is a professional member of the American Herbalists Guild, and is a part of United Plant Savers and the American Botanical Council and author of *The Wild Medicine Solution: Healing with Aromatic, Bitter and Tonic Plants* --- This article is brought to you by Urban Moonshine, makers of Organic Digestive Bitters in Original, Maple and Citrus flavors!

Catching Up With The Berkshire Rice Project

By Cian Dalzell, Special Projects Manager



Can large amounts of grain be cultivated in the harsh New England climate? We certainly think so. And the Berkshire Rice Project is well on its way.

Two winters ago, we published an article in this newsletter about a visit to South River Miso. The article highlighted the amazing process of miso making and what makes South River so special. But it also featured the on site rice growing that happens there for personal use. We were inspired by their rice production and Daniel, our Non-Perishables Manager, got some seeds and set out to create the Berkshire Rice Project.

This year's harvest is larger than last year's. Some farms that grew only four or eight plants last year grew small plots this year ranging up to 250 plants! Each of those plants can produce a few hundred seeds. Once it's threshed, they can expect to have a few pounds of rice to plant in the spring—thousands of seeds. Each year these small plantings will better acclimate the cultivar to our peculiar Berkshire climate. Over the next few years some of these small plots will increase in size and increase the amounts of rice seed available through the project.

Of course the project is slow going. But rice growing is a marathon, not a sprint. What's most important is that we got it started and progress is being made. We'll report progress as it comes. Until then, happy growing!

For more information on the Berkshire Rice Project, contact Daniel Esko at 413.528.9697 or desko@berkshire.coop.

Farm Visits Continued from page 9

planting (which has recently translated to an incredible winter squash harvest), onions and greenhouses, he showed me the changes happening on the farm to better the infrastructure. One of these was a new well that helped turn a continually wet area of field into a more efficient system for irrigation. The other was retrofitting his old dairy barn with infrastructure for year-round production with more cold storage and a passive solar location for a wash station. The section of barn once used for storage of equipment and hay is now also used for local foods gatherings. During the winter, Howard and Lisa travel with a nonprofit to bring some of the new ecologically conscious farming methods utilized in the United States to developing nations, and Howard spoke with passion about bringing useful tools to the resourceful farmers he has met on previous trips.

On the way back to Massachusetts I stopped by the Scott Farm, an integrated pest management apple orchard in Dummerston, Vermont. The Co-op had not worked with this orchard yet, but I was familiar with it from a past job and I knew I would see their apples on the shelves here before too long. Their office is on the second floor of a federal-era barn, which gives a nice view of some of the apple trees for the staff stuck indoors. Zeke and I sat down with the farm's dogs at our feet and discussed the Co-op's food policies, the farm's growing practices, and the ways that we're looking to work with each other. It was clear from talking to him that Zeke is incredibly passionate about apples, specifically heirloom varieties that have all but disappeared in the age of industrial orchards. He took me up the hill that is the orchard—naming the varieties that have, over time, been patch-worked together—rows of mixed varieties marked by slight changes in growing patterns or fruit color that are so imprinted on this man he could walk the orchard blindfolded and tell you which tree he was standing in front of. He described his grandchildren coming to help in the summer and at the harvest festival each autumn, which led to his description of their IPM practices. He makes decisions based on two criteria: the health of the trees and his ability to feed clean and healthy fruit to his grandchildren.

That final visit on Thursday was cut short because Zeke had to attend a meeting of the town's selectmen. As he left he encouraged me to walk around the packing facility, giving me a rundown of some pieces that were kept from an old barn— doors, hinges and floorboards that had seen hundreds of years of agriculture in Dummerston. He offered the use of his favorite swimming hole in the woods behind the packing facility, and told me to come back soon. That last exchange is what I thought about all the way back to Barrington that night. He hadn't, in fact none of the farmers had, just given me the opportunity to see his workplace; he had invited me to join him, told me his story, and shared his life's passion with me. These farmers had all invited me to come back, bring other Co-op people, talked about bringing a busload of owners up for an event. Over and over they had mentioned how excited they were that our store cared enough about their farms to send someone to them and talk about what and how they grow and how to support them. These trips have highlighted for me how the Co-op is a real part of the agricultural community.

STRONGER TOGETHER RECIPE RESOURCE

FROM STRONGERTOGETHER.COOP

WINTER SQUASH & APPLE BAKE

The sweetness of baked apples and squash is accentuated with fall's warm spices. A perfect side for pork or poultry.

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds winter squash, peeled, seeded and cut into 1/4-inch thick slices
2 Granny Smith* apples, cored and cut into 1/4- to 1/2-inch thick slices
3 tablespoons maple syrup
3 tablespoons brown sugar
2 tablespoons flour
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
Pinch of salt and black pepper
1/4 cup cold butter, cut into small pieces
1 tablespoon butter, melted

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 375° F. Grease a 9 x 13 inch casserole dish with melted butter. Evenly layer the squash and apple slices in the casserole dish, alternating and slightly overlapping the squash slices with the apple slices, until all slices are gone. Drizzle the maple syrup over the squash and apples.

In a small bowl, mix together the brown sugar, flour, spices, salt and pepper. Mix the butter into the flour/sugar mix with your fingers to make a crumbly mixture. Sprinkle the mixture evenly over the top of the squash and apples. Cover the dish with foil and bake for about 40 minutes or until the squash and apples start to become tender. Remove the foil, and let casserole brown for another 15 minutes. Serve warm.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Use your choice of local apples and winter squash in this recipe, and serve as a side dish with ham, pork or poultry.

* Ask us which locally grown apple substitutes best for Granny Smith apples.



RECIPE INFORMATION

TOTAL TIME:

1 hour 20 minutes;
20 minutes active
Servings: 8

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

PER SERVING:

150 calories,
6 g. fat
15 mg. cholesterol
37 mg. sodium
25 g. carbohydrate
3 g. fiber
1 g. protein

Recalling the Origins of GMO Policy

GMO Continued from page 6

conference in San Diego. Megan was there as well, presenting, of course, on the Non-GMO Project. After her presentation, I decided to talk to her and bring up my predicament. I was worried that she would take a radical stance and refuse to accept the very real financial/business risks involved. Instead, I was pleasantly surprised.

Megan completely understood our conflicts. And it was she, not I, who said, "If the Co-op doesn't stay in business, what good does it do anyone?" That conversation was the first time I heard the idea of restricting the flow of new GMO products by refusing to purchase products with high-risk ingredients unless they were certified non-GMO. It was Megan's idea. After the conference, she sent me a draft of a possible policy around new products. Daniel and I read it over, adapted it to our store, and started work on putting into action.

It's been awhile since we officially launched our current GMO policy. We were one of the first co-op stores in the country to adopt a policy like this, and once we got the hang of the vetting and procedures involved, we were ready to share with the rest of the co-op community.

After a vigorous campaign by our GM and some other efforts at the national conferences we are happy to report that fourteen co-ops representing \$168 million in annual sales have signed on to the same policy. The National Cooperative Grocers Association, which has 115 member stores, has also agreed to adopt a similar policy for new products in their Co+op Deals sales program. These actions will be noticed nationally and the numbers continue to grow every day. Since then, state initiatives have gained ground; Whole Foods has declared a five-year GMO-labeling plan, and while there is still a lot of work to do, things are looking brighter for the first time in years.

We are hugely proud of what has been accomplished. And, if you had asked us back in 2011, we probably wouldn't have had expectations this high. I learned a lesson from this process about positive action in the face of a bleak picture. And I'll continue to take what I learned with me into future challenges. Some may say that our policy doesn't do enough. And they are entitled to their opinion. But I ask you to consider the story I've told and decide for yourself.



According to the Non-GMO Project, 88% of U.S. corn is GMO along with 94% of soy; 95% of sugar beets, 90% of canola.

Berkshire Co-op Market's GMO Policy can be found in our Food & Product Policy at www.berkshire.coop/coop-about/important-documents/

The Departmental Reports

Non-Perishables From Daniel Esko

Greetings from the center store! Changes, changes and more changes. By now some of you are probably sick and tired of us constantly changing things around. Admittedly, I can sympathize with that sentiment, but would like to assure you all that everything we do here at the Co-op is truly in the spirit of improving our service to you: our owners and customers. The most important change in the department since the last newsletter is the Great Freezer Reset of 2013! Our crack reset team worked until 2 AM to reset all ten doors. In addition to giving more space to our local meats, we also expanded our selection of wholesome product lines, specifically frozen fruit, vegetables and frozen breads. These changes ultimately reflect a storewide trend to shift the focus to items that more appropriately reflect our values by offering the healthiest options available.

Upcoming changes will include a reset of our bread island that will add more options and updated equipment. We will also be resetting our grab-n-go drink cooler once again, with the major change being the relocation of our soda type beverages (root beer, cola, ginger ale, etc.) into the single-door cooler currently occupied by the single-serve milk, smoothies and juices. Those products return to the open eight-foot grab-n-go with the waters, kombuchas and functional beverages. This move will emphasize healthier options by offering the best nutritional options in the most visible places. And finally, the one you have all been waiting for, bulk dried fruit. We have decided to introduce five fruit options into the Bulk department, something we didn't even have when we were packaging the fruit on site. This is a change we wanted to make when we expand the store in a couple of years, but we thought: why wait? By the time this newsletter goes to print you will be able to find raisins, mango, apricots, figs and cranberries in your Bulk section.

I would like to welcome the most recent addition to our grocery team, Devin O'Brien. Originally from the Berkshires, Devin recently moved back from Hawaii, where he was a drum technician and stage assistant for Mick Fleetwood of the 70s rock band Fleetwood Mac. You can find Devin stocking in the aisles several days a week, so stop on by and introduce yourself to him if you are so inclined.

Finally, I'd like to recap some of the recent product additions since the last newsletter. The pursuit of new local items has been our focus. Here are some of the recent highlights

Oliver Kita Fine Chocolates: Located in Rhinebeck, NY, these local, organic, fair trade chocolates really raise the "bar" in our chocolate set! Kita has been making and selling his chocolate at his West Market Street Studio since 2007. These bars are handmade and hand wrapped there every day. We're carrying the Clermont Cappuccino, Peanut Butter & Crispy Rice and Beekman Buttercrunch with Sea Salt. Give them a try. You won't regret it

Harney & Sons Iced Teas: From one of our local favorites in Millerton, NY, master tea blender Paul Harney still supervises each batch of these teas. These 100% organic, ready to drink iced teas are lightly sweetened with only five grams of organic cane sugar per serving and only forty calories per bottle. This is almost half as much sugar as most other organic iced tea brands on the market. They are priced competitively with the other brands and have proven to be a big hit with our customers.

High Lawn Farm Ice Cream: We have brought in three flavors so far and our customers are raving about them.

#6 Depot Coffee. From West Stockbridge, Flavio Lichtenthal and Lisa Landry have teamed up and opened a café, coffee roastery and tearoom. They are committed to sourcing the highest quality Arabica coffee from small farms and co-ops.

Akara Beancake Company Falafel Patties. Out of Greenfield, MA, these certified organic products are a great vegan alternative for the pan or the grill.

That's all for now from the center store. See you all in the store.

Fresh Foods From Jeff Schilling

Every year we offer a variety of preorder items for Thanksgiving. You can order natural and organic turkeys, prepared dinner plates that include traditional and vegan options, holiday sides in any quantity, and Co-op pies featuring our signature cranberry-walnut pie, which is a sinfully delicious holiday tradition. We also take special orders for gluten-free and alternative ingredient items.

This year we are spicing up preorder options with something a little different. For every Thanksgiving preorder placed in the month of November, we're going to donate a buck to Berkshire's Bounty, an organization that supports local community pantries with food and financial donations. We hope this promotion encourages you to plan ahead (which makes our jobs easier) and generates much-needed funds for those in need at this important time of year.

In other news, we added a whole freezer door to our Meat & Seafood selection. While frozen isn't everyone's favorite way to buy meat, it is a great way to market local and regional products. This option has given Austin (our M&S guy) the opportunity to bring in a bunch of new items that can really help your freezer be fantastic! Check out Austin's article on page 4 of this newsletter to learn about one of the suppliers who has a larger presence because of added freezer space.

Have a great autumn, everyone!

Wellness From Brenna St. Pierre

Hello from the Wellness department! This season our department is full of terrific new products for autumn. All Hallows Eve approaches and you can look to ChicoBag to Green Your Halloween. Designed to be unforgettable, it is their mission to inspire humanity to adopt a healthy reusable bag habit. Their "terrifying" variety of styles, colors and sizes is a reusable bag playground, and their Halloween goodie bags are a great way to introduce kids to reusable bags.

Feel the Halloween spirit all the way to your fingertips with our new selection of 33 nail polishes from Mineral Fusion. Their formulas are 100% vegan, chip-resistant, and free of camphor, dibutyl phthalate, formaldehyde and toluene. Our suggestions for this season are Radiant Amber, Rockin' Ruby, Meadow, and Obsidian! Get the best results by using their top and base coats, and easily remove with Mineral Fusion acetone-free nail polish remover.

Renew your lips with the new, limited edition lipstick Novum from Dr. Hauschka's Play of Light collection. Each of the five shades highlights your natural lip tone for a customized color unique to you. Formulated to heal and protect, they are rich in argan oil and nourishing plant extracts that leave lips soft and supple.

Maggie's Organics released a plethora of new products over the late summer, including their colorful hair ware and mid-calf and knee-high striped socks in green, blue, black, brown and purple! Sunbeam Candles in Ithaca, NY, has also developed wonderful new products this year. Look for their Goddess of Fertility, Tibetan Buddha Head, Manifestation pillars in Goddess and Transformation, as well as the brightly colored soy and scented beeswax pillars. We will also have black taper candles from Molehollow candles, items frequently requested this time of year.

Enjoy the vibrant selection of new products and have a safe and happy Halloween!

Produce From Jake Levin

Just because the weather has gotten cooler doesn't mean that there's no local food to get excited about! Granted you won't see too much locally grown lettuce, cucumbers or tomatoes in the cooler months.

Anyone who loves fall can't wait for locally grown butternut, acorn and buttercup squashes to make it to their table. We'll have winter squash from High Meadow Farm throughout autumn. Pumpkins from Taft Farms will be here in time for Halloween, and we will have apples from Klein's Kill Fruit Farm, Windy Hill Farm, Thompson Finch Farm and Scott Farm as long as Mother Nature allows us to do so.

They don't call kale a winter green for nothing. The colder months are actually prime season for everyone's favorite hearty green. After the first frost it gets sweeter and is at its most delicious.

Once winter really sets in, storage crops become the name of the game, bringing to mind the times before supermarkets and mass transit. Eating locally in the Northeast isn't just about the fresh, wonderful bounty of the growing season. It's also about taking advantage of the opportunities given to us by storage, pickling and other ways to preserve that bounty into the winter. These crops don't look as wonderful as what is on the shelves in August. But they are delicious, and purchasing them supports local farmers that live, work and produce in our region. We will always offer you the best of the organic, national (and sometimes international) produce in the winter. But before you pick up that beautiful California carrot, consider that the less attractive storage option may be a better choice.

Last year we concentrated on storage crops like never before and were able to offer you onions, turnips, beets, radishes and parsnips well into white, snowy days. We were even able to offer local carrots all year round, which was an exciting goal for us to reach. We will work with Red Fire Farm, Mighty Food Farm and any other winter farms to increase that selection this year.

Thanks for shopping with us and have a wonderful holiday season.

