

New Farm a Sign of Things to Come

MX Morningstar Farm in Copake is the newest member of the local farming community.

By Matthew Novik, Communications Manager

When I first walked onto the Copake, NY, property, Max Morningstar was instructing one of his workers on where to locate their business signs along the road. That's how new a farm this is. They may be strangers in these parts, but MX Morningstar Farm is setting up to make a splash in this region's local food landscape. And they're doing so by using progressive ideas for land preservation, food production, and financial support that will serve as a model for increasing this region's local food supply in a sustainable and financially successful way.

The Making of a Farmer

Max is not, by any means, a new farmer, but he also didn't grow up with farming in his blood. "I grew up in the 'burbs outside of Boston," he told me as we took in the view of his new farm. "We were a big family. I've got twelve brothers and sisters, and our parents sent us off to work pretty young." At age fifteen, Max first got into food by working in restaurants. As he moved up the ladder, his relationship with food grew through reading, learning about recipes, and searching for ingredients at the local farmers' market.

As the years passed, Max started thinking about a different line of work. "I wanted to do something that would maintain the pace, intensity, and satisfaction of restaurant work, but I wanted to do it outside." Then, at the age of nineteen, Max realized what he wanted. "I told a friend of mine that I wanted to be a farmer. He reacted like I was crazy. These were the days when farming wasn't as understood as it is now. These days, the same comment is usually met with a smile."

Max then signed up for the Farm School, a new program in Athol, MA, that was offering a one-year curriculum training adult students to farm. It wasn't long before he was managing the vegetable program at Lookout Farm in Natick, MA, and then helped found Siena Farms in Sudbury, MA, which he ran for eight years before the move to Copake.

A New Model for Agricultural Success

Once Max decided he wanted to start out on his own, he needed to find some land. Enter Farmland Renewal, LLC. The partnership of twenty-two



Max Morningstar at his 65 acre farm in Copake, New York.

local investors had purchased a 110-acre parcel of land in the center of Copake. The property had been the proposed site of a controversial housing development that had fallen through. But, before that, it had been farmland for over a hundred years. Farmland Renewal is using an emerging model that uses private **MX continued on page 7**

Smart Snacks For Monument Students

The Co-op provides support for local students & the Farm to School Stand

By Daniel Esko, Operations Manager



From left to right: Dominic DeFelice, Quinn Abrams and Emma Adler at the store.

A couple of months ago we were approached by Zoe Borden, a student at Monument Mountain Regional High School in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. She was seeking some assistance with their Farm to School project, specifically with expanding their product selection. They had started a small retail store in the school called the Farm to School Stand, which was offering healthy snack options to the students. The Farm to School project is an offshoot of Project Sprout, an entirely student-led effort to improve student access to healthier food in the cafeteria, among other goals. In 2007, Project Sprout started a garden on the Monument grounds. Their vision was "to cultivate an organic farm on school grounds that would: grow vegetables for the cafeterias of the schools in the district, be used as an educational tool by classes from pre K-12th grade, and build **STORE continued on page 11**

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NOTES FROM HQ: THE GM REPORT

By Art Ames, General Manager



Happy spring. At least, I sincerely hope so. It seemed like winter would never end, and that it took the warm weather far too long to get here. In fact, I think it was the day after we received our first shipment of outdoor plants that we got a couple of inches of snow.

I'm having fun sprucing up my little Westy camper and getting ready for the summer music festival season. Can't wait! There's a lot happening, so let's get started.

Leadership Team

For the third time since I've been here, we've changed our management structure. Take a look at the new titles, which can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. Essentially, Daniel and Jeff are no longer super-department managers and are now "all-store" managers. I think the details will bore you. Instead, I want to brag about this team of ours. Some of our systems weren't working as well as we wanted. The management team looked at the issues and came up with a creative solution. They took a chance, because they suggested eliminating a couple of roles and creating new ones, putting their own jobs at risk. We took the original idea, tweaked it, talked to the rest of our amazing staff, and rolled out the new structure within four weeks. Everybody either embraced it or agreed to see how it all goes. Close to half of our employees instantly had a new "boss." Several weeks later, it's all a rousing success, people are happier and more focused, and you can just feel the positive difference. What's truly remarkable and far too rare is that our team identified a need, and instead of being afraid of change, embraced the concept, worked together, and came out stronger for it. That just doesn't typically happen in any business, particularly in a retail grocery environment. It's just one of the reasons I love working here: there's a spirit of "can do" that is exciting and invigorating. While I want to thank every single employee at the Co-op, a special shout out goes to Bob, Daniel, Jeff, and Matt for letting go of ego and self-interest, and really hammering out a consensus solution. Exciting stuff!

Expansion

What's happening with expansion? It's obviously been a difficult process. We've been ready for a long time. The choices we are considering involve many partners and property complexities. I am trying to do my due diligence, and our board is constantly kept up to date. Frankly, we still have some work to do to even determine where we will end up. I'm as impatient as the rest of you. However, once we decide and start fundraising, things will pick up speed. Once we borrow our first dollar, the clock starts ticking. If it takes us longer at this end so that we are more prepared when we start to spend money, we will be far better off.

More recently, we just found out that the downtown reconstruction project will commence in late June. I don't know if, or how much, this will affect our business. I do know that if our sales are reduced for a long time, it will affect our ability to expand. We do not have a structure that brings in a lot of profit or cash. We tend to spend those profits and put them back into the community each year. That means that reduced sales reduce the funds available for the big project. Of course, I'm not being negative or pessimistic. Instead, we want to make sure that we make wise business decisions to protect your equity. Please take a look at my separate article in the newsletter, and please spread the word.

I do think it might be helpful to remind all of us why we need to expand. As a rough estimate, did you know that our sales per square foot are probably 120% higher than our local big stores? Of course, we are much smaller and specialized, so our total sales are much less. But it is getting crowded in our store, and we can't carry all that you need or want. We really want to find room to give you low-cost bulk choices. Speaking of bulk,

we want to at least double that space, because the quality is superb and it is a far more affordable way to shop. We are already victims of climate change, which I'll discuss a bit later in more detail. For us to prepare for the next several decades, we will need the ability to store more goods, incentivize our local growers to produce more product, and work toward helping our community become more self-sufficient. That means that we have to work toward increasing local sales by offering more choices and having the ability to store more local foods. We really want to be a good employer, but at the moment many of our team just don't have the room to get their work done, and we are forced to have offices and storages off-site. It's inefficient and expensive. The building that we are in will need major renovation, even if we don't expand. As long as we are forced to spend money, we may as well make the best decisions we can. We feel that we need to focus more on education and community services and just don't have the room or resources yet to do so. Everything is getting more complicated, and our co-op is obliged to support our community during these transitions, and we simply need more resources to do so. I think we are well past discussing *whether* we should expand, but I do realize this discussion has been going on for far too long and just felt it was time to take a step back. Thanks for your indulgence.

Sourcing Food

Lately, the subject of prices at the Co-op has come up again. I've asked all of our team not to apologize, but to try and explain what's happening out there in the real world. Yes indeed, I know that some of you just don't want to hear it. Well, we are all in the same boat, because I don't like discussing it either, because the news is not good. We just don't think we can hide behind falsehoods, nor do we think we can subvert the quality of the product that we sell. I've said it before: our entire national food system is rigged! The least expensive foods are the least healthy. The least expensive foods have food substitutes, artificial ingredients, "flavoring," and lots of sugar and sodium. Lots! We won't sell that stuff. We can't, unless our owners decide to change the description and purpose of the Co-op. We absolutely compare our prices for the same products with the other stores. I promise you that in most cases, our prices are lower. Yes, lower! I think it doesn't feel that way because we don't really have the option of offering many lower priced choices as easily. We are working on it, but I don't foresee any miracles happening.

This winter was horrible, and here's where I get into the subject of climate change. With severe drought in the giant fields in California, and snow and below freezing weather in Florida and other parts of the South, it was almost impossible to find good produce this winter. Much of that product also goes into manufacturing. If you want to know more, stop and talk with Jake. Even what was delivered to us was poorer quality. In some instances, we refused as much product as we accepted. Prices rose. Have you tried buying a lime lately? Ouch! Because there are fewer organic and truly natural options, there is less back stock of product. This means that these categories are the first to see price increases—and it's getting worse. Remember coffee prices going up a couple of years ago? It's going to be much worse in future. There is a fungus called coffee rust that is attacking a huge portion of the coffee growing in Central America, with devastating results. Coffee grows best in climates that offer cool evenings. The coffee rust is spreading because the climate is changing and growing warmer. I sadly guarantee that food prices will continue to rise, and I sadly believe that the rise will be significant in about two years.

So, what do we do about it? On our end, as mentioned earlier, we need more storage space so that we can stockpile larger quantities at reduced prices, when available. We need to work even harder at increasing productivity and decreasing waste to be able to hold the line on prices, which we are doing already. I think your decisions are

even more challenging to make. Only you can decide where you need or want to save. If it's in the food you eat, that's your choice. On our end, it gets increasingly more challenging to vet all of our items, and it's increasingly apparent that the quality and contents of ingredients are getting worse. You are going to absolutely hate my long-term answer. The world is changing, sometimes more quickly than we like. Eventually, we are going to have to find a way to budget more money for food by cutting something else out. There! I said it! In the meantime, it's local businesses and cooperatives that allow your hard-earned dollars to stay in the community and work toward making us more able to deal with change. It's a tough decision for any of us to make. All I ask is that you consider your choices and actions, and make the best decisions you can for yourselves and families. A few weeks ago, I attended a start-up party for a new co-op effort in Amherst. It was a packed house, representing a very excited community. Of course they want what everybody wants: access to more local foods; fair wages and treatment for employees; community support and outreach, and the lowest prices around. I had to ask how many of them wanted access to more local foods. They all raised their hands, amidst the laughter. I asked them who wanted the lowest prices. Again, all hands went up. I asked them which they really wanted, because they couldn't have both. They decided that the question was not, "how can we afford to shop at the co-op." Instead, more appropriately, it was suggested that the real question is, "how can you afford not to."

More stuff

There are lots of new faces working here. I'd list them all, but I can't remember all their names. I can tell you that there's lots of work being done and lots of laughter—an ideal combination. We've raised the bar, and it shows. I know you've noticed how our displays have been looking better than ever; that in spite of quality issues in sourcing, our produce department is finally where it needs to be in looks and cleanliness; that Austin's efforts to bring the freshest and tastiest sustainable seafood to Great Barrington is paying off. My goodness, you have to try those scallops when we have them. They are fresh and sweet enough to eat as sushi. In a couple of weeks we are going to rebuild the cheese department, and put even more emphasis on excellent small local choices. I can't wait. I love cheese, and know just enough about it to make me dangerous. Since Deirdre took over our bulk department, you've probably noticed that the stock levels and organization have improved. At all levels, it's getting better. We brought in a dedicated, experienced person to handle our outdoor plants, and I know you must be impressed with the changes. Speaking of which, we only source those plants from local suppliers who grow their product near us, and we deliberately leave those plants outdoors so that they will become hardier. Simply put, these plants are more accustomed to our weird climate and will grow better for you, while not importing any odd, out-of-the-area diseases. Have fun with them but don't get too aggressive quite yet. It's still kind of cool out there.

Finally (phew)

Just another reminder that downtown construction is coming and it's expected to last two years! Please don't let that scare you away and please continue to support your locally owned downtown businesses and services during the construction. We all win. For our part, we are going to make things easier for you once you get here with permanently extended hours and more parking! I know that many businesses have a different set of summer hours. Every business has the right to make its own decisions, but at the Co-op we are philosophically opposed to the idea of summer hours. We are here to serve our community, including those who live and work here year-round. Consequently, we think you deserve that convenience year-round, and not merely when summer visitors hit the streets.

Thanks. See you in the Co-op.

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DATES of INTEREST

OWNER APPRECIATION DAYS

10% OFF TO OWNERS IN GOOD STANDING

THURSDAY, JULY 17TH

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16TH

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17TH

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15TH

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

A Message Before Construction

By Art Ames, General Manager

OK, everybody. Get ready! For a long time now we've been anticipating the downtown Great Barrington reconstruction project. Depending on whom you talk to, it will either be the end of the world as we know it, or it will have little effect on businesses, shoppers, and commuters. Most likely the actual result will be something in between apocalypse and heaven on Earth. What we do know is that it all finally starts sometime during the end of June. Wait a minute—you say you are opposed to it, and your neighbor supports it? Frankly, none of that matters anymore. It's here and it's happening. As a community, how will you respond to the reality?

If you are a Co-op owner, I certainly expect and hope that you are able to look at this constructively, no pun intended. After all, you do understand that we can no longer afford to ask, "What's in it for me," and that in this far more difficult real world, we must change the question to, "what's in it for us." Here's the real challenge. If we are all to come out of this project healthy, I really think you/we will need to bend over backwards to remember that difference.

Let's be frank here. Many of us, out of necessity or design, will always look for the lowest price or the most convenience. We shop sales, we shop Amazon, and we assume that the relationship between buyer and seller is confrontational. That's no surprise nor should there be any recriminations. A capitalistic structure demands that type of a role. Working within that structure however, it's our co-op's responsibility to suggest that we can do better, and that all of us can be better than that. We are partners.

Forty-eight percent of our shoppers are not owners. They are, instead, valued shoppers. I expect that some of them may be less likely to see the complexity of these issues, and that owners have a different grasp of these relationships. You, as owners, understand that the Co-op puts its meager profits back into the community. You understand that the prices at the Co-op are higher at times because the price of healthy and natural food is on the rise for many reasons, including climate change. I do expect that our sales will suffer during the construction. What I don't know is by how much. The same is true of many of our locally owned downtown businesses. Many of the folks who own these establishments and work downtown are our neighbors. Many of them do business with many of you. We economically feed on each other. So what am I asking of you? Actually, I'm not asking for anything that extraordinary.

The very first time you consider coming to the Co-op, or any other downtown establishment, and decide otherwise because of the construction, I ask, beg, and plead with you to reconsider. Yes, I know it may be more inconvenient. I know all of us are busy and that time is a critical resource. I know it may take more time. I am not asking you to make a special trip to support your local businesses, though they could certainly use it. I am simply asking you to not change what you would normally do because of the construction. Otherwise, many could be in a world of hurt. This is exactly what



Downtown Great Barrington will soon be conducting a large construction project.

it means to support each other, even if we aren't happy or disagree with how we got here. The true vision of a healthy community lies in our ability and determination to watch out for one another; to live in a community where we have the opportunity to have enough money to pay our bills and maybe a bit left over for more; to get to know each other and to bend over backwards for each other when times are tough. We understand that community and supporting each other is not always the most convenient thing to do, yet we do it anyway because we are all better for it.

The Co-op is going to make some adjustments to hopefully cut down on some of the inconvenience. We will be extending our Sunday hours permanently, and we are going to almost double our parking spaces very soon. We'll be delighted to share more details very shortly. However, we have no control over what happens on Main Street. I do have real faith in our town manager, and expect that every consideration will be given to the challenges we will all face. Again, we all have a part to play.

I know I'm opinionated and can be emphatic. Maybe at times I even cross that line and become too preachy. You all know me and you all know our team. You know many of our downtown neighbors. Our lives and our livelihoods are here. We need your help and support. It's time for us to step up, deal with inconvenience, and support each other. I think we're up for it! Please pass this on. Let's spread the word. Won't it be funny and wonderful if we buck the trends and the downtown not only holds its own but thrives? Boy, that would really qualify us as the best small town in America.

A New Food Justice Gardening Project is Coming to the Berkshires

By Carrie Petrik-Huff

This spring will see the launching of a new type of gardening program in Berkshire County called the Revolution Garden Project. The project will be marketing 4x8 raised vegetable beds that include all the soil and plants, as well as hoops, row cover, and plastic so the beds can convert into a mini-greenhouse. These mini-greenhouses will allow clients to raise food nine months out of the year. What makes the Revolution Garden Project unique is that built into the price of every garden bed is the cost of a bed for a low-income family in Berkshire County. Clients receiving a donated bed will receive the same materials and support regarding the installation and care of their beds as is offered to the purchasers.

Donated beds are not just limited to homeowners. With landlord approval, tenants are eligible for these beds as well. In order for a family to be eligible for a donated bed, they must meet specific income guidelines in addition to having either children in the house under the age of 18 or elders over 65.

Businesses are also welcomed and encouraged to purchase beds. Because these beds are 16 inches deep they can be placed on either pavement or soil. All that is required is a sunny spot. Once a business does choose to put in a bed they are welcome to suggest a spot for a donated bed within the community, such as at a childcare or senior center, a health clinic, school, library, or community center. These beds will have a small sign letting people know which business donated the bed.

The Revolution Garden Project was created by Carrie Petrik-Huff and supported by a seed grant from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and administered through the Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC). The Revolution Garden Project will also be partnering with Greenagers throughout the season in various capacities. The original inspiration for the project came from work Carrie did at Seeds of Solidarity, a farm and food justice nonprofit in Orange, MA. However, feeling frustrated with the traditional nonprofit model, which relied predominantly on grants, Carrie wanted to develop a project that

looked more like a business model and create a saleable product in order to have a larger amount of financial independence. Impressed by the Tom's Shoes model, where when one pair of shoes is bought another is donated, Carrie decided to try this model with raised vegetable beds.

After returning to the Berkshires in the spring of 2013 from the Pioneer Valley, Carrie began working with BCAC in Pittsfield, coordinating the care of three city gardens. During this time, she was struck by how many Pittsfield residents felt they didn't have adequate access to fresh food. As Carrie learned more about both BCAC's role in the county as the food distribution hub for all Berkshire County food pantries and the compounded challenges that rural low-income communities face in battling food desertification, she wanted to utilize BCAC's strengths to help bring fresh food to low-income families. Thus the Revolution Garden Project was born!

The Revolution Garden Project is an inventive response to the needs of low-income, rurally located families in Berkshire County. To begin with, the project has been designed to serve all of Berkshire County and use its economic diversity to its advantage. The project can utilize areas with higher per capita incomes by marketing the Revolution Gardens beds in these communities and then distribute the donated beds to any household in need, regardless of location. The Revolution Garden project is founded on the principle that it is more useful to offer someone in need a skill. By placing a garden bed at an individual home and providing extensive mentorship and support, that household gains the knowledge of how to grow their own food. Furthermore, because these beds are sited at their home, a resident does not need to worry about transportation to the garden. They are able to walk outside and help themselves to the bounty nine months of the year.

The Revolution Garden Project now has beds available both for purchase and to be donated. To learn more information, call Carrie Petrik-Huff at 413.320.8227.

Local Students Get Unplugged

Fourth annual April vacation event provides screen-free activities to kids at no cost

By Jenny Schwartz, Education & Outreach Coordinator

Did you know that we had a boomerang champion living in the Berkshires? Thanks to Avi Dresner's article about him in the *Berkshire Eagle*, we found John "the Moleman" Anthony and asked him to be part of Get Unplugged. A few weeks later, John spoke in front of a crowd of thirty people and talked to them about developing interest in boomerangs. Halfway through his presentation, he shared a story about his first boomerang competition. Upon finishing, he was cheering and giving high fives to others around him, regardless of the fact he performed poorly. It didn't matter to him. He explained to the kids that he had won by getting himself to the competition, performing in, and completing it. He strongly encouraged the kids to try new things, explaining that they would never know if they liked something until they tried.

We were happy to have John Anthony be part of our fourth annual Get Unplugged event, a week-long, free program that is a collaboration between Berkshire South Regional Community Center and Berkshire Co-op Market. The goal of the program is to get kids outside and engaged in the community, particularly through community organizations and, most importantly, trying new things. This year we had 24 workshops offered to children in grades K-4th and 5th-8th. Get Unplugged had a "soft" opening on Saturday, April 19th, as we helped out the Greenagers with their "Earth Day, Work Day" community cleanup project at the Housatonic River Walk. During the week of April 21st -April 25th, there was something offered for each age group for the majority of the day. While many presenters returned from previous years, we also had newcomers this year, each bringing something unique to the week.

Several budding fashion designers bloomed in a workshop held at Tasha Polizzi studios. John and Ashley Polizzi led an in-depth tour of the studio and gave a great presentation about the fashion industry, specifically on how to turn old fabric into new products. The students were then challenged to take some old fabric and create fashion boards that told a story of what they would make. Participants leafed through old magazines looking for reference, taped fabric swatches and buttons onto their board, and used magic markers to draw and write their ideas.

Officer Timothy Ullrich from the Great Barrington Police introduced us to his K9 partner, Jori. He told us the story of Jori's Slovakian background, different commands he's trained to do, and gave demonstrations on how Jori works to keep our community safe. A few children happily volunteered to get lost in the woods in order for Jori to find them. While officer Ullrich appreciated this offer, he instead showed us how Jori could find keys hidden in the grass—a safer way to go!

Steffen Root and Tammy Lockenwitz Payer from Berkshire Bike and Board did a hands-on demonstration about bike safety. The kids that participated received thorough safety checks of their helmets and bikes. Afterwards, they reviewed proper hand signals for the road. The kids then rode their bikes through a chalk-drawn road complete with stop signs and turns. Lastly, there was a fun obstacle course set up for them to ride through once they successfully completed the safety course.

Mike and Leslie Bissaillon, from Crossfit Great Barrington, were a highlight of the week as the kids got sweaty doing fun fitness relays to get their heart rates going. During water breaks they addressed important topics such as good nutrition and fun activities they could do at home instead of watching TV. The kids unanimously agreed that the relay races could easily be replicated at home with their friends. The kids were challenged to practice drinking lots of water, get outside more, and eat their cruciferous vegetables! CFGB was generous enough to offer two workshops that week. Many who attended the first class came back to the second. At the end of one workshop, one child said, "I thought this was going to be really boring, but it was actually really fun!"

John Fields and Tom Ingersoll were the representative arborists who visited for Arbor Day. John and his brother Will brought one of their trucks to show kids how they are used to care for trees in the community. While addressing a group of fifty people, John kept it fun and interactive. Kids learned how to tie some of the necessary knots that keep arborists safe when up in the trees. He gave them fun quizzes, like asking how many gallons of sap make one gallon of maple syrup. The correct answer, by the way, is forty gallons. While lifting curious kids in and out of the lowered cherry picker, John exclaimed, "Isn't this more fun than watching TV?" The crowd enthusiastically shouted, "YES!" Tom Ingersoll followed with a hands-on Arbor Day workshop, focused on teaching kids how to plant a tree. The tree was generously donated to Berkshire South by Whalen Nursery. They learned how to prune and properly water it for future growth. As Tom made holes in the soil, he asked what they thought they were for. One child replied, "You put water in there and it will help the roots grow the tree more higher." A future arborist in the making!

Other amazing workshops that took place during the week were: A fly-fishing workshop with Harry Desmond from Berkshire Rivers Fly Fishing; an art project with Project Native; an interactive solar energy presentation with Sarah Hebert from CET; a marine life presentation by Action Sports and Travel and Berkshire Humane Society; African Dance with Kuukua Dzigbordi Yomekpe; Food Adventures, a collaboration between the Berkshire Co-op Market and the Nutrition Center, making human-powered ice cream sweetened with fruit; basketball with Ira Kaplan; a phenology walk with Collin Adkins; a solar-heating demonstration with Stu Besnoff from Alpine Solar and Heating; hula hooping with Brenna St. Pierre, and a drumming workshop with the Berkshire Bateria.

The week concluded with a free concert by Rock Steady that got the group dancing. Thank you to all who helped make the week so special!



A New Co-op Comes to the Region

By Matthew Novik, Communications Manager



Founding members sign up at ACC's kickoff.

It was one of those great spring days. The sun was out, and for the first time in months I could actually feel warmth on my skin from it. Every spring I feel that warmth on some April day and feel like I've been released after a hundred-year sentence in a prison of cold. It feels like the world is being reborn, and with it, anything is possible. That feeling is a wonderful one and it made what I had to do that day all the more appropriate.

Art Ames (our GM) and I were traveling to Amherst, Massachusetts, to participate in the Amherst Community Co-op's Membership Drive Kick-Off. Art was asked to speak at the event and I tagged along, mostly because I love being part of this kind of thing. This new co-op—

and by new I mean they

incorporated just a week or so before the event—was about to enlist their founding membership, and I wanted to be there for that.

I first met some of the members of the ACC's Steering Committee two years ago at a meeting of the Neighboring Food Co-op Association in Brattleboro, Vermont. There are always start-up co-ops represented at the various regional and national events I attend, and some simply stand out more than others. This group stood out.

I was on a panel about healthy food access that day and, after I spoke, I was approached by two of the ACC folks with questions about our Community

Card and Basics Programs. My memory is not what it used to be and I have to admit that two years later I don't remember which two approached me or what questions they asked. What I do remember was that their questions were interesting, relevant, and well thought out. We had lunch with them at the Brattleboro Food Co-op and began what we hoped would be a long and productive relationship.

Fast forward to April 12th, 2014, and there they were after years of work, asking members of their community to become member-owners of what will be a worker and consumer owned full-service cooperative grocery store.

The event was well attended. Art spoke about access and affordability and was very well received. Other speakers included Jessica Montagna and Angie Gregory, worker-owners of Simple Diaper and Linen, a cooperative diaper service in the area; Jonathan Lash, president of Hampshire College, who is spearheading the school's Healthy Food Transition; and keynote speaker Gary Hirshberg, chairman and cofounder of Stonyfield Farm, who attended Hampshire and has strong ties to the Amherst community.

As I listened to Mr. Hirshberg talk about his company and how it grew from a small production farm with just a few cows and a great product to one of the largest yogurt makers in the country, I was struck by one thing. Even as a multimillion-dollar company, Stonyfield continues to maintain high values and good ethics. When he talked about what they pay their farmers for milk compared to the conventional average (Stonyfield pays A LOT more!) and the innovations they are developing in sustainability, I couldn't help thinking about the growth of our co-op sector and how much good it can do. After all, we were at a launch event for a co-op that is going to create good, paying jobs, help farmers get fair pay for their products, increase access to local food, and help strengthen community in a host of other ways as well.

It was all starting there, on that wonderful day when the sun was warm and the greatest achievements felt eminently possible. And I was there for it. And I'm grateful.

NOTE: Amherst Community Co-op needs our help. They are seeking donations to hire CDS Consulting Co-op (a company we use here quite a bit) to conduct a feasibility and market study for the project. The consultants will provide information that will help decide their potential market area, best possible locations, and other vital aspects of the project.

Amherst Community Co-op is a fiscally sponsored project of the Cooperative Fund of New England, which means they can accept tax-deductible donations toward the market and feasibility study. If you are interested in helping a new co-op in our region get off the ground, you can donate online at amherstcommunitycoop.com.

California Drought Affects Quality Nationwide

By Cian Dalzell, Special Projects Coordinator

There's an ongoing drought in California. It's been intensifying over about three years, and has gotten so bad that the USDA gave an exemption to California's organic dairy farmers this winter on the requirement to graze for four months of the year—allowing them instead to buy organic hay from elsewhere. Grazing is only possible when there is grass growing on pastures, and the pastures in much of California's agricultural regions are brown and barren.

So far, even during the drought, California has continued to provide a large portion of the country's produce: twice as much as it did forty years ago, just before the last severe drought in 1977, and with the same amount of water (in gallons per year) going to agricultural uses. That seemingly magical doubling of output for the amount of irrigation is largely based on a move toward more water-efficient irrigation such as drip line (think small hoses with microperforations), underground irrigation in orchards, and low-pressure sprinklers for greens. With no water falling, even these highly efficient methods of irrigation are becoming too taxing on the water resources and some farmers are irrigating only their perennial plants.

To keep close tabs on what water resources are left, both above and below ground, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is working with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and NASA. They are analyzing images from NASA's satellites against previous years' USGS resources to determine how much agricultural land is being left fallow, as well as monitoring water levels in the state's reservoirs and snow levels on the state's mountaintops. The most amazing use of the technology, or at least the least obvious, is monitoring subsidence, or sinking rates, in the state. Areas sinking indicate a decrease in groundwater levels—something that is otherwise very difficult to monitor, especially on such a large scale. And it's not just for California. Three of NASA's five earth science missions set to launch this year will contribute to water cycle research and inform water-related policy nationwide.

Thankfully, the Co-op has always stressed local purchases, so we may see less of an impact than many other grocery stores during the local growing season. For instance, all of our milk is produced in the Northeast, as is a large portion of our yogurt offerings, a large portion of our meat offerings, and almost a quarter of our produce annually. Some of the areas where we may see more impact this season are packaged greens, avocados, artichokes, celery, broccoli, tomatoes/peppers/eggplant (before they're available locally), berries of all types, and organic stone fruit. It's important to remember that as supplies decrease (and demand does not), prices may increase as well.



A dried riverbed in drought-stricken California

If you're interested in decreasing your part of the stress on water resources in California, one of the best ways to do that is to eat locally. Supporting local farms lets them expand production and infrastructure so that we can have more delicious locally grown meals year-round. Eat salad-heavy this spring, and then see how the varieties of local vegetables multiply over the spring and summer. That first local tomato is ever more precious if you haven't had a fresh tomato in months. Trust me. Experience the switch from storage carrots to fresh ones in June, and from purple top, roasting turnips to hakurei salad turnips: from earthy and hearty to sweet and crisp. A stronger local agricultural economy will provide us with resilience if the drought in California continues; based on the preliminary analysis of groundwater loss, it might be a long road to recovery.

MX Morningstar Farm Comes to Copake

MX Continued From Page One



Soon to be planted vegetable starts in the greenhouse at MX Morningstar Farm.

investors to preserve farmland and lease it affordably to farmers looking for land. The investors get a small profit on their capital. The farmers get a long-term, secure contract at an affordable rate. And the community gets to keep its farmland farmed.

Named the Copake Agricultural Center, the land is now home to three farms. MX Morningstar took sixty-five acres. Sparrow Arc Farm, formerly of Maine, took thirty-five acres. Owned by Matt Linehan (an old friend of Max's from Lookout Farm), Sparrow Arc grows specialty vegetables for sale in larger markets like Boston. The final ten acres is leased Tiny Hearts Farm, a flower farm owned by Luke Franco and Jennifer Elliot, who moved their operation from Westchester County.

"It's really a perfect spot for us," says Morningstar. "It's exciting to be part of an innovative project like this. Not only do I get to do what I love to do, but I get to do it as part of an exciting new era of farmland preservation in a community that wants and needs farmers like us."

It's All About Sustainability

Max Morningstar is a sustainable farmer, and he's careful to explain what that means. "It's not just about avoiding conventional pesticides and fertilizers. Don't get me wrong, those practices are great, but they're organic, not sustainable." To Max, sustainable means treating the soil well, treating the employees well, treating the customers well, and existing in the community in a productive and long-term way.

He gets particularly excited when he talks about the soil. The farm's soil is known as Blasdell Channery loam and it is known for being particularly good for growing produce and grain. "It's got a lot of rocks in it," Max told me. "It's weird. It's really rich dirt but it's full of very small stones like you might find in a driveway. It's really well drained and it's really fertile. The loam that holds the stones together is very productive and holds organic material very well."

The quality of the soil really speaks to Morningstar's soil conservation practices. "I'm only going to crop twenty-five acres this season," he said. "Ideally we will only crop about half this land at a time. I take soil health very seriously and the best way to make sure that inputs are reduced and the soil stays like it is now or even gets better is to take half of it out of production each year and rotate with cover crops. In the end, you have to treat the soil as a living thing."

It's Also About the Scale

One thing that makes what MX Morningstar Farm is doing interesting is the scale at which they're doing it. Most farms in the area that use practices like these are much smaller than this operation. And Max would love for it to be bigger. "All my farm heroes take the sustainable and ethical practices of the small family farm and translate them to a much larger production level. And that's what I want to do here. As long as you stick to your principles, I don't think you lose any legitimacy if you do it on a bigger farm. As long as the rules are followed, the impact simply grows."

It's no secret that this philosophy falls in perfect harmony with that of the Co-op. One of the Ends (see page 2) is that the Co-op will foster the growth of the local/regional food systems. It has long been an issue in this area that demand for local food is far higher than the supply. Small farms are a vital piece of the local food system. But, in order to catch up with demand and solidify the supply, larger farms like MX Morningstar need to be part of the picture as well.

The farm's larger size also helps with the issue of access. Along with selling to the Co-op and manning farmers' markets, they're also a CSA. And they take Community Supported Agriculture very seriously. "The CSA members are the backbone of this operation," Max told me. CSA shares represent a firm commitment to local food that can't be duplicated. And Morningstar intends to recognize that. And at this size, they can distribute more food to more places. And that makes it easier for shareholders to pick up and therefore increases the impact of local food.

The farm will have CSA pickups and a farm stand on the property (Mountain View Rd. in Copake). Morningstar is also the first farm to approach the Co-op about doing a distribution at the store. So twice a week this summer they will be set up and distributing food outside the store. They've also got pickup locations at farmers' markets in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, and Chappaqua, NY.

"It makes a lot more sense for me to drive one truck to Great Barrington than for all our individual CSA members to drive all the way out to Copake. And growing on the larger scale allows us to do that," Max said. And he is surely correct.

As I drove away from MX Morningstar Farm, I noticed the worker Max had been talking to when I arrived banging sign stakes into the dirt outside the farmhouse. The signs were about to go up. Here's hoping they are up for a long time to come.

MX MORNINGSTAR
FARM
COPAKE, NY

MISSION: To help reinvent American agriculture by using innovative environmentally sustainable practices to grow high quality food, and by ensuring good life quality for the farmers who grow it. We value equally the quality of our produce, the health of the land, and the personal, professional, and economic well-being of farmers. In so doing, we build an agricultural way of life that improves ourselves, sustains our environment, and fosters greatness in our society.

FARM STAND: Mountain View Road in Copake - Opens June 9th

EASTERN NY FARMERS' MARKETS:

Hastings Farmers' Market
Hastings on Hudson, NY - Saturdays 8:30 to 1:30

Chappaqua Farmers' Market
Chappaqua, NY - Saturdays 8:30 to 1:00

CSA:

Pickups at The Farm Stand, The Markets or at the Co-op.

For more information visit mxmorningstarfarm.com
or e-mail farmers@mxmorningstarfarm.com

COMING SOON: INCREASED ACCESS
LONGER SUNDAY HOURS
MORE PARKING SPACES

LOOK FOR MORE NEWS SOON & CHANGES BY MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

Reinventing the (1,235 pound) Wheel

Massachusetts-made cheese has a rich past and a delicious present.

By Austin Banach, Meat, Seafood & Cheese Manager

In 1802, Puritan settlers in Cheshire, Massachusetts, made a cheese that weighed 1,235 pounds (4 feet wide x 15 inches thick). Each town contributed milk from their farms and it was estimated that there was milk from 900 cows. The cheese was named, appropriately, "Cheshire Mammoth." The cheese was strapped on a horse-drawn sleigh (the wheels on a carriage would have snapped) in the middle of winter and pulled to Washington, D.C., to be presented as a gift to Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States. It took the cheesemaker, John Leland, three weeks to deliver this cheese. Although there are no documented sources as to how the president liked the cheese, what he drank with it, or if he shared it with his cabinet, president Andrew Jackson commissioned the same cheese to be made in 1837. Again, although I have no evidence that Andrew Jackson enjoyed the cheese or referred to tasting notes from Jefferson, a statue (that still stands today) was erected in the town of Cheshire, MA, of a large cheese press and a plaque honoring the life and other contributions of John Leland, as well as the production and presentation of the large cheese.

Although the Cheshire Mammoth has long been extinct, artisanal cheesemaking in Massachusetts has not. Today, there are an estimated 22 cheesemakers in Massachusetts who make and sell their cheeses. Although we are a small state, some of this country's best cheeses were born right here on Massachusetts's grass. Massachusetts's cheesemakers have won more awards per capita than any other state in our country. And that doesn't include a handful of small producers who don't have the supply or means to travel to these award shows to enter their cheese.

From the lush green hills here in the Berkshires to the rocky and flat coastal landscape in the eastern part of the state, there is no denying that our small state has a diverse topography. When one talks about food origins the word 'terroir' is often used. A word used most often in the wine world, terroir roughly translates to "a sense of place." Factors such as mineral content in soil, humidity, and temperature affect the growth and taste of grapes in a given region just as it affects the milk from animals eating and living in these various elements. This is perhaps why cheese and wine are a dynamic duo. Each farm's terroir in Massachusetts, whether in the western hills or near the eastern coast, contributes to the unique artisan cheeses.



The Cheshire Cheese Press monument, which commemorates the production and presentation of the Mammoth Cheese.

As diverse as is the farmland, so are the producers and types of cheeses made here in Massachusetts. Susan Sellew has been making her iconic Berkshire cheese, Monterey Chevre, from a herd of 40-50 alpine goats the same way since she started in 1984. Ira Gable left his career in business to take over Berkshire Blue Cheese in 2009 and hasn't looked back since. Lordes Smith of Fiori di Nonno (translation: "my grandfather's flower") makes hand-stretched mozzarella and burrata just as her grandfather did. Bob and Debby Stetson took over Westfield Farm in 1996 and have been producing unique French-inspired cheeses that have won numerous awards around the country and are considered by some cheese aficionados to be some of the best cheeses in the world.

As I've discovered from my career in food and journalism, many cheesemakers didn't start off wanting to be cheesemakers. Mostly, they fell into it from the beauty and inspiration of the land and the animals. When you have a beautiful farm and animals that are producing outstanding milk, cheesemaking just makes sense as a way to turn that milk into a more sturdy and

complex product.

As any farmer or cheesemaker will tell you, it is a hard career to tend a farm and animals, make cheese, and then sell it. It's hard enough to wake up early every day to milk the animals and coddle the curds and wheels of cheese as they age on the shelves, not to mention that cleaning and sanitizing is sometimes most of the work. Marketing and selling cheese after these long days poses a huge challenge.

In 2013, Barbara Hanley of Shy Brothers Farm in Westport Point, MA, along with a few colleagues, started the Massachusetts Cheese Guild with the hope and vision of connecting not only the farmers and cheesemakers around the state, but the retailers and consumers as well. Through means of education, events, and other resources, Barbara hopes to see the continued support and growth of Massachusetts's cheesemakers.

Berkshire Co-op Market is the first retail establishment from the western part of the state to join and contribute to the Massachusetts Cheese Guild. As western state ambassadors, our involvement will not only mean selling more local cheese, fun events, classes, and tastings at the Co-op, but also supporting our local farmers and producers and helping them to grow. Your support and feedback as a consumer is a crucial part of this equation.

Vitamin & Supplement Non-GMO: The Basics

Navigating Potential GMOs in the Wellness Department

By Brenna St. Pierre, Wellness Manager

The Co-op is concerned about the flow of under regulated genetically modified organisms flooding the market. We are committed to offering a plentiful selection of non-GMO products throughout our store. There are plenty of materials available to guide you in purchasing non-GMO products from the fresh and packaged departments. However, there's not a lot of talk about wellness. And GMO ingredients can be integrated into wellness products in unexpected ways.

Corn and soy are the top two GMO crops found in wellness products. During all aspects of the manufacturing process there are potential ingredients at risk, including acidifiers, solvents, standardization materials, microorganisms, substrates, and enzymes used to create supplements and personal care products. GMO microorganisms are used to make some B12, B2, ascorbic acid (Vitamin C), and beta-carotene supplements. Soy is used to make vitamin E, K2, and natto. Gel caps, gelatins, flow agents, lactose, dairy, and other animal derivatives are also at some risk. For example, non-GMO vitamin D3 manufacturers need documentation that the lanolin supplied is not from cloned sheep. Once combined into a multivitamin or b-complex, the origins of each nutrient become more difficult to trace.

Ease in non-GMO purchasing comes with allying yourself with the Non-GMO Project. Their website is an incredible source for information on GMOs and all related subjects, especially what brands have or are working on non-GMO product verifications. They are currently confronted with heavy traffic from manufacturers seeking certification, so it will take time for products to be verified with the Non-GMO Project label. To navigate wellness products, use the Non-GMO Project's website Verified Products page under Vitamins & Supplements and Body Care Products. There you will find an ever-expanding list of verified products listed according to manufacturer, many of which are available in our store.



MegaFood is just one of the many wellness brands that are embracing non-GMO ingredients and becoming verified with the Non-GMO Project.

In body care, where GMOs are less of a risk, the star players are Alaffia, Dr. Bronner's, EO, and HimalaRose. Booda Butter, Topricin, and W.S. Badger are all enrolled in the Non-GMO Project, but their verifications are not yet complete.

Featured supplements manufacturers that have a wide range of verified non-GMO products are Megafood, New Chapter, Garden of Life, Spectrum, Natural Vitality, Nordic Naturals, and Flora. We applaud the efforts of all these brands, especially those of Megafood, New Chapter, and Garden of Life, who are working toward 100% non-GMO verification. By happy coincidence, both Megafood and New Chapter are also local brands to our store, so supporting local and non-GMO go hand in hand.

It has been encouraging to see non-GMO labeling take hold, and we are excited to see it spread throughout the industry. During this transition, we are happy to assist our owners and customers in finding non-GMO options in all departments of the store, including the more subtle navigation of non-GMO supplements and body care products.

A Short History of GMO Food

By Cian Dalzell, Special Projects Coordinator

There was recently an announcement about a genetically modified (GMO) tomato with higher antioxidant content that's in development. It's purple, with high levels of anthocyanin antioxidants, and it's gotten the go-ahead for field trials this year. That announcement got me thinking, mostly because there already exist high-lycopene (another antioxidant) tomatoes that were bred the regular old way in Italy (announced in 2010), and high anthocyanin antioxidant and high vitamin C non-GMO tomatoes bred in Brazil (announced in 2011). Both were developed in less time than it has taken the GMO tomato to make it from its initial "it has been developed" announcement (2009) to its move to field trials (2014).

This announcement, and the subsequent discussions I have had with people about it, got me thinking about the history and development of GMOs. Mostly it highlighted for me how little I know about the subject. Happily, this newsletter is a great excuse for just such a research project.

It's amazing how far technology has come in the past century. It was only in 1935 that DNA was isolated, a process now considered so simple it is included in a common middle-school science lab. Then scientists desperately tried to figure out what DNA looked like on a molecular level; it wasn't until 1953 that the structure of DNA was published. The understanding of DNA gained by scientists over the decades following those discoveries was immense. Then, in the early 1970s, Herbert Boyer and Stanley Cohen collaborated on their work in microbiology, genetically engineering *E. coli* to be resistant to different antibiotics, and then to insert DNA from other species into *E. coli*—most notably from a toad. Since *E. coli* replicates so quickly (about every twenty minutes), they were able to show for the first time that the engineered genetics were present many generations past their introduction.

For the first ten years after the first paper on GMO *E. coli*, much of the research seems to have concentrated on single-cell organisms, such as bacteria. That is, until January 1983, when three separate teams of scientists announced having developed a GMO plant at the same conference. Two of them modified tobacco and the third petunias, all of which had been modified to be resistant to different pharmaceuticals. A few months later a fourth group announced a sunflower with a gene taken from a bean plant. Those early transgenic plants were all laboratory specimens, never grown commercially (although one tobacco did make it to field trials), but the research formed the basis of engineering genetics in commercial crops.

The first GMO foods showed up in the early 1990s. It was at this point that the ill-fated Flavr Savr tomato and similarly fated NewLeaf potato appeared. Flavr Savr appeared in 1994, but lacked consistent quality, and was no longer produced by the early 2000s. NewLeaf potatoes were a russet-type that produced Bt (a biopesticide). Fast food giants and potato chip companies declined to purchase NewLeaf potatoes, so they were discontinued in 1999 so that their parent company could concentrate on more profitable varieties. From the '90s on, so many strains of modified food were introduced it becomes difficult to trace them individually. What became clear was that there were different branches of goals for different GMOs; different altruistic scientific reasons to modify. There were Bt or other pesticide-producing plants, herbicide-resistant plants, fungus or other disease-resistant plants, and "biofortified" or increased-nutritional-value plants.

It is important to pause for a moment and recognize that the theory behind each of these four branches of GMOs are, or at least were or can be, for the good of the world. Bt-producing plants are supposed to minimize pest damage, reducing insecticide use and being therefore, better for the environment and safer for agricultural workers. Herbicide-resistant plants are supposed to lower herbicide use and be better for the environment and safer for agricultural workers. Disease-resistant plants are supposed to increase yield and heartiness of commercial crops. Biofortified foods are supposed to increase nutritional value of a crop, potentially providing additional vitamins or nutrients to those with limited means or food options. Whether or not they have, can, or are even designed at this point, to meet those lofty goals, is not clear at this point.



Genetically modified "Roundup Ready" soybeans, introduced in 1994, now make up more than 94% of U.S. soy production.

So far there haven't been any biofortified GMOs in commercial production. The best-known product in development, Golden Rice, has been in field trials for a decade and has yet to become commercially available anywhere. The Golden Rice Project reports that it is currently crossbreeding the modified Golden Rice with "preferred" regional varieties (preferred in this case could mean considered more palatable or preferred for growing purposes, i.e. cultivars that are well suited to the climate of a region). There are a few fungus or disease-resistant plants on the market, most notably Rainbow Papaya (90+% of Hawaiian papaya, resistant to ringspot virus), and varieties of squash and zucchini that are resistant to certain mildews and viruses.

The two biggest traits that food and commodity plants have been modified for (by scale of production) are herbicide resistance (most commonly glyphosate/Roundup) and the production of an insecticidal toxin (usually Bt). By the end of the 1990s, over fifty percent of the U.S.-grown corn, soy, and cotton were GMO. In the first decade of this century there has been a continued increase in acres and percentages of GMO varieties grown of those crops. The trend has changed from single-trait crops (herbicide resistant or insecticidal) to "stacked gene" crops (herbicide resistant *and* insecticidal, resistant to particular disease(s) *and* one of those traits, or resistant to multiple herbicides). Stacked gene cotton was estimated by the USDA as 67% of cotton grown in the United States in 2013; stacked gene corn was estimated at 70%. The total GMO percentages for the same year were estimated as 94% and 90% respectively. Worldwide the percentages are much lower; over 50% of the GMO plants grown in the world in 2013 were estimated to have been grown in the United States.

With the growing concerns about glyphosate/Roundup-resistant weeds and Bt-resistant pests, the future of GMO development looks to be an interesting and divisive one. There are strains being developed to be resistant to 2-4-D and other herbicides said to be more toxic than glyphosate, as well as more stacked gene crops. Golden Rice may someday actually make it to commercial production. And everything may change direction if mandatory labeling reaches the shelves in U.S. grocery stores. In the meanwhile, I will continue to follow developments as they are announced, and continue to shop non-GMO whenever feasible. And if you're looking for high levels of anthocyanin antioxidants in your food before the Italian or Brazilian tomatoes, or the GMO tomato in development, make it to grocery stores around here, try raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, bilberries, blood oranges, red cabbage, red onions, or eggplant instead.

1935	DNA isolated by Andrei Nikolavitch Belozersky.
1953	Franklin, Watson, and Crick discover DNA's structure.
1972	Paul Berg creates the first recombinant DNA molecules.
1973	Herbert Boyer and Stanley Cohen combine their research to create the first genetically modified organism (GMO).
1975	Asilomar Conference, where biologists, doctors, and lawyers create guidelines for the safe use of genetically engineered DNA.
1980	First GMO patent issued. In <i>Diamond v. Chakrabarty</i> , the US Supreme Court ruled that a living organism, a bacterium that could digest oil, could be patented.
1982	FDA approves Humulin, insulin produced by genetically engineered <i>E. coli</i> bacteria.
1983	Four independent groups of researchers announce the development of a transgenic (GMO) plant, three of them at the same conference.
1986	First field tests of GMO plants (tobacco) are conducted in Belgium.
1987	First field tests of GMO plants (tobacco and tomato) are conducted in the United States.
1990	First GMO cotton is successfully field tested.
1990	GMO rennet is approved by the USDA, putting GMOs into the food supply for the first time.
1992	FlavrSavr tomato is approved by the USDA.
1992	FDA declares that genetically engineered foods are "not inherently dangerous" and do not require special regulation.
1994	GE canola approved by USDA
1994	Recombinant bovine growth hormone (rGBH) is introduced. Roundup Ready soybeans are introduced.
1995	Failed Flavr Savr tomato goes to market. Sales are dismal, and it is discontinued not long after.
1995	Monsanto's NewLeaf™ potato, the first pest protected plant, approved by the EPA and FDA in 1995.
1995	Glyphosate-resistant weeds are detected in Australia.
1996	Monsanto's first GE insect-resistant corn variety approved by USDA.
1997	European Union rules in favor of mandatory labeling on all GMO foods
1997	Calgene's GE insect resistant Bt cotton approved by USDA.
1999	GE papaya strains developed by Cornell University and the University of Hawaii approved by EPA.
2000	International Biosafety Protocol is approved at the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada. The protocol agrees upon labeling of GMO crops, but needs to be ratified by 50 nations before it goes into effect.
2003	A Bt-toxin-resistant caterpillar/moth, <i>Helicoverpa zea</i> , damages GMO Bt cotton crops in the southern United States. The scale of damage increases in subsequent years.
2005	Monsanto's Roundup Ready alfalfa approved by USDA. This approval was challenged in court and planting of GE alfalfa was prohibited.
2005	Monsanto's Roundup Ready sugar beets approved by USDA. This approval is challenged in court and planting of GE sugar beets was prohibited, although USDA allowed some of the crop to be planted.
2005	GE papaya strain developed by University of Florida approved by USDA.
2011	Monsanto's Roundup Ready alfalfa is approved by USDA, with no planting restrictions.
2011	USDA allows planting of Roundup Ready sugar beets despite legal challenges to the department's approval of the crop.

SEASONAL EATING SPRING

ASPARAGUS: One of the first local vegetables of the spring season, local asparagus on the Co-op's shelves is always a sure sign of spring in the Berkshires. Here's a couple of recipes for your spring kitchen.



Asparagus Gremolata with Orzo

Total Time: 30 minutes
Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces uncooked orzo pasta
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 yellow onion, diced
1/2 pound asparagus, cut into 2-inch pieces, woody ends discarded
1 cup curly parsley, washed well, stems removed, and finely chopped
3 tablespoons fresh mint, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1 lemon, zest and juice
Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes
Pinch each of salt and ground black pepper
1/2 cup shredded Parmesan cheese for garnish

PREPARATION

1. Cook the orzo according to package directions and drain, reserving 1/4 cup of cooking liquid.
2. While the orzo cooks, heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté the onion for a few minutes. Add the asparagus and sauté another 3 minutes or until asparagus is just tender. Remove from the heat and add the reserved cooking liquid, parsley, mint, garlic, lemon zest, and juice and red pepper flakes. Mix together with the hot orzo. Season with salt and pepper and garnish the individual servings with Parmesan. Serve warm.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Add 2 tablespoons of sliced olives or oil-cured sundried tomatoes for a more complex flavor. Or skip the orzo, and serve the asparagus gremolata over couscous or quinoa with lemon wedges.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Per Serving: 556 calories, 12 g. fat, 17 mg. cholesterol, 336 mg. sodium, 93 g. carbohydrate, 6 g. fiber, 23 g. protein



Garden-Fresh Asparagus Soup

Total Time: 50 minutes
Servings: 6 appetizer servings, 1 cup each

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon curry powder
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger zest and juice of 1 lemon, divided
2 cups diced, peeled red potatoes
3 cups vegetable broth, or reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 cup "lite" coconut milk
2 cups 1/2-inch pieces trimmed asparagus, (about 1 bunch)
Freshly ground pepper to taste
1/4 cup crème fraîche, or reduced-fat sour cream
1/4 cup finely chopped scallion greens, or fresh chives

PREPARATION

1. Melt butter and oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and 1/4 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring often, until golden, about 5 minutes. Stir in curry powder, ginger, lemon zest, and potatoes and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Stir in broth, coconut milk and asparagus. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, partially cover and continue to cook until the potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes.
2. Puree the soup with an immersion blender or a regular blender (in batches) until smooth. (Use caution when puréeing hot liquids.) Season with the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper.
3. Whisk crème fraîche (or sour cream), lemon juice, and scallion greens (or chives) in a small bowl and garnish with a swirl of it.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Per Serving: Calories: 203, Carbohydrates: 19 g., Fat: 13 mg., Saturated Fat: 6 mg., Monounsaturated Fat: 4 mg., Protein: 4 mg., Cholesterol: 14 g., Fiber: 3 g., Potassium: mg., Sodium: 444 mg.,

FARM TOURS

Your chance to see where your food comes from.

MILL RIVER FARM • Mill River, MA • Sunday, 5/25 @11:00

WOLFE SPRING FARM • Sheffield, MA • Saturday 6/7 @ 11:00

MOUNTAIN PASTURE FARM • Becket, MA • Saturday 7/19 @ 2:00

LEAHEY FARM • Lee, MA • Sunday, 8/10 @ 11:00

**MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT WWW.BERKSHIRE.COOP
ALL TOURS MEET AT THE FARM**

New Source for Healthy Snacks at the High School

STORE Continued From Page One

connections with the natural world for all of the students in the community.” Though the initial planning called for a 1,000 square foot garden, greater than anticipated student interest and overwhelming community support helped them create a 3,500 square foot garden that provided over 1,000 pounds of food to the community through the WIC program, as well as meals for the school lunch program that fall. They tripled the size of the garden in the second year, and to this day continue to use the garden as an educational resource for students of all ages, and of course provide a fresh, local food resource for the school and the community.

I arrived at the school on a seasonably warm March day and was greeted by Zoe, and Emma Adler, Zoe’s deputy and second in command, if you will. Zoe is graduating in May and was grooming Emma, a sophomore, to take the reigns of the operation the following school year. They were both incredibly excited and possessed that typical youthful energy that seemed like an echo from my own high school years, which are in the not too distant past. Marianne Young, the principal at Monument, and Art Ames, General Manager of the Co-op, joined us, and after introductions the students described their efforts thus far, their current challenges, and outlined some goals for the future of the store. They had already established an account with Guido’s Fresh Marketplace and were offering a limited selection of healthy snacks, including nutrition bars, apples, fruit leathers, and dried mango. They provided us with information about the nutrition guidelines for competitive foods that govern serving size as well as fat, sugar, and salt content of the items they could offer. We learned that they wanted to improve their merchandising and marketing, offer more local options, and improve record keeping.

As the discussion progressed it soon became clear that this could be an educational opportunity for the students to learn about retail operations and the wide variety of skills and technical knowledge needed to operate a successful store. I saw an opportunity for the Co-op to engage the students creatively in the science, math, and art fields as they relate to retail operations. Although we were happy to help them expand their selection, we had no intention of trying to compete with another community business, so we explained that we were more interested in the “values” inherent in helping them with their project than in the “value” to the Co-op of selling them food. The Co-op is dedicated to cultivating a vibrant local economy, and part of that commitment includes going above and beyond to ensure that our actions reflect that commitment. We like to think of the Co-op as a shared community resource that provides a myriad of services to individuals, community organizations, businesses, and schools in the area. We ended the meeting by reviewing the commitments made on each side to follow up on action items.

Later that week, I drafted a consulting report and proposal with the stated goal of: “Assisting the students managing the Food Project at Monument Mountain Regional High School with establishing a thriving and sustainable retail store operation



Some of the products we sourced for the new store at Monument Mountain Regional High School.

(“The Farm to School Stand”) by providing retail operations education, consultation, and support.” Areas of focus included equipment sourcing; information technology (IT) needs assessment, research, and recommendation; retail operations best practices training and education (merchandising, pricing/margin, data metrics), and marketing and product sourcing support. I created a new product spreadsheet, researched, and priced a basic POS (point of sale) software program and related equipment, provided produce and grocery merchandising guides, and reached out to several vendors for equipment support. I realized later, after a discussion with Art, that although the students were enthusiastic, bright, and capable, it might be best to start by getting them the new items they wanted and helping them improve their merchandising and store layout. I had to remind myself that the students were primarily focused on their studies and that even though this was a project they created and were invested in, their time was limited and goals would need to be slowly worked toward over time. Although ambitious, the rest of the plan could then be pursued through the remainder of the school year and into the following.

I am personally committed to seeing the students succeed in their endeavors and to educate them about retail operations best practices, ultimately helping them set up a semiprofessional store in the process. Rather than trying to get it done as quickly as possible however, I see this as a long-term investment the Co-op is willing to make because that is what the Co-op is all about: enriching community through education. The Co-op grew from this community and is a reflection of the values of the community

that built it. The values that form the foundation of the Co-op cycle back into the community in many ways, and will always be the cornerstone of the Co-op’s reason for being. The education and outreach arm of the Co-op, headed up by Jenny Schwartz, has been educating students about food and nutrition for many years now, and has reached dozens of schools and thousands of students from Williamstown to Sheffield. Maybe the work we are doing with the students at Monument could build into a more robust educational initiative that gives the students some insight and experience into real world applications of academic concepts. I distinctly remember a large gap between what I was learning in high school and how it could actually be applied when I “grew up.” I would like to believe that the children could benefit from making these connections in as many ways as possible, and maybe the Farm to School Stand can be one of them. I am excited to make a difference, no matter how small it may be, and above all, one thing is certain: I am truly honored to be a part of it all.

On Monday the 5th of May, we made the first delivery to the students at Monument. We were happy to report that two local companies (Tierra Farm and Harney Tea) were willing to donate the first batch of products. We also happy to tell them the the Co-op picked up the bill for the rest. We brought them a pricing gun and taught them how to use it. We gave them some display advice and baskets and we arranged for future plans including a basic level Point of Sale system and adding more local products. All in all, it was a great day and we’ll be printing more on this project in future newsletters.

WELCOME NEW OWNERS

Every day, new people come to us wanting to join the Co-op.

Since January 1st, 2014 we have added 41 new owners. We’d like to take this space to welcome them all.

Alan	Alvin	Candace	Conrad	George	Joseph	Lauren	Matthew	Sherry	Veronica
Alexcia	Amanda	Caroline	Dawn	India	Karen	Maggie	Michelle	Stacey	Vincent
Alfred	Andrea	Charles	Denise	Janice	Karl	Marcia	Sabine	Thea	
	Ann	Chris	Flaecia	Jocelyn	Karyn	Marilyn	Sarah	Tom	
		George	John	Killian	Martha				

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Grocery From Zack Sheppard

There haven't been too many major changes lately in our grocery departments, but there has been a lot of tweaking going on. Over the past few months we've been able to fit a few new products into our little store. One of the highlights is Leahey Farms yogurt. Family-owned and operated since 1889, Leahey Farms is nestled in the October Mountain region of the Berkshires and is one of the last small family farms left in Lee. They have produced and sold milk for more than one hundred years!

We have more products in the GoodBelly probiotic drink line. Probiotics are living microorganisms that are good bacteria that live naturally in your digestive tract. Probiotics are believed to support good digestive health and balance good bacteria in your body.

In our freezer we added a new kind of local ravioli, from Fior D'Italia. Based out of Manchester Center, VT, they make fresh pasta using all natural ingredients locally sourced in New England. We currently carry just their ravioli but hope to bring in more of their wide selection as we try to create more space for it.

Also new to our freezer, a product line we are very excited about is Hosta Hill local tempeh! Hosta Hill is a diversified farm and producer in West Stockbridge, whose mission is to bring whole foods raised humanely, ecologically, and locally to people in our community.

And finally, we just recently brought in Cora brand pasta. It is imported from Italy and we are excited to offer this very affordable pasta line. We are currently carrying their spaghetti, penne, rigatoni, and shells.

We have been doing some minor restructuring to our subdepartments. We recently hired a new bulk lead, who is doing an exceptional job breathing new life into our bulk department. Congratulations to Deirdre Blair, and congratulations to John Clarke, who has been hired into the new position of bread lead and who is going to take our bread department to the next level. We've put together a really strong team and are gearing up for expansion.

Meat, Seafood & Cheese

From Austin Banach

It's my one-year anniversary of starting at the Co-op, and it has been a great one! I've been busy reshaping and polishing up our meat, seafood, and cheese departments and look forward to bringing even more ideas and programs forward. Feedback is an extremely important tool for me to gauge success. So I encourage you to stop by and let me know what you think.

For seafood this past year, my main goal was to create a department that was known for the freshest and highest quality product in the area. I also wanted to maintain a consistent supply of that product every week, a goal that had been a challenge in the past. I'm more than happy to announce that we have come a long way toward meeting those goals.

Our "cream of the crop" as one might say, is BerkShore Native Seafood. I've had the utmost pleasure working and developing a relationship with the owner, Wes Malzone. His product is exclusively sourced from Massachusetts day boats and is the freshest fish we can get. Next on the purveyor list is Black River. They have a new meat and seafood facility in North Springfield, Vermont, and are buying fresh seafood from Boston six days a week. Always feel free to ask us which fish is freshest or where it was sourced. Also, here is the delivery schedule we hope to maintain all summer to help you plan your seafood purchasing:

Mondays: Fresh fish in from Black River.

Tuesday: Fresh fish and shellfish from BerkShore. (coming very soon)!

Wednesday: No fish deliveries

*Thursday: Largest selection of fresh fish in from BerkShore.

Friday: Fresh fish in from Black River.

Saturday: No fish deliveries.

Sunday: No fish deliveries.

Also, I am finishing up the final details of a preorder program called "The First Cut Club." I will be sending out weekly opt-in e-mails highlighting specialty items in seafood and meat that will be available through preorder. This will include oysters, lobsters, clams, whole fish and fillets, as well as seasonal delicacies like shad roe, softshell crabs, and even caviars. Specialty meats, steaks, and chops will be offered as well. Stay tuned!

In the meat department we are working more closely with Hardwick and Black River Meats to look at custom products and cuts as well as pricing image and promotions. Hardwick has long been our supplier of fresh, grass-fed beef. Black River Meats sources most of their meats from small-scale family farms in Vermont, and are dedicated to quality and animal welfare.

Last, but certainly not least, expect to see some changes in our cheese department (look for my article in this newsletter for more details). We recently signed on with the newly started Massachusetts Cheese guild and are excited to be the first retail post for the western part of the state. While we are giving our Massachusetts cheesemakers a more center stage, we will still be carrying the regional and imported favorites while adding a few of my favorites and what I feel our cheese department should be carrying.

Prepared Foods From Lynn Pino

After a long, cold winter, I am happy to say that spring has finally arrived! Before we know it we will once again be able to offer locally grown produce! After months of using product that has been shipped to us from across the United States and beyond, we are eagerly anticipating the beginning of the Berkshires' bounty. We are already receiving greens from Ted at Equinox Farm and we look forward to continuing our collaboration with Pete and Jen at Woven Roots Farm, Maureen and Mitch at Left Field Farm, Laura at Farm Girl Farm, and other wonderful area farmers. As soon as they're ready to supply us with the fruits of their labor, we're ready to feed you some delicious local food. Look for the local stickers on the hot/salad bar soon.

The café is as busy as it has ever been, and we will be able to triple our dining space now that the patio is once again open to patrons. It is a beautiful space that both customers and employees have missed because of the cold and snow. Now that the weather is warm, David has decided to add another smoothie to the menu board. He is calling it "tropical breeze," and it will consist of strawberries, mangoes, and coconut-pineapple juice. Look for it soon. Additionally, instead of offering just one flavor of iced tea this year, our English Breakfast, we will also be offering Green Moroccan Mint. It's delicious!

We are looking forward to another beautiful spring, and to providing you, our friends and customers, with all that our area has to offer.

Produce From Jake Levin

After a long and hard winter, local season is finally here! The season started in mid-April with Equinox Farm mesclun. The mesclun was followed quickly by organic plants from Left Field Farm (Middlefield, MA), and High Meadows Farm (Putney, VT). This year we have hired someone to specifically deal with the plants. Her name is Jordan Archey and she comes to us with a lot of knowledge about and passion for plants. If you have any questions about the plants don't hesitate to ask her.

Next on the list come cut greens like baby arugula and baby spinach. We will also start to see our favorite spring delicacies popping up, such as asparagus, ramps, fiddlehead ferns, and garlic scapes from Wolfe Spring Farm, Three Maples Market Garden, and others. We will see baby bok choy, radishes, and head lettuces starting in May from Et Cetera Farm, Woven Roots Farm, and Farm Girl Farm.

In June we should start to see bunched greens like rainbow lacinato and green kale roll in, as well as scallions from Left Field Farm. The ever-popular strawberries from Thompson Finch Farm will be here front and center. By July everything else should start to arrive, including tomatoes, summer squash, zucchini, green beans, peas, eggplant, stone fruit, blueberries, and more and more and more. We can't wait!

Wellness From Brenna St. Pierre

The smell of citronella heralds the Berkshire summer here in the wellness department. We're looking forward to a sunny season and have a wide offering of products to help protect you and your family from the elements this year.

W.S. Badger Co. has long been a favorite source of organic sunscreen and bug repellent, and we're pleased to continue to offer their fantastic products. Unfortunately, the lovely sunscreen lotions released by Badger last year will not be available again until next summer. While patiently awaiting their reappearance, we've assembled some wonderful alternatives for everyday, light sunscreens. Badger has a new SPF 15 Unscented Sunscreen Cream with 40 minutes of water resistance, a lighter cream perfect for resisting sweaty garden work. Alaffia offers a simple formula with coconut water, neem extract, and zinc in their SPF 15 Everyday Coconut Daily Face Lotion. A bestseller, this light lotion is in a convenient pump bottle and at \$9.99 for a 12oz bottle it is perfect for face and body. Devita Natural Skin Care offers a Solar Body Moisturizer SPF 30 and Solar Protective Moisturizer SPF 30 for the face that are formulated with aloe for sensitive skin. Look for their Aubrey's Natural Sun SPF 26 and SPF 45, also formulated for sensitive skin. We're happy to help find the sun protection that suits your needs, whether for splashing in the sea or playing at the park.

Berkshire bugs are legendary, so we've amassed an arsenal for the coming siege. Badger offers a new travel-size Anti-Bug Spray in addition to their full-size organic spray and Anti-Bug Balms. Best-selling Quantum Health Buzz Away Extreme products are available in regular and family size, perfect to last all summer or to use as a refill bottle. We've expanded our offering of insect repelling products with the addition of Way Out Wax's BUG OUT! candles and sprays. Their three unique, DEET-free blends use 100% plant essences to deter insects in a way that's safer for you and the environment. The candles are made from non-GMO soy wax and hand poured in the Green Mountains of Vermont. A portion of every sale is donated back to a variety of environmental or social causes, and 100% satisfaction is guaranteed. We are pleased to work increasingly with Way Out Wax to offer great products for your summer picnics and BBQs. Visit the wellness department to see these great new products, and have a wonderful summer!