

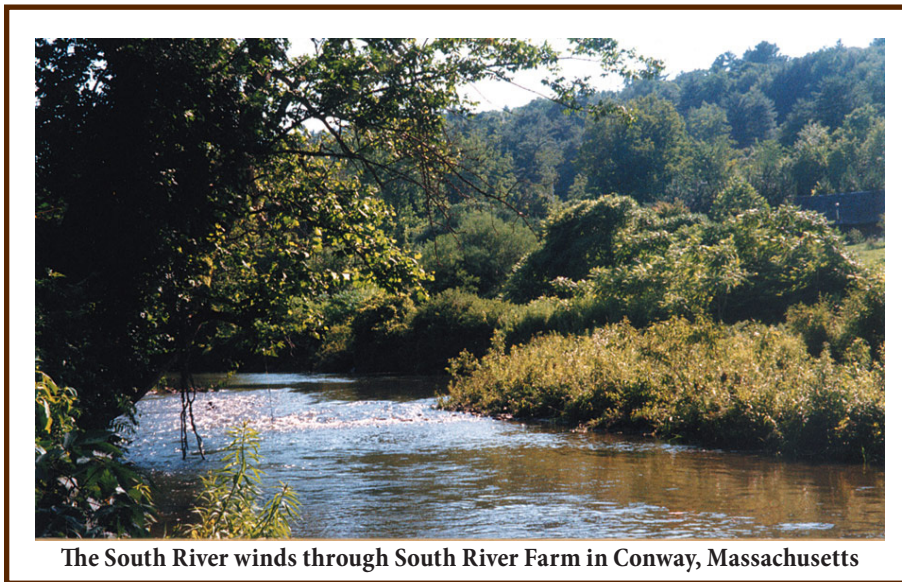
I Heart Miso: Visiting the South River

A Co-op Field Trip to One of the Most Authentic Miso Factories in the Nation

By Daniel Esko

I have a confession to make. I love miso. Savory, sweet, earthy, hearty, just plain delicious miso! I have loved it since early childhood. When it comes to all things miso for the owners and shoppers at Berkshire Co-op Market, I realize that I just might be preaching to the choir, but those not in the know may already be wondering: What in the world is miso?

Miso is a traditional Japanese seasoning or condiment made through a double fermentation process from cultured grain (called koji), beans, and salt. In its pure form, miso is a paste that is used in soups, dressings, marinades, spreads and other recipes. Miso is high in protein, rich in vitamins and minerals, and contains high levels of several probiotic bacteria, including lactobacillus, as well as enzymes, which are important for healthy digestion. Among many known health benefits, one study has shown miso to reduce the risk of breast cancer by fifty percent (reference 1), and miso was thought to mitigate the physiological effects of nuclear radiation on the co-workers of St. Francis Hospital after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki in 1945 (reference 2). From its health benefits to its versatile culinary uses, miso is an ancient food for modern times, and we are truly blessed to be able to enjoy its powerful benefits.



The South River winds through South River Farm in Conway, Massachusetts

My favorite miso is made locally by the South River Miso Company in Conway, MA. Not only do I love their miso, but I also had the opportunity last summer to grow some rice that came from their farm. This experience inspired me to connect a local farm with South River to explore growing rice in the Berkshires. In December 2011, during a product development meeting with Alex Freedman of Community Cooperative Farms, I asked

him if CCF would be interested in growing rice. He was incredibly enthusiastic and I told him that Christian Elwell, the owner of South River Miso Company, had been cultivating rice locally for many years. I proposed a visit to connect the two farms, to learn about miso making, and to strengthen Berkshire Co-op Market's relationship with a local producer we had yet to personally connect with. Alex agreed and I arranged a meeting and tour soon thereafter.

One morning in late January, I departed from my home in Dalton, MA, and made the journey to the South River. As I started the

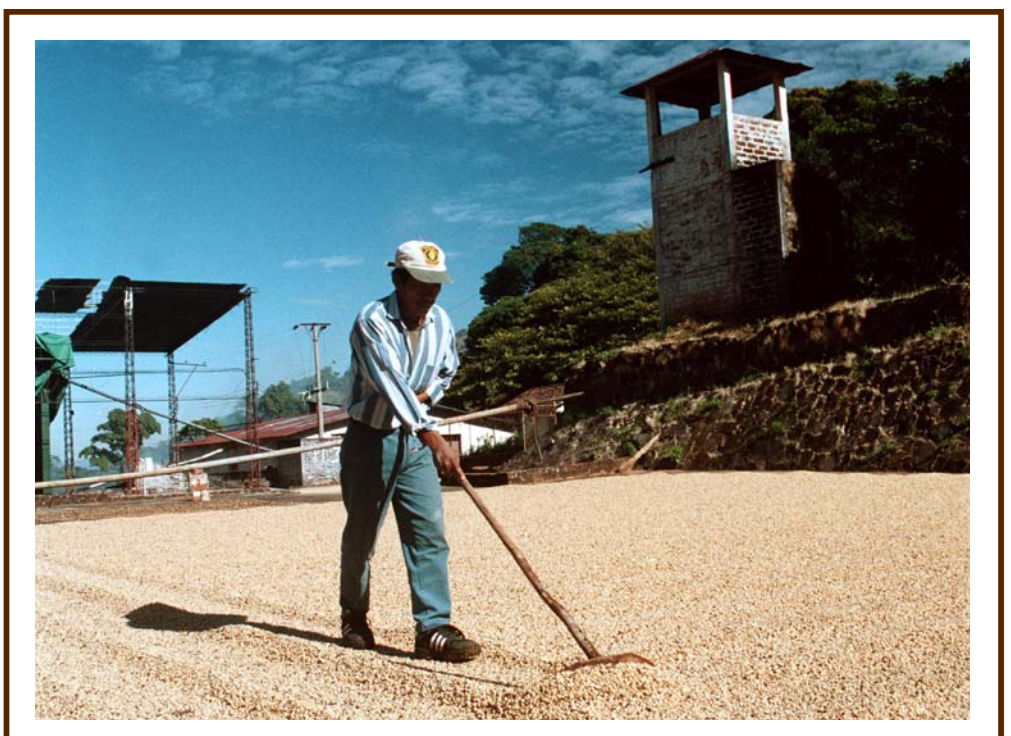
mountainous climb up Route 9, the sun was shining brightly and I was witnessing the beginning of what would turn out to be an incredibly beautiful day. After winding my way into the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains, I arrived at South River Farm in Conway, home to South River Miso Company, where I was greeted by Robin Cole, the Operations Manager. She then introduced me to Christian Elwell, the founder

MISO CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

The Future of Fair Trade

By Matthew Novik

Fair Trade is a pretty good cause. Most of us can agree on that. But, as with most international economic issues, it just isn't that simple. For years a battle has raged on debating the definition of Fair Trade, the requirements of certification, and who Fair Trade is meant to represent. This past autumn, Fair Trade USA, the U.S. National Fair Trade organization, decided to separate from the Fair Trade Labeling Organization, which sets the international standards for fair trade labeling & certification. Fair Trade USA (formerly Transfair USA) has decided to go it alone in their certification process and has set their own set of standards, apart from those of the international community. The split became official on January 1st. With this action, the battle became a war and the future of Fair Trade lay in the balance.



A Little History

The Fair Trade movement got its start over 70 years ago as a reaction to human rights violations in the tropical commodities industry (coffee, chocolate, sugar etc.) Working conditions were dangerous and harsh and trading relationships were exploitive and oppressive. In an effort to help small farmers and their families, church and community groups formed alternative trade organizations that made commitments to work directly with indigenous peoples and to market their products directly to

FAIR TRADE CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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Mon - Sat 8 am - 8 pm
Sunday 10 am - 6 pm



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Notes From HQ: The G4 Report

A Review of the Last Three Months From the Co-op's New Management Team

By Matthew Novik

In the last newsletter our GM told you that he was taking a long vacation. It is my pleasure to report that Art is having a great time. At least that's how it sounds from our very limited contact. He started by traveling to Florida, continued on to New Orleans, followed the coast for a while, and as far as we can tell, is somewhere in Texas as I write these words. Most of our contact with him has been through photos of his stowaway, Rex the Co-opasaurus. Art may be a little camera shy, but Rex is more than ready to pose, as you will see as this article continues.

Several months before he left, Art put a four-member management team in place. The team, consisting of Bob Crowle, Business Manager; Daniel Esko, Nonperishables Manager; Jeff Schilling, Fresh Food Manager, and myself, has taken the operational reins in Art's absence. We call ourselves the G4 (instead of GM) and I am proud to say that it is going quite well. Writing for the group, I will go over what's been happening during the last three months in our Art-free co-op.

Art's Return

Art was planning to return at the beginning of April. He has since changed that return date to May 1st. We assume that he's just having too much fun to come back yet. But don't you worry. We planted a spy to keep an eye on him during his trip. As you will see from the pictures on this page, Rex the Co-opasaurus has been there at every stop. Art has been pretty quiet, but Rex has kept us in the loop. And he says everything is going fine.

A Rolling Stone Gathers No Moss

We just keep on changing things around! We're sure most of you have seen the change in the café setup. We had been talking about it for some time, and with all the other changes taking place lately, it seemed like as good



as well), Amy's single serve pizzas and entrées, Against the Grain gluten-free pizza, frozen peaches, cherries and pineapples, and more offerings from Van's, Nature's Path, Stahlbush Farms, Ronnybrook, Luna & Larry's, Natural Choice, and Quorn.

Another change involved moving some coolers around in order to offer grab'n'go drinks in our register display and move the bulk kombucha closer to the bottled versions and out of the way of our new traffic flow. We also moved the café cooler to better fit the new setup.

We'd like to thank you all for your patience and flexibility. In the last year or so we have reset produce, café, meat, cheese, prepared food, center store grocery, dairy and the freezer. Each time we change something, our customers are enthusiastic and willing to adjust. Attitudes like that are rare in this world and we truly appreciate it.

New Colors for Spring

As I write this piece, new paint is being applied to our foyer. We will then paint the front wall near the registers, the café and any other spots that need a touch-up. By the time you read this, the project will be completed. And you may or may not like the colors.

And that brings me to a discussion on colors. We understand that some people feel very strongly about colors; and why shouldn't they? Colors are an important part of our environment and they affect how we see the world. That said, they are also completely subjective.

Every time we change the colors in the store, some people love the change and others hate it. We are absolutely sure that there is no way to satisfy everyone. So we do the best we can. While we certainly hope you all like the choices we make, we would like to issue a preemptive apology to those who think we were nuts for choosing what we did.

Maintenance & Facilities

You can thank us for the mild winter. After the horrors of last year's snow, we went out and bought a snow blower. With all those snowstorms, we were not satisfied with the job we were able to do keeping paths clear for our customers. We figured the purchase would enable us to do a much better job. Little did we know that it would get used exactly three times this winter. So, when you remember this winter fondly, remember that it was your co-op that made it all possible.

We hired a full-time maintenance employee last month. Previously we had two part-time guys who, while hard workers, simply didn't have enough time to address all the issues at hand. Now, with the addition of forty more hours a week, the maintenance team is on top of it all. They will keep the store cleaner, the equipment running happier, and be quicker to react to repair needs.

Our café has a new waste system. We have always composted our production scraps, but it was high time

to start doing the same with the food scraps our customers throw away. With great efforts from our staff-run Sustain Ability Team, the maintenance department has initiated a new four-bay garbage system. There are separate containers for paper, plastic, compost and landfill. Please take a look at the posted signs if you have any questions about what goes where. Or, of course, you could always ask a Co-op employee.

Expansion/Relocation

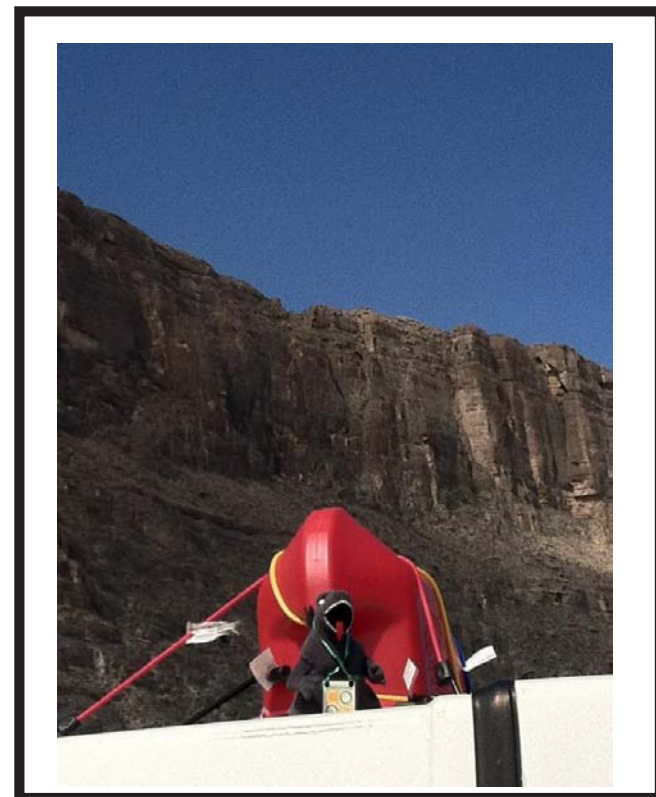
Rumors continue to fly about our plans. It's always interesting when a customer approaches and tells one of us what we are going to do, as if the decision has been made. I would like to say definitively that absolutely no decisions have been made regarding expansion, relocation or additional store locations.



Yes, we are looking into all realistic options available to us. Yes, some developers are wooing us to join their projects. And yes, we take every meeting that seems worth the time. But no, that does not mean that any commitments have been made. Certainly nothing will be decided in our GM's absence.

If you are wondering how to tell when we have finally made a choice, here's a big hint. We will tell you! There will be no secrets. In fact, we will be excited—no thrilled—to tell you. We are all as eager to know where, when and how this is all going to take place as you are; maybe more so. But we won't rush into decisions and we will do all the work necessary to ensure that our community has this co-op for years and years to come.

With that, the G4 wishes you all a wonderful spring. Thanks for your patronage, your ownership and for just being you.



a time as any. With a little shift in positions in produce and the café, we were able to create an additional pathway for customers to enter and exit the café. We think it has done wonders for the traffic flow and made our café a more pleasurable place to be.

In the old setup, the exit and the entrance were in the same place. That meant if you wanted to leave you had to cross the ordering line. There simply wasn't enough room to get through comfortably. With the new setup, the order line still follows the same path (along the counter towards the seafood). But customers wishing to exit or enter the café without ordering are able to access the space with no trouble at all.

We also reset our freezer section. We moved the frozen meat closer to our meat counter, condensed and reset our categories in a more logical way, eliminated items that were not selling, and added almost fifty new frozen products. These include burritos and snack wraps from Amy's and PJ's (many gluten-free options

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ENDS STATEMENT (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

UPCOMING EVENTS

2012 OWNER APPRECIATION DAYS

10% OFF TO OWNERS IN GOOD STANDING

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18TH, 2012

THURSDAY, JULY 19TH, 2012

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20TH, 2012

2012 BOARD MEETINGS

HELD THE 4TH WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

SCHEDULE CHANGES NOVEMBER & DECEMBER DUE TO THE HOLIDAYS

6:00 PM • BERKSHIRE CO-OP OFFICES • 307 MAIN STREET

APRIL 25TH - MAY 23RD - JUNE 27TH - JULY 25TH - AUGUST 22ND

SEPTEMBER 26TH - OCTOBER 24TH - NOVEMBER 28TH

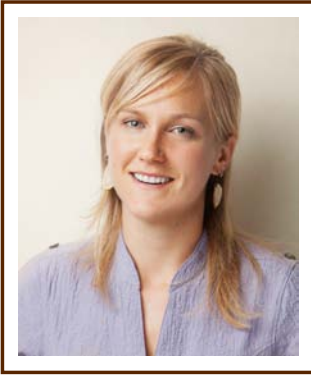
DECEMBER 19TH

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

Healthy Diet • Healthy Dirt

By Alexandra Phillips



As farmers just starting out, the most discussed topics of conversation at my house are soil, food and health. What I've been learning throughout this past winter is that the relationship of these topics is far more intertwined than I'd ever bothered to imagine. Of course I've heard it said that soil is a living organism, but I didn't spend extra time thinking about what that entailed. I recently listened to a Joel Salatin lecture wherein he entertained the crowd by caricaturing the roles of several soil microbes and their wanderings, "romances" and deaths. It was a cute way of explaining a difficult concept and got me thinking about what's happening under my feet.

I've been taking multivitamins off and on for many years. One high-quality brand recommends that I take nine pills a day. I take that to mean that for optimal functioning my body requires a lot of added nutrition! What I've been learning is that for a plant to photosynthesize well, minerals very similar to those I put directly into my body through vitamins are also needed in the soil. The more bioavailable these necessary plant minerals are the better a plant performs. All plants produce

sugars to use for growth and reproduction. These sugars then create compounds including fats, oils, carbohydrates and proteins. Not all plants make significant amounts of complete proteins. Why? Complete proteins require the bioavailability of minerals and trace min-

"A new view I'm embracing is that each pest and disease is a messenger. They indicate that the plant is not as strong as it could be."

erals in the soil. Why should we want plants to form complete proteins? They are the plant's defense system against insect damage and disease. Pests are unable to digest complete proteins and thus go in search of weaker plants that they can more easily consume.

Bioavailability is when the high microbial activity in soil can better supply the complex mix of minerals to plants' roots. On the contrary, when the soil is low in microbes, plants' immune systems lack minerals, making plants less resistant to disease and insects. The same goes for me when I don't take my vitamins. My immune system suffers and I'm more susceptible to getting sick or worn down. You would think just this information sufficient to blow my mind, but there's more.

Plant pests are usually regarded as a nuisance. They weaken our plants, affect production, and require mea-

asures to be taken to kill or remove them. A new view I'm embracing is that each pest and disease is a messenger. They indicate that the plant is not as strong as it could be. What I'm learning is that many pests and diseases relate to mineral deficiencies. Take the dreaded early tomato blight—it's a sign of a potassium deficiency in the plant. In the same vein, weeds are also indicators of mineral imbalances in the soil. Each weed tells a different story of what is going on in the soil.

Ensuring that the soil has what it needs means that what we grow will be healthier and stronger, thus providing us with more minerals and nutrients in our diets. At my home, we've been taking soil tests, assessing the present nutrient levels, and amending each garden plot with the necessary blend of minerals. Remineralizing our soil to its optimum level will take several years. The planting of cover crops and the use of nutrient-rich foliar sprays on the plants will expedite the mineralization process.

This is an exciting time to be farming. There's so much information available and so many knowledgeable farmers and lecturers who are willing to share their information and experience. I'm excited to see what this year brings for the soil and plants I'll be working with.

Alexx was elected to the Co-op Board of Directors in 2011. She and her fiancé, Luke, own Second Hand Farm in Great Barrington.

High School Food Project Continues

By Sophie Randolph & Quinn Martin

Often it is the most complex problems that bring out the most passion. Such is the case with the relationship between our schools and food. The fight to get more nutritious, organic and local foods into school cafeterias has brought as many roadblocks to the table as it has creative solutions. At Monument Mountain Regional High School, our initiatives stem from a fundamental desire for delicious food that has been sustainably obtained. An exciting initiative was born five years ago that was a huge step in making this possible.

Project Sprout was started by three students: Sarah Steadman, Natalie Akers and Sam Levin. They wanted to get organic, student-grown food into the cafeteria—food that could be eaten the same day that it was pulled out of the ground. What started as a 3,000 square foot plot on an old soccer field sandwiched between two highways blossomed into a 12,000 square foot farm that includes a heritage fruit orchard, raspberry orchards, blueberry plants, and a hoop house (a moveable greenhouse). This year, other initiatives include chickens—to add another dimension to the project—as well as a root cellar to help keep food that's harvested in the summer in the cafeteria all year round. There is another method of preservation in the works as well: flash freezing. The board members of Project Sprout have been working to get a moveable flash freezer, stationed at Green Mountain College, down at the garden to freeze their own produce as well as that of farmers in the area.

But even with this amazing resource, there have been many challenges in getting this school-grown food into the cafeteria. In a resurgence of interest in farm-to-school at MMRHS, another group has formed as an offshoot of the Student Senate. This group, the Food Committee, works closely with Project Sprout, Marianne Young (Principal of MMRHS), Kathy Sullivan (Food Service Director of BHRSD), Sharon Harrison (Business Director of BHRSD) and Erik Bruun (a volunteer mentor) in looking at solutions to the roadblocks preventing this obviously desirable endeavor from coming to fruition.

"The Food Committee has developed a mission that encompasses more than just the quality of the food served in the cafeteria. This group has committed themselves to promoting nutritional education and involving students in the process to maximize the potential impact of exhibiting good eating habits."



The Food Committee has developed a mission that encompasses more than just the quality of the food served in the cafeteria. This group has committed themselves to promoting nutritional education and involving students in the process to maximize the potential impact of exhibiting good eating habits. By complementing the tangible, edible farm-to-school aspect with information about the benefits of good eating habits and a healthy lifestyle, the impact will be much greater. The many facets of this mission make for much more work, but it is work that will pay off in ways that are beneficial to both the community that makes up Monument as well as the larger community that encompasses it.

In hopes of getting a better understanding of the projects happening at other schools (as well as the tech-

niques utilized there), Food Committee representatives, Project Sprout members and Matt Novik of the Co-op attended the Massachusetts Farm to School Conference. Farm to School is broadly defined as a program "that connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers" (<http://www.farmtoschool.org/>). Here we had the opportunity to hear several speakers and attend informative workshops. Topics included tips for pairing schools with local farms, how

to implement new nutritional standards in existing cafeterias, stories of other schools' difficulties and success, and tips for overall menu change by incorporating more local foods. Attending this conference was beneficial as it allowed us to hear from and interact with other people who care about the same issues. We were able to learn how they have been able to overcome challenges similar to the ones that we face.

The best way to face these obstacles is by networking with the valuable resources that surround MMRHS. The Co-op, Guido's and Berkshire Grown have all been helpful and enthusiastic. By working with them we will be able to better access the resources in the immediate area. Berkshire Grown helps us communicate with farmers; Guido's helps us consider options for obtaining local and organic food and has offered to help with educational components. The Co-op has also offered to help obtain food for Monument's cafeteria. Additionally, they have offered to negotiate a bartering system, so that in return for Project Sprout providing them with produce during the summer, the Co-op could provide food for Monument in the winter when Project Sprout is dormant. They have also offered us their nutritional expertise. The strength of our community has aided us immensely in our endeavor, and as awareness of our initiative grows, we hope to collaborate with more people who have similar interests and cares.

Sophie Randolph is a Senior and a member of the Monument Mountain Food Committee. Quinn Martin is a Senior and a member of the Project Sprout Board.

A Guided Tour of Miso Heaven

A vendor visit becomes an enlightening education on one of the world's oldest foods.



MISO CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and owner. Although I had never met Christian, he has known my father, Ed Esko, since the late 1970s when they were studying macrobiotics together in Boston. After some catching up, Matt Novik, the Co-op's Communications Manager and Alex Freedman pulled in and the tour was about to begin.

Christian began by explaining the history and genesis of the South River Miso Company, which began in Ohio under the name, Ohio Miso Company, in 1979. In 1981 they moved the entire operation to 64 acres of farmland along the South River in Conway, Mass., and South River Miso Company was born. Over the years Christian and his dedicated team have built an impressive operation that now produces 120,000 pounds of miso a year! Today, South River is the only company in the United States producing certified organic miso using wood-fire and traditional handcrafting methods. We were led into the heart of the facility where Christian began a step-by-step tour of the entire miso making process.

It all starts with koji making, which begins by soaking organic short-grain brown rice (or other grains) overnight. The next day the rice is steamed, then placed in wooden cooling boxes until the rice cools to below 112 degrees. The steamed rice is then inoculated with the spores of a mold, *Aspergillus oryzae*. They call this "seeding the koji," as the process is similar to sowing seed grain in a field. The cooked grain becomes the "ground" in which the "seeds" (spores) are sowed. Christian considers this an agricultural process raised above the earth into a more subtle realm of life processes. After inoculation, the koji is placed into a large, muslin-lined wooden box called "the crib," where, like an infant, it stays overnight. The koji goes into the crib at 80 degrees and by the next morning will reach 95 degrees, at which time the koji is stirred to oxygenate it and to release heat and carbon dioxide. The koji is then placed in wooden trays, which are carefully stacked in a small incubation room for the final 24 hours of the koji making process. What is occurring this whole time is a rapid growth of the koji mold fueled by the starches in the grain, creating numerous enzymes as it grows on the rice. These enzymes are breaking down the starches of the rice into sugars, which continue to fuel the growth of the koji at an accelerating rate. At "harvest time," a full 48 hours after inoculation, the rice is coated with what Christian describes as a "fragrant bloom of white mold." The koji is bound together by the mycelia of the mold into a solid white mass that needs to be broken up during harvest. This is accomplished by rubbing the matted koji through a stainless steel screen. The koji is then mixed with a measured amount of sea salt, the exact amount depending on the variety of miso being made. The sea salt stops further mold growth, and preserves the nutrients and enzymes needed for the second stage of the miso fermentation.

Meanwhile, the beans (predominantly soy beans, but chickpea, and azuki beans are also used) are prepared in a three-day process as well. This starts with hand sorting, washing, and overnight soaking. Soaking is important, as it rehydrates the beans for more even cooking and increases their digestibility and nutritional benefit. The soaked beans are then boiled by wood-fire for about 20 hours in a large cauldron set within a massive masonry stove. After cooking, the beans are placed into a large, stainless steel mixing box. After cooling down to body temperature, they are now ready for the next step: treading.

South River uses the ancient process of foot treading to mash the beans into a chunky textured paste. The treader wears two layers of plastic leggings and organic cotton socks over the feet. According to Christian, nearly

all miso was made this way in Japan right up until World War II. After that time industrialized machine processing was introduced. The foot treading process results in the traditional chunky texture or "country style" miso, in which some whole beans are left intact. During the treading process some already mature "seed" miso is added to the cooked beans. This inoculates and fortifies the fermentation process with beneficial micro-organisms that have co-evolved with miso up through the ages, similar to traditional sourdough bread cultures.

After the beans are crushed, the salted koji is added during the final part of the treading process, resulting in raw miso. It takes about an hour for one person to tread and mix 500 pounds of raw miso. Christian proudly informed us that, at South River, they have mixed and tread by foot over two million pounds of miso in 31 years. Christian



Daniel at South River. Those barrels will age for 3 years.

himself has walked the equivalent of over 3,000 miles during the treading process!

Once treading is complete, the raw miso is now ready for the second and final stage of fermentation. It is placed into large wooden (cypress) vats, each holding up to 7,000 pounds of miso. This final fermentation can take anywhere from three weeks to three years, depending on the variety. After the desired fermentation period, the miso is removed from the vats and packed by a small team of folks in the packing room and placed in refrigeration. The miso is now ready for shipment to mail-order customers as well as for pick-up by UNFI (United Natural Foods) and other distributors for wider distribution.

South River Miso produces ten varieties of miso. Current offerings include the tried and true Three Year Barley, their most popular variety, Sweet White, the sweet but hearty Chickpea, and the more esoteric Garlic Red Pepper and Dandelion Leek varieties. The white and yellow varieties of miso contain more rice or grain koji relative to the amount of beans. They also contain less salt, and are fermented for shorter periods of time. They tend to be sweeter, lighter and creamier, and are more versatile in use. Darker misos (red, brown, and black) contain more bean than grain (usually barley koji instead of rice koji, or a combination of both). They are fermented for longer periods of time, and contain higher levels of salt than the lighter varieties. They are heartier and more robust tasting, and are more specific in use. Darker misos are commonly used for soups, glazes, bean dishes, and gravies. Lighter varieties of miso are also great for soups, but can also be used in marinades, dressings, spreads, and as a substitute for dairy in chowders, casseroles and stews. The complex and savory flavors of miso seem to transcend the four basic tastes of sweet, salty, sour and bitter. The unique flavor profiles produced from different combinations of fermented grain and bean over varying periods of time and in varying climates can be difficult for Westerners

to describe. The Japanese describe the taste of miso as "umami," the flavor of Japan. It is a distinct flavor that stimulates the appetite and is uniquely satisfying.

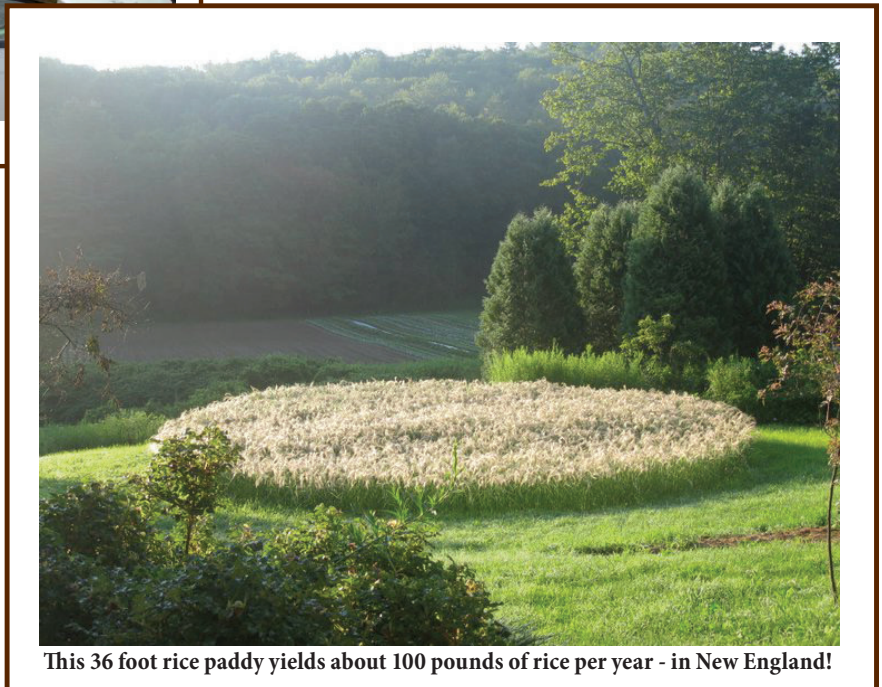
While explaining the art of miso making at South

"While explaining the art of miso making at South River and the different styles for each variety of miso, Christian was animated and excited, inserting bits of his own personal food philosophy and relevant historical background, all necessary to inform our understanding of this truly miraculous process that we had the honor of witnessing."

River and the different styles for each variety of miso, Christian was animated and excited, inserting bits of his own personal food philosophy and relevant historical background, all necessary to inform our understanding of this truly miraculous process that we had the honor of witnessing. While Christian was speaking, the dedicated employees were all engaging in each step of this process before our eyes. Matt and Alex

were, of course, familiar with miso, but seemed like they were becoming gradually "enlightened" as to the ways of miso, eyes wide open, listening intently the whole time. Even though I have a long history of consuming miso, I was in the same boat as Matt and Alex and felt an incredible feeling of gratitude and appreciation wash over me. I felt this towards Christian, his dedicated staff, miso masters over the generations, and the force of life itself from which our food and thus our consciousness derives.

Our tour was almost over, but we had one more important item on the agenda: exploring the idea of growing rice in the Berkshires. Christian showed us the 36-foot diameter rice paddy where he has been growing rice for thirty years. He grows this rice for his family and friends. He harvested a little over 100 pounds in 2010.



This 36 foot rice paddy yields about 100 pounds of rice per year - in New England!

This is equivalent to a yield of over 4,000 pounds per acre! The paddy is home to many symbiotic organisms in the ecosystem of South River, which is a tributary of the Connecticut River. Gray tree frogs are the most notable, and they fill the air with their songs during the month of June. Alex asked Christian if he could share some rice seed for growing at CCF in Sheffield. Christian obliged, they exchanged contact information, and Alex was invited to the next rice planting at South River, which takes place in the late May. We were all given a nice gift of South River Chickpea Miso Tamari, which is a relative of soy sauce, and a by-product of miso making. I was also given four bags of rice to take to my father and Christian's other friends in the Berkshires. We discussed follow up, such as future South River Miso promotions and demonstrations at the store, the expansion of our South River Miso selection, this newsletter article, and the next steps for Alex and his friends at CCF. We then all said our goodbyes. I left feeling inspired by food, the people that bring that food to life, and by the personal connections we all made that day.

Along with being a miso enthusiast, Daniel is the Co-op's Non-Perishables Manager.

1. Reference: Soy, Isoflavones, and Breast Cancer Risk in Japan, by Yamamoto, S. in Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Vol. 95, pgs 906-913, June 18, 2003.
2. Reference: The Miso Book: The Art of Cooking with Miso, by Belleme, J., pg 13.

Education & Outreach Report

By Jenny Schwartz, Education & Outreach Coordinator

It's been another exciting season in the Co-op's Education & Outreach Department. So far we've seen over 1,000 students in 46 classes in 4 school districts. And the year isn't over yet. We are also running in-store workshops, farm and vendor tours and volunteer and educational opportunities. All in all, we've got no trouble keeping busy.

NEW PROGRAM!

Community/Teaching Garden

Are you looking to get involved in your community and receive an education as well? Then this is the program for you! Here's an opportunity to be part of the inaugural year of Berkshire South Community Garden, a 30' by 40' fenced-in space that will be used for Early Childhood programming at the center, as well as for community plots available in the beginning of May. Berkshire Co-op Market will also have a plot that will be used to supplement the community dinners at Berkshire South as well as being the central location for educational workshops. Along with Community Cooperative Farms and Greenagers, we will provide bi-monthly workshops with topics that include incorporating fruits into gardens, natural pest management, and how to make and can preserves. We are looking for volunteers who would be interested in spending two hours per week working in the garden. It is open to all ages and abilities and you don't need to be an owner to participate. The workshops will be open to the public for a small fee and volunteers will be able to attend the workshops for free. For more information, please contact Jenny Schwartz, jschwartz@berkshire.coop or call 413-528-9697 ext. 33. The schedule for volunteer days and workshops will be available soon on the Co-op's website.

Food Adventures

Food Adventures, in collaboration with the Nutrition Center, had a terrific group of kids in the after-school program at Conte Community School. Fifteen children participated in the Conte's Food Adventure's after-school program. While the focus was on healthy eating, we incorporated different cultures into the curriculum. After focusing on local and seasonal, we made recipes from Mexico, Africa, China, India, the Middle East, Europe and Russia. Our Food Adventures vegetable fried rice continues to be a favorite among the kids. A new recipe addition to the class was a "squapple" crisp, where we used a combination of butternut squash and apples covered with a crispy, cornflake top. One child replied that she was going to relay to her family, "This is the only way I will ever eat squash!" This session concluded a little differently than our usual showcase presentation. For the first time, parents were invited to participate in the last class of the session. We had about eight families join us to make nacho flavored kale chips and a mango lassi, two recipes the children voted to share with their relatives. It was great to see the children from our class instruct their relatives and friends on what to do and how to use specific cooking utensils. Parents and children were sad to see the class end after trying and liking what we made together.

We recently led an after-school program at New Marlborough Central School. This was a six-week program during which we focused on healthy breakfast recipes, balance and variety in food choices, nutrient dense foods

and local and seasonal recipes. The kids worked together to make recipes such as pita pizzas, roasted delicata and butternut squash with a variety of seasonings, and rainbow vegetable wraps with homemade dressing. We changed some of the pickiest eaters' taste buds to enjoy ingredients such as purple cabbage and spinach pesto. Nothing is more pleasurable than seeing a child request a recipe, then run up to a parent and say, "We need to make this when we get home!"

The Central Berkshire Fund grant the Nutrition Center received through Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation helped us to provide in-school programming at Nessacus Middle School in Dalton, MA. Thanks to our wonderful collaborator Mary-Jo Erickson Conner, the school's nurse, we met with eight seventh-grade classes and made a traditional hummus along with a carrot hummus. We used freshly cut cucumbers and celery to dip into the hummus samples, which made for a quick and tasty snack.

Lastly, our monthly visits to Undermountain Elementary School continue to go well. We have met with children in grades ranging from kindergarten to 6th, and focused on the origins of the specific ingredients and how to make simple, nutritious snacks from them. From tofu lettuce wraps to demonstrating how to use leftover brown rice to make Brazilian and Chilean inspired rice puddings, we are traveling the world each time we visit the students at Undermountain.

Eat Well and Learn at Undermountain Elementary School

Our collaboration continues with Fairview Hospital as we recently began another session of the Eat Well and Learn after-school program. The kids have had a great time making delicious recipes such as breakfast crepes, spring rolls and whole-wheat vegetable pizza. Thanks to the assistance from Robert Hoehster, staff nutritionist at Fairview Hospital, and our volunteer extraordinaire, Betsy Garcia from the Sheffield Senior Center, the kids are having a blast experiencing new foods and learning how to cook for themselves.

At the Co-op

Our DIY Kids workshops take place on the second Friday of every month. Upcoming workshops included magazine beads on Friday, May 12th and a planting workshop on Friday, June 8th. DIY Kids workshops are scheduled from 4-5 pm in the café. Be sure to look for Sammi and Jenny at summer solstice on Saturday, June 23rd, when they will be leading ongoing tie-dyeing workshops throughout the day. Our upcoming Kids Can Cook workshops are Saturday, May 12th from 10-11 am, when we will be making a spring vegetable frittata, and on Saturday, June 28th, when we will be making fondue! You don't have to be an owner to attend and can sign up at the front desk or call 413-528-9697 ext. 10. Please let us know when you sign up if your child has any allergies or dietary restrictions.



Charge Accounts Ready For Rollout

By Kira Smith, Owner Services Manager

Attention Co-op shoppers, **BIG ANNOUNCEMENT!** We have listened and planned, and as owners you have waited patiently.

We are happy to announce that owner charge accounts will be available by June 1st, 2012. Woohoo!! I have been waiting to say that for a long time. For anyone who does not know the story, I will be happy to explain.

The Co-op spends almost \$90,000 a year in credit card and credit card related fees. That is a lot of money, money that could be going back into the community instead of lining the pockets of the unknown. As owners, you wanted to find a way to help us reduce those fees and keep more money local. The only way to cut back on these fees is by not using credit cards or bank cards, and because people don't carry much cash these days, we know that's not the answer. We had to come up with a better solution, so we decided to offer owner charge accounts.

This is how it will work: "Tony," a Co-op owner, currently spends \$10 each week day getting coffee and lunch. Each day he swipes his card for \$10 and the Co-op gets charged at least one fee for each swipe of the card. Tony decides to sign up for an owner charge account and he puts \$50 on his owner card at the beginning of each week (only swiping his credit card once) and the rest of the week uses his owner card to pay for his purchases. This means that Tony is helping us reduce the credit fees by only using his credit card once a week, instead of five times a week.

As time goes on, Tony realizes that this system has really worked for him and he decides to help even more. Tony puts \$200 on his owner card once a month to cover his purchases at the Co-op, reduc-



Your owner cards are about to be a lot cooler.

ing his credit card charges from four times a month to once a month. Before owner charge accounts Tony was swiping his credit card and we were getting charged fees twenty or more times a month. Now he only uses his credit card once a month, greatly reducing the fees charged to the Co-op.

Owner charge accounts offer the possibility of reducing our credit card fees by up to 40%. This will allow the Co-op more profit. We then put that profit back into the local economy. The program can also give owners a new option for removing themselves from the credit card economy. Once signed up, owners will just need to present their owner charge card and a valid ID at the registers, helping to ensure that the new owner charge cards will be secure and offer the same convenience that an Amex or Visa would, but without the fees. Of course you can always put money on your owner charge account with cash or check and help save even more money in the long run.

We will keep you updated as we continue to roll out this program. In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments please feel to email me, Kira Smith, owner services manager, at ksmith@berkshire.coop or call 413.528.9697 ext 13

C o-op C ustomer C omments

Each month our customers are invited to comment on the store, our products and anything else that may come up. The Q & A box is located at the front desk. One of the things that makes the Co-op unique is that we answer ALL questions and post those answers in the store. You can find on the board across from the front desk. Here are some excerpts from the last round.

Comment: Could you please switch back to paper "spoons" for the samples? The wooden ones feel like tongue depressors. They give me goose bumps (I am not the only one that experiences this feeling).

Response: Unfortunately, while we loved those paper spoons, they were cost prohibitive in the end. The wooden ones, while significantly more expensive than typical plastic sample spoons, are about 25% of the cost. We're sorry you don't like them. A suggestion: some customers just pick up the sample cup and down the sample without using a spoon at all. Maybe that will keep the goose bumps at bay. - Matt

Comment: I noticed you have Whole In The Wall Pesto. It's very good, but their Spinach Pesto is even better. The Co-op used to get Spinach Pesto, but doesn't anymore. I am just wondering why you stopped carrying the spinach pesto?

Response: We have tried selling the spinach pesto several times. Unfortunately, it just does not sell fast enough and we end up with too much waste. We can order you a case of that particular variety, which consists of 8 packages. Just let a Produce employee know if you are interested. - Andrei

Comment: Just wondering if the meat department could carry the sole they used to sell in the fish department. Thank you!

Response: I am sorry, but we are now a participating retailer in the FishWise program. Through our training with them, we discovered that the previously carried sole is not sustainable. With the addition of FishWise, we set a new commitment to carry only sustainable choices. Unfortunately, that may mean some of your favorite items are no longer carried at the Co-op. We are working hard to find suitable replacements for discontinued items. - Jeff

Comment: Please carry gluten-free Luna bars...they're new and delicious.

Response: Luna's protein bars (which is their gluten-free line according to their website) all contain soy protein isolate. Our Food & Product Policy requires third-party verification for all new products that contain GMO high risk ingredients. Since non-organic soy is almost exclusively GMO, we cannot bring in this product at this time. We're hoping that Clif/Luna gets third-party verification soon, and recommend giving them a call to let them know you'd like them to be verified by the Non-GMO Project. On the bright side, while we can't currently bring in these Luna bars, that doesn't exclude them from being purchased by the case through the buying club, which is a great option if you'd like 12 bars of any one flavor. - Daniel

COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Starts in **MAY!**
 Community Plots
 Gardening Workshops
 Community Suppers **Food with**
 The Co-op
 Berkshire South
 Greenagers

For more information, see page 6 or call Jenny at 413.528.9697 x33



APRIL 16TH - 20TH 2012

YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A WEEK OF FREE EDUCATIONAL AND FUN PROGRAMS AT BERKSHIRE SOUTH DURING YOUR SPRING BREAK. SOME OF THE AWESOME WORKSHOPS WILL BE LED BY: SOLID ROCK FARM, COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE FARM, THE SEWING SHOP, GREENAGERS, CROSS-IT KIDS, THE NUTRITION CENTER, BERKSHIRE CO-OP MARKET, BERKSHIRE SOUTH AND MORE!

LOOK FOR A MORE DETAILED SCHEDULE AT:
WWW.BERKSHIRE.COOP OR
WWW.BERKSHIRESOUTH.ORG
 FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL:
 JENNA BRONSON - 413-528-2810 EXT. 34
GETUNPLUGGED@BERKSHIRESOUTH.ORG

Sloppy Joes & the New Era Lunch Lady

By Matthew Novik

On page four of this issue, you can read a great article from two students at Monument Mountain Regional High School about their efforts to introduce more local ingredients and improve the nutritional content and food quality of their school lunches. I have been intimately involved with the project and I have to say it has been a great experience.

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend the Massachusetts Farm to School Annual Convention with them. The meeting was primarily geared toward educators, school administrators and food service directors, but it was open to all and we had a lot to learn. Toward the end of the day, a bunch of us attended a workshop called “Tools for Successful Menu Change.” The featured panelists were Alden Caldwell, food service director from Concord-Carlisle public schools; Vin Connelly, kitchen manager at Cambridge Rindge and Latin school, and Melissa Honeywood, food service director at Cambridge public schools.

Now, to understand my experience at that workshop, you need to know a little about me. Those that know me best know that I have a weakness for stupid humor. I love the Three Stooges, I’ve seen Steve Martin’s *The Jerk* more times than I can count, and I am huge fan of the early feature films of Adam Sandler.

What does all that have to do with school lunches? Well, when I think of school lunch I think of the lunch lady scene from Sandler’s classic *Billy Madison*. “Have

some sloppy joes,” says the unrealistically scary lunch lady. “I made ’em extra sloppy for you. I know you kids like ’em sloppy!” I know this is a little weird. But I’ve seen that movie so many times that it’s the first thought that pops into my mind when I think about the good folks procuring, preparing and serving school lunches. I hear the words “lunch lady” and I think of that scene. At least I did until I met Alden, Vin and Melissa.

“They were young. They were passionate. And they were dedicated to challenging the status quo in the public school lunchrooms.”

In our last newsletter, we featured chef Anne Cooper, the self-proclaimed “Renegade Lunch Lady.” Chef Anne is known for making huge changes to large-scale school lunch programs. She reintegrates cooking from scratch, uses local and fresh ingredients, and gives fiery speeches nationwide about starting a revolution in the cafeteria.

Well folks, the revolution has begun. The food service managers I met at the Farm to School Convention were soldiers in the Anne Cooper army. They were young. They were passionate. And they were dedicated to challenging the status quo in the public school lunchrooms. They talked about health and nutrition. They talked about visiting lunchrooms and asking kids what they thought of the offerings. They talked about work-



ing with farmers to create products that made it easier to sell to schools. And they talked about how rewarding their work was and how much they loved their jobs.

These people were such a far cry from the scary sloppy joe slinger in *Billy Madison* that the image was forever banished. Because of my experience that day, when I think of school lunches, I will think of these innovative, hip and passionate food service professionals. I will think of Alden, Vin and Melissa. And I will think of a future that has very few sloppy joes.

RECIPE RESOURCE

UDON SALAD WITH PINEAPPLE



Ingredients

- 8-ounce package udon noodles
- 1 tablespoon tamari
- 2 tablespoons Mirin (rice wine)
- 3/4 cup pineapple juice (if using fresh pineapple)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 cup carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger
- 1 tablespoon fresh garlic, minced (about 2–3 cloves)
- 1–2 jalapeño peppers, seeds removed, minced
- 1 cup sugar snap peas (fresh or frozen), cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 2 cups diced fresh pineapple (or 1 20-ounce can diced pineapple, drained, juice reserved)
- 4 ounces of cooked chicken, cut into bite-sized pieces
- Sesame seeds for garnish

Preparation

1. In a large pot of boiling water, cook the udon noodles until just tender. Drain, rinse and set aside. In a small bowl, whisk together the tamari, Mirin, pineapple juice, and cornstarch and set aside.
2. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Sauté the carrots for a minute or two, then add the ginger, garlic, and jalapeños. Sauté another 2 minutes, then add the snap peas and sauté for 2 more minutes. Add the sauce and cook until thickened. Toss the vegetables and sauce with the noodles, green onions, pineapple and chicken. Serve warm or cold, garnished with sesame seeds.

This is a great way to dress up leftover roast chicken, but you can also substitute baked tofu or seitan for a vegetarian version. Grill the chunks of fresh pineapple before adding it to the salad for just a bit more sweetness. **Cost Per Serving:** Approximately \$2.50

Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 6

Nutritional Information Per Serving:

Calories: 164, Fat: 3 g, Cholesterol: 16 mg,
Sodium: 219 mg, Carbohydrate: 26 g,
Dietary Fiber: 2 g, Protein: 9 g

Recipe from strongertogether.coop



5 STAR



VENDOR

By Ted Moy, Merchandising Coordinator

Co-op buyers are always looking for companies that go the extra mile. That extra effort could be more environmentally sustainable business practices, heightened community awareness, or contributing to improved public health. When we find these products, we label them as Five Star Vendors. Each quarter, we highlight one of them in these pages.



Upon taking a look at the Co-op's Ends Statement (page 3), I have come to realize that certain companies and their products are natural fits for inclusion in our store. One such company is mothering Mother. One of our local vendors, mothering Mother is located in Pelham, NY.

Berkshire Co-op Market strives to be a model of social and environmental stewardship (E3) and support a sustainable environment (E8). To these ends we provide avenues for recycling of consumables and electronic devices, and have one of the most abundant bulk departments in the county. We also opt to not offer plastic shopping bags at checkout. Instead, we supply paper bags for a nominal fee of 10¢ per bag, and donate that money to different environmentally focused nonprofits. As you may have noticed, the business of providing a convenient and comfortable shopping experience does involve the use of some plastics. At this point, we still offer thin plastic bags for use in the produce and bulk departments, as well as the fresh bread section. These bags, unbeknownst to many, are actually recyclable, but many of our customers and staff have opted to not use these bags on principle.



A great alternative to these are mothering Mother reusable cotton bags, which should be included in the bunch of reusable shopping bags we all keep in the car.

"Our Mission: mothering Mother™ is committed to developing, promoting and distributing reusable products that replace disposable products. Our intention is to reduce the impact of disposable living upon Mother Nature by educating and encouraging a wider community commitment to changing behaviors, and by making our products accessible and affordable.

A portion of profits from mothering Mother™ will be shared with environmental organizations working toward Earth awareness and protection. mothering Mother™ encourages activity that mothers Mother in all areas of life." -from motheringmother.com



IYC FEATURED COOPERATIVE

GREEN MOUNTAIN SPINNERY CO-OP

A Story of Success & Succession by Erbin Crowell



The United Nations has declared 2012 the International Year of Co-ops (IYC), recognizing the contribution of cooperative enterprise to community resilience, human development and food security. As a member of your local food co-op, you know the difference that co-ops make in your community. And as part of our celebrations, the Neighboring Food Co-op Association is profiling other cooperative businesses that are building a thriving regional economy.

For many small business owners, what gets them up in the morning is not just creating a successful company. Success is also about creating lasting social, economic and environmental value in the world by providing good jobs, offering quality products and services, and giving back to community.

But one of the challenges to the sustainability of small business is succession. As owners look toward retirement or new opportunities, they may wonder what their options are. Others may want to stay in their business but realize that they find it more fulfilling to share the rewards and responsibilities of running their enterprise. In both of these cases, a transition to the worker co-op model can be an effective and rewarding way forward. By engaging employees in the ownership and operation of the business over time, a small business owner has the pleasure of knowing that their work will continue in the community. And workers have the opportunity to become owners and entrepreneurs--or in this case "co-opreneurs"--in their business.

Back in 1981, four people founded the Green Mountain Spinnery in Putney, VT, with the goals of supporting regional sheep farmers and producing natural wool products for local artisans in the most environmentally sound manner possible. The founders were inspired by E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, and shared the author's vision of community-based enterprise.

After twenty-five successful years of operation, the owners began to think about how to ensure that the work

they had started would continue. They worked with the Vermont Employee Ownership Center (VEOC) to obtain a grant to transition the business to co-operative ownership. Today, the Green Mountain Spinnery Co-op is owned by nine members and has recently published an updated edition of its book of knitting designs, *99 Yarns and Counting: More Designs from the Green Mountain Spinnery Cooperative*.

"The Spinnery is resilient and innovative," says Margaret Atkinson, who focuses on sales and marketing for the co-op. "We have been operating for over 30 years. For a business of this type that is amazing. We came up with 'green' products and methods and supported the local economy long before this was a fashionable trend. Sometimes we think the rest of the world is catching up to us."

The Spinnery provides good manufacturing jobs, health benefits and flexible schedules that encourage members to be more involved in their communities, whether that means coaching sports or serving on the board of a community organization. The co-op also contributes to local community organizations and events such as Brattleboro's "Strolling of the Heifers," and sponsors a knitting circle for elders in Putney.

"Many of the great folks at Green Mountain Spinnery are also active members of Putney Food Co-op," says Robyn O'Brien, General Manager of the nearby Putney Food Co-op. "It's great to live in a community where the cooperative model is recognized as a solution for succession and upholds the intentions of the founders of the business."

Next time you're in southern Vermont, be sure to stop by the Spinnery, or visit them on the web: www.spinnery.com.

Erbin Crowell is Executive Director for the Neighboring Food Co-op Association, www.nfca.coop, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Cooperative Fund of New England, www.coopfund.coop

In Search of Authentic Fair Trade

A war rages on over the definition of fair trade.

FAIR CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

consumers. These alternative trade relationships created direct partnerships among co-ops of small farmers and consumers and were defined by better prices, longer-term contracts and personal relationships.

As with any successful movement, the bigger Fair Trade got, the more complicated its systems became. In participating countries, the alternative trade organizations joined together to establish National Fair Trade Organizations, created to define, certify and label fair trade products for the consumer. In 1997, knowing they needed a universal international standard, the Fair Trade Labeling Association (FLO) was formed by 25 independent fair trade organizations including labeling initiatives representing 22 countries. The U.S. representative at that table was Transfair USA, an organization that was itself formed by the direct trade organizations that got the ball rolling in the first place. Since its creation, the FLO has functioned as the umbrella organization for the world's Fair Trade certification. The FLO sets the rules by which other organizations create their certification standards.

With FTUSA's departure from FLO, a major player is now going it alone. This marks the first time since the 90's that an organization has left the FLO. It also marks the only time in history a single organization has attempted to create its own set of standards.

What's The Issue?

In a word: plantations. Fair Trade USA has launched a new initiative that they call Fair Trade for All. In this plan, they will allow Coffee Plantations to be eligible for Fair Trade status. This change has led to a worldwide debate and FTUSA's departure from FLO.

Plantations are, by their nature, much larger operations than their small farmer counterparts. Detractors say that, by putting plantations up against small coffee farmers, FTUSA has made it impossible for them to compete. Thus placing the coffee market back to where it started. FTUSA claims that, no matter the size of the company, workers need support and fair trade needs to impact as many workers as possible. And therein lays the debate. Should Fair Trade stay small while maintaining current standards and focusing on small farmers? Or should it grow by altering its standards to increase impact and help more workers, but with less direct goals?

FTUSA's Fair Trade For All

If you visit Fair Trade USA's website Fairtradeforall.com, it all looks very positive. The following is directly quoted from their front page: "Fair Trade USA is building on the momentum of the past 12 years to bring greater impact to farming communities. Our new vision—Fair Trade for All—is an innovation strategy that will double U.S. sales for Fair Trade producers by 2015." The statement goes on to highlight a strategy that includes strengthening farming communities, innovating the Fair Trade model and igniting consumer involvement. Strengthening community and consumer involvement have long been at the foundation of Fair Trade. It's the innovation that is causing the problems.

Innovation: Another Word for Change

Paul Rice, President & CEO of Fair Trade USA responded to criticism in an article at TriplePundit.com just after the official separation from FLO. In it he said "There are many voices in the Fair Trade movement, all united under a common mission to alleviate poverty through trade. FLO, one group in the global movement, is focused on small farmers organized into cooperatives. Fair Trade USA, another voice, believes that Fair Trade has to work for all kinds of producers to make a meaningful dent in global poverty."

In those sentences, Rice defined the future of Fair Trade in this country. Two models led by two different organizations, both claiming the right to use the Term Fair Trade. Whichever way you look at it, one thing is for sure. Rice's Fair Trade for All strategy marks a major change from the original values of Fair Trade. And a whole lot of people don't like it one bit.

Reaction From The Market

At Equal Exchange, Fair Trade for All was the straw. Equal Exchange is one of the nation's leading Fair Trade advocates. They were at the table when Transfair USA and the FLO were formed. While they started in the late 80's with coffee, EE has moved on to be a leader in Fair Trade chocolate, bananas and tea. A co-op themselves,

EE is also devoted to the co-op model and using it to create a different, more equitable food system.

For years, they have seen the gradually degrading standards of Fair Trade certification. They saw the acceptance of tea and banana plantations under the fair trade system even though plantations had no problems with market presence and needed no assistance and protection. They chose to continue working with co-ops in both sectors, holding themselves to a higher standard. But, when FTUSA proposed to take this model into coffee and chocolate, Equal Exchange couldn't continue. Rink Dickinson, co-founder and co-president of Equal Exchange made a speech reflecting on the origins and current state of Fair Trade in October. He spent time talking about the hard work that went into what has become a profoundly successful endeavor. Then he addressed the current situation.

"It's not like just one day Starbucks or Green Mountain or Dunkin Donuts woke up and decided it would be a really hip idea to buy from small farmers coops. No; it took years and decades of work to organize, entice and cajole these worthy giant corporations to do it our way. And let's be clear; we did not ask them for their advice on how to trade fairly, how to support small farmers and how to have fair trade "impact". Remember that word impact because it is being bandied about quite a lot by the people who are trying to steal fair trade from us. Their argument is whatever leads to higher volume by definition is higher fair trade impact. No, Starbucks and Green Mountain and Dunkin Donuts had very high volumes of coffee but no fair trade impact until we allowed them into our system on our rules. And to be clear large corporations are welcome to participate in, and profit from and support authentic fair trade. But they or their unconscious surrogates such as Transfair USA are not welcome to take over our fair trade. They can have all the corporate responsibility programs they desire. That is great. But no they do not get our

beautiful model that activists, consumers, small farmers and alternative trade organizations have patiently built for decades. Fair trade is ours, not theirs"

What is Authentic Fair Trade

Equal Exchange has since discontinued the use of the FTUSA certification. Choosing instead to continue with the FTO process and begin using the FTO certification logo as seen to the right. They also launched the Authentic Fair Trade campaign to offset Fair Trade For All. The following is from the statement in the Authentic Fair Trade Petition, launched at the start of the campaign. "Small farmer co-operatives are the center of our Fair Trade movement. We believe that cooperative organization is essential for small farmers to survive and thrive, and the cooperative model is an important vehicle for economic empowerment and social change. Working with small farmer cooperatives through Fair Trade strengthens farming communities world-wide, protects the environment and builds a just and sustainable food system for all." As of early March, they had already collected almost 4,000 signatures.

It's Your Choice

This all comes down to a question. Is Fair Trade a movement devoted to small farmers specifically or is it a movement that has broader, less specific goals. Advocates of Fair Trade For All criticize their detractors as reactionaries with limited world view. As Paul Rice said in a recent interview "Small is not beautiful." Traditional Fair Trade activists like the folks at Equal Exchange say that FTUSA's current action are a veiled attempt to collect more certification fees and to support the desires of big corporations like Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts.

Sides have been chosen. In the end, the choice is yours. And your choices may be what decide the future of Fair Trade.

Don't Get Logo Fatigue!

One of the biggest dangers to Fair Trade comes from what may be a side effect of the battle to define it. With organizations splitting and rules changing, consumers may see several versions of Fair Trade certification labels. Too much information may create label fatigue and dilute the value of the logos as a whole. Here is a guide to some of the logos you may see going forward.



This is the internationally accepted logo for the Fair Trade Labeling Organization. In all other FLO member nations, this is the fair trade certification logo. It was only in the U.S. that a different logo was used. Any product with this logo has been certified according to the international fair trade definition, which includes plantation for bananas and tea but not for coffee and cacao.



This is the former Transfair USA logo. While it is probably the one you have seen the most, it is being replaced with the logo below. While this logo used to represent the same as the one above, it no longer does so. It will be some time before it phases out completely. So, for now, Fair Trade USA will have two logos on the market.



This is Fair Trade USA's new logo. It was released around the time they split from international the fair trade community in favor of an independent set of standards. So far it has not appeared on too many products, but as new packaging comes into circulation, it will become more prevalent. CLAC stands opposed to Fair Trade USA's changes to Fair Trade standards.



The Small Producers' Symbol is special distinction granted to the products and values of Small Producers' Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. The initiative, launched in 2006 by the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Small Fair Trade Producers (Coordinadora Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Pequeños Productores de Comercio Justo—CLAC), may start to show up in the U.S. Market now that Fair Trade Certification is in flux.

Owner Services Report: The Front Desk & Beyond

By Kira Smith, Owner Services Manager



We didn't have much of a winter, but I have to say I am very happy that spring is here. It makes all the great

changes happening at the Co-op seem even brighter. Everything looks better in the spring with the warmer weather and the flowers blooming. There are so many things happening I am not sure where to start, so I am going to just jump right in!

- First off, make sure to mark your calendars for the following dates:
- Wednesday, April 18th is Owner Appreciation Day
- Sunday, April 22nd is Earth Day. Join our Sustain Ability Committee for some Co-op fun
- Saturday, June 23rd our annual solstice celebration will be held at Memorial Park on Bridge Street, directly next to the Co-op. The rain date will be Saturday, June 30th
- Thursday, July 19th is the next Owner Appreciation Day

Soon you will be seeing the brochures and other material at the front desk get a fresh, new look. We realized that they are a little out of date and needed to be freshened up a bit. We are also working on a revised "new owner packet" that uses less paper and can be emailed to anyone who requests it. We are excited about these changes and can't wait to give the front desk a bit of a new look.

For those of you who come into the Co-op on a regular basis, you may have seen a new chalkboard sign

hanging behind the front desk. This sign is changed every Sunday and will have all the "happenings" at the Co-op for the upcoming week. We are also posting the sign on Facebook and Twitter. It will tell you when new sales start, schedules for demos and workshops and anything else that may be happening at the Co-op that week.

Thanks to the Sustain Ability Committee, we have found a new recycling program for electronics called *Think Recycle*. We are still accepting cell phones but we are now able to take laptops, tablets, iPods and other MP3 players, digital cameras and some ink and toner cartridges. To see a complete list of items call the Co-op's front desk or go to thinkrecycle.com. We recommend wiping any personal/sensitive information off of the devices you bring in; we are unable to do this once you bring them into us for recycling. You can drop off eligible items you would like to recycle at the front desk.

Have you visited our website lately? www.berkshire.coop is a great place to learn about what is going on at your Co-op. You can find the daily menu, workshops and events, and the online Buying Club. We know you have busy lives and this can save you a trip to the Co-op if you are too busy enjoying the sun. It's easy to order on the online Buying Club; all you have to do is sign up and request an online account and in 24-48 hours you will be all set to order away. Our blog also makes for some fun reading. My personal favorite is the Adventures of Rex the Co-opasaurus. Some of you may enjoy the article on South River Miso or the one about the International Year of Co-ops. Make sure to take a look next time you are surfing the web or looking for some good reading!

Legislation For Community

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By Tim Geller

My father used to say, "If you want to know someone's values, take a look at their checkbook." At the Great Barrington Town Meeting on May 7th, our town has the chance to make its checkbook look a lot better. In these tough budgetary times, Great Barrington residents have the chance to add to their checkbook by a new and significant source of funding for supporting the kinds of values that make the southern Berkshires what they are: a countryside filled with working farms and open space and year-round recreational opportunities. This funding also enables working families to live in the towns where they work.

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a state statute that, when adopted by a town, provides funding for open space and recreation, historic preservation and affordable housing. CPA will be on the Great Barrington Town Warrant for a vote at the May 7th Town Meeting. If passed, it will be placed on the November ballot for adoption.

Generated from a small surcharge on property taxes, CPA is often viewed as "yet another tax." In practice, however, it can actually reduce residents' tax burden. When Town Hall needs a new roof, CPA funds could pay for it; when the town has the opportunity to create a new town park, say at the fairgrounds, CPA funds can help pay the bill; when the town wants to permanently preserve farmland and open space, CPA funds can help purchase the conservation restriction; when our working families are looking to build their first home, CPA funds could help provide a down payment. These direct economic benefits say nothing of the overriding positive economic impact of preserving our historic and open-space character.

The mere adoption of CPA has improved some towns' bond ratings. With \$30 million in infrastructure improvements slated over the next fifteen years, a higher bond rating could save the

town quite a lot of money. Most importantly, CPA brings access to state funding that is only available to municipalities that have adopted it. Although the amount varies from year to year, the state "matching funds" are virtually guaranteed to be available, as they are funded from a statewide fee on real estate transactions and are thus outside the annual state budget.

Across the Commonwealth, 148 towns have adopted CPA, including the Berkshire County towns of Stockbridge, Lenox, Williamstown and Becket. Stockbridge has put to use approximately \$2 million in CPA funds over the last seven years, 47% of which was from the state matching fund. Stockbridge CPA open-space expenditures include high profile projects such as \$125,000 for the conservation restriction on the 4-Corners property at the intersection of Rt. 102 and Rt. 183, and neighborhood-scale projects such as creating community-based gardens at Pinewoods Housing. The actual development of Pinewoods Housing, Construct, Inc.'s 30-unit mixed-income housing complex, received \$290,000 in CPA affordable housing funds, which leveraged an additional \$6.5 million. In the last five years, Lenox has raised \$3.3 million in CPA funds, which has leveraged an additional \$24.6 million in other project funding. This has included the purchase of the Lenox Library, paid with a \$1.5 million bond, secured with CPA historic preservation funds.

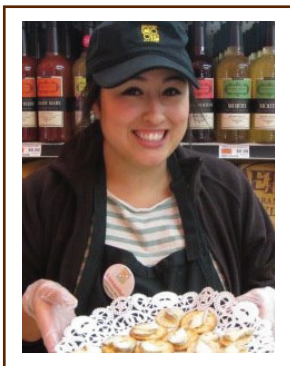
Preserving the historic character of our town centers, permanently protecting our farms and open space, creating healthy, inclusive community: it's not every day that legislation comes around that so clearly embraces so many of the values at the core of Berkshire Co-op Market. And that's why I thought Co-op owners would want to hear about it.

Tim Geller is a Berkshire Co-op Owner, and Executive Director, Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire



My Faves

Nobody knows our products like our staff. So we figured they could recommend some items to you. We are adding My Faves flags to our grocery section, describing staff picks of all sizes. Also, with each issue of the newsletter, we will ask one staff member to pick out \$50 worth of their favorite items in the store.



Sammi Zepeda

Communications Associate TOTAL: \$49.10

Taste Nirvana Coconut Water: It tastes delicious and it's refreshing \$1.79

Oliva Kale & Walnut Pesto: A healthy and tasty snack! I like to spread it on a baguette and add a slice of tomato! \$ 8.99

Double Shot Americano: A nice middle of the day drink....especially if I need a caffeine fix! \$1.60

Heavenly Organics Honey Pattie (chocolate mint): A nice treat after a meal or just in general — its hard not to have two! 49¢ x 2

Burt's Bees Tinted Lip Balm in Tiger Lily: Not only does it moisturize, but the tint makes you look cool! \$7.79

All Natural Adivasi Body Soap, Happy scent: It instantly puts me in a good mood, and it's not just because it's called "happy" \$5.99

Suzie's Multiseed Spelt flatbread crackers: These crackers are great with some brie (see below.) \$3.19

French Brie: A perfect snack with some flatbread crackers (see above.) \$9.78

Klara's Coconut Macaroons: Klara makes one of the best packaged cookies around, and she does it locally too! \$6.99

Q Ginger Ale 8oz: You haven't lived until you've had this stuff—delicious! \$2.00

The Departmental Reports

Each quarter we hear from the key buyers and managers in each department about what's been happening in the last three months and what to expect for the next three. Here are some department reports from our Produce Manger, Wellness Lead, Grocery Lead and Fresh Food Manager.

Produce From Andrei Smerechniak

The spring newsletter always comes at an exciting time for the produce department. As the weather warms and the ground thaws (well, most years it needs to do that) we prepare for the influx of local produce.

At our annual winter Growers' Meeting we had a great conversation with local growers about proactive and cooperative crop planning to maximize what we are able to buy from them. Over the next few seasons, we are confident that this progressive conversation will allow us to offer more high-quality local produce.

Starting this year, we will be able to offer some products that we had been unable to source locally up until now. These include local white ginger, Chinese cabbages, more abundant supplies of local asparagus and many, many more.

Organic potting soil and organic seeds have been on sale for weeks now. By the time this newsletter goes to print, we should have pansies and other early flowers along with potted herbs from High Meadows Farm in southern Vermont. Your green thumbs should be ready to go. Asparagus and fiddlehead ferns will be here mid-April to late May. In early May you can expect some local greens like kale, spinach and spring lettuce.

And then June and July will bring the best the area has to offer in produce. We can't wait for the prime growing season. It's the most exciting and fun time of year for our department. And it gets more so every year. We look forward to seeing you there.

Grocery From Cian Dalzell

A lot is shifting in Grocery these days—at least in the colder areas of it. Amie, our cooler and freezer buyer, reset both the dairy cooler and the whole freezer this winter. In said freezer you will find no fewer than forty new items, including a lot of new wraps for meals on-the-go, gluten-free options, waffles and ice creams. The freezer will continue to see some small changes—seasonal ice cream changes from the local vendors as well as new products that weren't available yet when the freezer was reset in March.

Some of the awesome products you might not know are sold in your Co-op include Fig Foods, Bread Alone rolls, Arico Cassava chips, Amy's shortbread, and CATA dryer balls. Fig Food soups are certified organic, all vegetarian and really hearty. Bread Alone, whose breads you may be familiar with, sell rolls that are right by the new meat department. They are perfect for sandwich making, and their Kaiser rolls are a great addition to burger night, whether that's with Hardwick beef or Vermont Bean Crafters bean burgers is your call. Cassava chips are just like potato chips, but made with cassava root instead. The flavor is excellent, not too far from a potato flavor, but different enough that it's a good change of pace, especially their ginger flavor. Amy's recently came out with delicious shortbread cookies that happen to be gluten-free, and you can find both a traditional and a chocolate chip version on the shelves. Community Access to the Arts (CATA) here in Great Barrington has a workshop where they make the dryer balls we're proud to sell; the ingredients are upcycled local wool yarn (often scraps after projects) and used (washed) tennis balls.

Some new items that are either just in or will soon be in the store include a raw, organic coconut water from Harmless Harvest, coconut juice blends from VitaCoco, new local organic maple syrup from Crown Maple, Klara's lemon poppy seed cookies (a farmers' market favorite from last year for Klara), and Crofters juice-sweetened jams. Some of these were specific requests from owners, and you're encouraged to let us know what you'd like to see on the shelves.

Food Policy in Action: On the grocery shelves you may notice more Non-GMO Project tags going up. This verification is important to us so we can be confident of the caliber of the items sold at the Co-op. The tags, much like the local and gluten-free tags, give you the opportunity to support the companies and products that fit your eating habits without spending a lot of time reading the labels. The products that are verified shift (mostly by way of expansion) every month, so keep an eye out for these tags.

A couple of Co-op Deals items that appear in the flyer are not going to be available in the store. In March, Kozy Shack pudding was not available due to a potential for rBST in the milk. In April this includes yogurt-covered pretzels in the bulk section of the flyer, as they have conventional soy lecithin in them, and Dr. Praeger's pancakes in the frozen section of the flyer, as they are made with conventional canola oil. While we have chosen not to sell these items, we understand that you may really like one of them and still want to buy them, something you can do through the Buying Club.

Wellness From Brenna St. Pierre

Spring greetings from Wellness! We're preparing for a sunny, buggy season, but fear not; we have you covered. W.S. Badger Co. sunscreen is here in all its variations, including three brand new products. All Badger sunscreens use pharmaceutical-grade non-nano zinc oxide for UVA & UVB protection in an emollient organic base. The Damascus Rose Antioxidant Face and Aloe Vera sunscreen lotions are SPF 16 sunscreen lotions for everyday use. These are a wonderful option for those who love Badger Co., but prefer a less-whitening lotion. Badger has also released an SPF 35 Sport Sunscreen with 80 minutes of water resistance for those who just can't get out of the water. Not seen for some time is Badger's SPF 30 Anti-Bug Sunscreen, a fantastic 2-in-1 with bug repellent essential oils in the mix. And an educational note: When looking for a sunscreen be sure to choose a "broad spectrum" formula. Only broad spectrum sunscreens protect against both UVA and UVB rays. Also interesting to note is that an SPF 30 sunscreen protects against about 97% of photons, while an SPF 60 (no longer allowed by the FDA) protects against 98%. Badger's sunscreen and bug repellent also come in twist-up sticks, perfect for your summer travels. We have testers of all Badger sunscreens, so feel free to try them all.

Other sun and bug products to look for are All Terrain's sunscreen sprays for kids and adults, as well as their pet bug spray. In the past we've carried sunscreen sprays from Kiss My Face, and Alba has just recently released one. However, we have decided to avoid carrying chemical sunscreens, and All Terrain's mineral zinc oxide sunscreen sprays are a perfect replacement. Our assortment of colloidal oatmeal remedies has expanded from the Nature's Gate lotion to bath packets, bubble bath, body wash and All Terrain's Ditch the Itch spray. Colloidal oatmeal is used for chicken pox, skin rashes and irritation, insect bites and poison oak/ivy.

Our selection of baby care has undergone a significant change as we've converted Burt's Bees to an expansion of Earth Mama Angel Baby, a USDA organic line; and Rainbow, with their colloidal oatmeal bath packets, bubble bath and body wash. Earth Mama Angel Baby is a mother-created and owned company with a dedication to organic, simple, effective products for mom and baby. Their products are clean and unique, like the New Mama Bottom Spray, a cooling, soothing mist intended to help ease postpartum soreness, swelling, episiotomies and hemorrhoids. They have a wonderful selection of body washes, lotions, balms, sprays and teas that we encourage anyone to investigate.

In supplements, the major news is Procter & Gamble's purchase of a local Brattleboro, VT, company: New Chapter organics. The makers of high-quality, whole-food supplements, New Chapter's leaders vow that they will not be changing the company, its quality, manufacturing processes or anything else. The increase in capital will probably mean more New Chapter advertisements out and about. We will keep a close eye out for any changes. If you would prefer to no longer purchase New Chapter, have no fear; Megafood is here! Also local, also whole-food vitamins, and mostly organic, Megafood's supplements are a terrific alternative to New Chapter. We can special order anything we do not carry, so don't be afraid to ask. April is the best time to try Megafood as the entire line is 20% off for our Wellness local deal. Have a happy spring and a sunburn-free summer!

Fresh Food From Jeff Schilling

Sugar has been the buzzword in our prepared foods department lately. After countless customer comments, we took another look at sugar content in our recipes and massively reduced our use of what has become a pretty unpopular ingredient with many of our customers. We eliminated added sugar from about 85% of our recipes, and reduced it in the rest. We think we were able to do this without negatively affecting our flavor profiles or food quality. However, if you notice a difference in the flavor of your favorite hot bar dishes, it's probably because of a change in sugar content. As always, we will continue to work hard to provide healthy food that tastes good. We hope you enjoy what we offer.

On another note, we have seen great success with our new meat department. When we did our last big owner/shopper survey, you told us that this department was an area with a great deal of opportunity for growth. Thanks to all of you who meant what you said. Sales have been up 30-40% since the change. We are thrilled to be able to offer products that were so in demand. Coming up for grilling season, look for marinated fish and steaks, beef and chicken kabobs and other great grill treats.

Future plans for the department include a revamp of the Co-op café menu. We'll be offering some new sandwiches, a chicken Caesar salad and a Cobb salad. As always, we encourage your comments. We value our customer opinions and would love to hear what you have to say. Thanks for being involved.