

# A Day At Sea: The BerkShore Way

*Learning about eating better fish on a Massachusetts fishery dayboat*

By Austin Banach, Meat, Seafood & Cheese Manager

Growing up in a small landlocked community I never really knew about great seafood. There were few to no sources of fresh seafood in the Berkshires during the time I was growing up (1990s-2000s). Besides canned tuna and previously frozen shrimp on our holiday shrimp cocktail plate, all I knew was grocery store salmon and cod. I didn't like seafood. In fact, when you mentioned it to me, I almost always frowned, recollecting the smell of the not-so-fresh and "fishy" protein. After attending culinary school, traveling, and working at various restaurants, I learned about the versatility and culture of seafood and became immensely passionate about finding more local and regional sources for this food and taking the once familiar fear of cooking and eating fish away from others around me. When I first met Wes Malzone and laid my eyes on the freshest, near scentless piece of glistening white fish fillet I have ever seen in the Berkshires, I knew our relationship would grow.

Here in the Berkshires we have a beautiful landscape that encourages and supports local farms that give us exemplary produce, meat, and dairy. More and more we are concerned with where and how our food was grown or raised. Another great advantage we have in the Berkshires (and all of New England for that matter) is that we are so close to the ocean and the vast edible bounties of the sea. Similarly, it is just as important for us to know where the seafood we choose to eat came from and how it was caught. Fishermen in towns around any coast make a living in catching and selling wild fish to markets and restaurants. Just as it is important to support our local agricultural farmers, the same is true for the regional fishermen and their livelihoods. Although most fishermen aren't considered farmers, they do have similar impacts on our environment and some species by the decisions and practices they use.

Allow me to get to the focal point of this article and introduce you to Wes Malzone (for those who may not already know him) and his small business, BerkShore. Wes grew up in Scituate, Massachusetts, near Boston, and was surrounded by the fishing and lobstering culture most **FISH cont. on page 7**



Wes Malzone (left) aboard one of the many small day boats that supply BerkShore Seafood.

## Sourcing Cold Weather Produce

*Summer means local. But what do we do when the frost sets in?*

By Matthew Novik, Communications Manager



During our local growing season, our focus is local. We have a fantastic community of local farmers who grow some of the most beautiful and sustainable produce available to man. Some farms are certified organic, some are not. Regardless, we make sure that all of them farm with sustainable practices that protect the soil, the water, and the community. In the summer, our selection is full of freshly picked, magnificently colorful food grown by local families. In the colder months, things are a little different.

When the local crops are no longer available, the Produce Department focuses on organic. In fact, with the exception of locally grown produce, ALL the products in our produce department are USDA-certified organic. This produce primarily comes from national and regional organic distributors. It is trucked here from distribution hubs on the coast and comes from farms that are much larger than the small local farms we buy from in the warmer months. It's tough to compare winter organic to summer local when it comes to quality, and we have no intention of doing so. That said, the produce buyers do everything they can to provide you with high-quality organic food that is free from chemical pesticides and is grown according to the standards set by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). **WINTER cont. on page 8**

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



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# NOTES FROM HQ: THE GM REPORT

By Art Ames, General Manager



Hi, everyone. It sure is a strange winter we're having. There were two nights when I went to sleep with lots of snow on the ground, only to wake up to bare ground. Intermingled with those warm days, we've all gone through days of intense cold and wind. It just seems that every year winter gets harder to predict, and it's pretty clear that our weather patterns are changing. I admit that I'm already looking forward to spring.

The weather is playing havoc all over the country, with deep freezes down south and brutal drought out west. This is turning out to be one of the most

challenging winters for our produce department, and because we only bring organic produce in from outside our local area, generally speaking this means smaller and more delicate crops, so the challenge will be greater for us than for other food stores in the area. Additionally, some people are becoming concerned about West Coast crops due to what's happening in Japan with nuclear reactors. I don't know how this is all going to shake out, but it certainly drives home once again the importance of supporting and growing our local production. As you know, at the Co-op we've been talking for several years now about supporting and increasing our local food supply, as we feel that weather issues and other factors will make it crucial to be more self-sufficient in Berkshire County, and perhaps that need is accelerating.

## Expansion

I bet you are really getting tired of waiting for information. So are we. Here's what's going on, with a bit of a look back. In October 2012, we announced that we would be pursuing 100 Bridge Street as a new home for the Co-op, partnering with the property owner, Community Development Corporation, Southern Berkshire. In September 2013, we realized that little progress had been made, and while we remained very excited about the possibilities at 100 Bridge Street, we had no choice but to reopen the search due to a lack of significant progress. An interesting thing happened, in that a couple of other possibilities were discovered that perhaps weren't available a year ago. Doing our due diligence, I've been gathering information and analyzing possibilities for the last couple of months. In the meantime, progress has also been made at 100 Bridge Street. Over the next few weeks I expect we will have gathered the information needed to make an educated decision, and should have a preferred destination by February. Once that happens, we'll be moving forward fairly quickly. Yes, this did set us back a bit. At one time we hoped to be able to move into a new facility in the fall of 2015. Now, realistically, it looks like the spring of 2016. I'm looking forward to getting this going and to having the opportunity to discuss it all with you fairly soon.

## Inside the Co-op

This should be a relatively quiet time at the Co-op. We are not planning any major repairs or improvements in the coming months. We did have a roof leak last month and will need to replace some tiles in the café, but I think that's it...at the moment. Our grocery department is planning a few resets before spring, following our bulk resets, but nothing else at the moment. People come and go, for many reasons. While it's fun getting to know our

new staff, it's always just a bit sad when one of our own leaves, regardless of the reason. Jack Hurley worked in our prepared foods department for eight years, mostly downstairs in our meat/seafood area. He is now pursuing other opportunities and naturally we wish him well.

As you likely know, we also witnessed a significant change to our Board of Directors roster in November. In a contested election, Michael Guthrie was elected and is returning to our board after a seven-year absence. Bryan Ayers was elected, and Michael and Bryan began their respective three-year terms on the board. I'm thrilled about this and am truly looking forward to working with them and the rest of the board. We bid farewell but certainly not goodbye to Lawrence David Hollander. Lawrence had been serving as a Co-op director since 1998. Wow! Our directors play a vital and active role that encompasses a good amount of time, and they are encouraged and expected, while serving, to actively become educated in a variety of fields. It takes a tremendous amount of time and dedication and I cannot even begin to say enough good things about our board as a whole, and the values and integrity that each individual brings to the table. Lawrence did this for fifteen years! We didn't always agree, and if you know me at all, you know that I can be a touch ornery at times, so I'm not surprised that we would disagree on occasion. That being said, since I've been here as the GM, not once have I ever doubted Lawrence's commitment to the values of our organization or his dedication to our larger local community. I won't miss Lawrence at all, because he's still very much part of our co-op family. Instead, I'm deeply thankful for his long-standing dedication to the values that we espouse and the humanity that he brings to any discussion. Thanks, Lawrence. See you in the Co-op.

After our Annual Meeting in November, we witnessed renewed interest in our Owner Tab program. It's our most effective way to "buck the banking system" and save thousands of dollars on credit card fees. (Check out the cool graphic below to see how it works.) Thank you very much to our owners who have decided to try out the service. I encourage each and every one of you to stop by the Owner Services desk and get more information if needed. Or just sign up! This is a case where we can truly make a difference. Other co-ops are watching what we do to see if it can really work, and if we can make it happen, other co-ops will follow suit. Here's hoping that you will all consider the possibilities and embrace the concept.

Finally, often one of you will approach me or send me a note, and apologize for "bothering" me. Let me stress that if I had my way, I'd be getting dozens of comments every day. Please don't hesitate. You are owners of this co-op and we are all here for a common purpose. Your comments, suggestions, and critiques make us better. We don't have to be limited by what our terrific staff sees. We have a distinct advantage - all of us. Of course, we lose that advantage if you don't let me/us know what's happening, so please take the time to stay in touch and let me know your thoughts.

Stay warm. Spring is just around the corner.

**Owner Tabs**

The choice is yours  
THE OLD STORY OF  
**Credit Card FEES**  
OR  
A NEW WAY  
to keep our money  
IN OUR  
**COMMUNITY**

**PLASTIC**  
1 You pay with a credit card or a debit card.  
2 We get charged fees for those transactions.  
3 Over \$100,000 goes to big banks from our Co-op per year.

**OUR NEW WAY**  
1 You prepay your owner tab and use it to shop at the Co-op.  
2 We save money on fees.  
3 We return those savings to the community through outreach.

**SAVED FEES**  
**OUTREACH BUDGET**  
**LOCAL**

**BIG BANKS**



# THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS [BOD@BERKSHIRE.COOP](mailto:BOD@BERKSHIRE.COOP)



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## THE STORE MANAGEMENT TEAM



Art Ames  
General Manager  
[generalmanager@berkshire.coop](mailto:generalmanager@berkshire.coop)



Bob Crowle  
Business Manager  
[bcrowle@berkshire.coop](mailto:bcrowle@berkshire.coop)



Daniel Esko  
Non-Perishables Manager  
[desko@berkshire.coop](mailto:desko@berkshire.coop)



Matt Novik  
Communications Manager  
[mnovik@berkshire.coop](mailto:mnovik@berkshire.coop)



Jeff Schilling  
Fresh Food Manager  
[jschilling@berkshire.coop](mailto:jschilling@berkshire.coop)

## THE LEADERSHIP TEAM



Austin Banach  
Meat & Seafood Manager  
[abanach@berkshire.coop](mailto:abanach@berkshire.coop)



Jake Levin  
Produce Manager  
[jlevin@berkshire.coop](mailto:jlevin@berkshire.coop)



Ted Moy  
Merchandising Manager  
[tmoy@berkshire.coop](mailto:tmoy@berkshire.coop)



Lynn Pino  
Asst. Fresh Food Manager  
[lpino@berkshire.coop](mailto:lpino@berkshire.coop)



Zack Sheppard  
Grocery Manager  
[zsheppard@berkshire.coop](mailto:zsheppard@berkshire.coop)



Kira Smith  
Owner Services Manager  
[ksmith@berkshire.coop](mailto:ksmith@berkshire.coop)



Brenna St. Pierre  
Wellness Manager  
[bstpierre@berkshire.coop](mailto:bstpierre@berkshire.coop)



Asa Vanasse  
Asst. Produce Manager  
[avanasse@berkshire.coop](mailto:avanasse@berkshire.coop)

## DATES of INTEREST

### OWNER APPRECIATION DAYS

10% OFF TO OWNERS IN GOOD STANDING

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup>

THURSDAY, JULY 17<sup>TH</sup>

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16<sup>TH</sup>

### BOARD MEETINGS

HELD THE 4<sup>TH</sup> 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](mailto: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



# Education & Outreach Report

By Jenny Schwartz, Education & Outreach Report

**“No one who cooks, cooks alone. Even at her most solitary, a cook in the kitchen is surrounded by generations of cooks past, the advice and menus of cooks present, the wisdom of cookbook writers.” Laurie Colwin**

“I’m not eating it, it’ll taste gross,” is a quote that we have become familiar with when kids are confronted with unfamiliar food. I don’t know if anyone remembers reading *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*, but in that book a comment like this led to Beezus and Ramona being in charge of making dinner for the family. What sounded to them like a simple task quickly became complicated as they learned that cooking was more detailed than they had imagined. Gritty cream of wheat was added to the cornmeal; banana yogurt was a substitution for another ingredient in the chicken dish. And there was a lot of chili powder involved. To put it simply, Beezus and Ramona could have benefited from having Food Adventures in their school.

Food Adventures, a program created in collaboration between Berkshire Co-op Market and the Nutrition Center of Pittsfield, works to create an atmosphere where students are educated on a multitude of topics. How to season your food, cook vegetables, substitute ingredients, and make a balanced meal are some of the many important and practical lessons we teach the students. While there is a strong emphasis on nutrition, particularly in regard to agriculture and eating a balanced and varied diet, there is also a focus on social and emotional health in that the students learn to work together in a cooperative manner. Roles change constantly in our classes as children learn how to take the lead in a kitchen and effectively delegate tasks.

Giving kids authority and room to develop their own ideas has proven to be successful in our classes. At the conclusion of each semester, the students participate in an “Iron Chef activity,” where they are divided into groups and work together to decide on how to make a balanced meal by choosing from a list of specific and seasonal ingredients we provide for them from the Co-op. Problem solving and cooperation are key when it comes to working together as a group to research, write, and create their recipes. On the day of the activity, the teachers get to sit back and watch while it’s up to the kids to complete their recipe. And clean up! On the day of the event, they know what they are making and they understand the steps required to complete the recipe. Unlike Ramona and Beezus, our kids are prepared for the task and know what to do. It is an important goal for children to have a better nutritional sense and understanding of what they are eating. To provide them with this sense of self-sufficiency and independence can be the determining factor for whether or not kids will take on this role at home when it comes to making their own balanced meals.

In our classes, there is an emphasis on culinary arts, because cooking and preparing your own food is more than just a necessary part of everyday life. It is important to take it a step further and put one’s own personal touch to a basic recipe. That changes the task from simply being a necessity, and instead helps it blossom into something extraordinary. One of the most memorable moments in our Iron Chef activity took place in the first class we attempted this project. One group was moving at a fairly rapid pace while the other group was falling behind to the point where we weren’t sure they would finish. The fifth grader in charge of the slower group appeared nervous at times, yet mindful of the time limit and what the other students were doing. Something remarkable happened in the last five minutes as the separate pieces they were working on turned into a masterpiece, both in taste and in presentation. They were clearly paying close attention to taste in terms of seasoning food, texture in terms of roasting certain ingredients, and temperature as they prepared traditional recipes in nontraditional ways (warming a salsa they prepared it). The vibrant colors of the warm salsa next to the burrito filled with bright yellow egg and topped with crispy kale chips was both aesthetically pleasing and tasty. At the conclusion of the activity, the team leader remarked on how nervous she had been during the process. The combination of leadership and delegating responsibility was new to her. She was surprised and happy about how everything turned out.

**“The only real stumbling block is fear of failure. In cooking you’ve got to have a what-the-hell attitude.”**  
*Julia Child*

While we have had many successes, there have also been some memorable moments where things didn’t go exactly as planned. Last spring, a group had begun their Iron Chef and was moving at a good pace and following their recipes well. Then, something changed. The roasted vegetables that consisted of peppers, onions, and carrots, which were supposed to serve as a side dish for their meal, were suddenly making their way into a blender. The bright shades of yellow and orange quickly transitioned into an odd shade of brown. The adults in the room all looked at each other in bewilderment. “We decided to make a smoothie too,” the group explained, having seen the other group blend up their fruit concoction. I think the question that went through all of our minds was, “Do we really have to drink that?” Visions of the kids telling us what we tell them crossed my mind. “You can’t say you don’t like something until you try it.” Or, “You sometimes need to try things a lot of times before you like them.” Et cetera. When the time came, we all hesitated as we brought the cups to our mouths. Similar to what our students often experience in our classes, to our surprise, we liked it. It tasted like a V8 and it was delicious! If you think you can’t learn from a child, you are incorrect!

At BART (Berkshires Art and Technology Charter School), located in North Adams, MA, students in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade go shopping in our Food Adventures Iron Chef activity. The week before the activity, they are given a budget and the sales flier of the local grocery store to aid in creating their recipes. They work together to create a recipe that fits within their budget. Throughout their classes there is an increased emphasis on shopping on a budget and understanding how to get the most for your money by learning how to read shelf tags. Budget lessons, in addition to lessons about reading



Server and stove-top kids from the Hot Jalapenos Iron Chef group are working together to finish their recipe in time.



A Muddy Brook 4th grader presents her group’s recipe to Principal Thad Dingman & Project Connection Site Coordinator, Jack Cowles



One group of BART students made a summer salad with sauteed tofu and homemade croutons.

product labels, play into how the students go shopping. The teams sometimes work together as well. If two groups need granola for their respective recipes, they split the cost to save money and to keep from buying more than they need. Through this process, the groups have come up with recipes such as carrot pancakes with pumpkin ice cream (from scratch), fruit tacos, and homemade chocolate dip with fresh fruit.

At the end of the Iron Chef, students are always asking, “Well, who won?” It’s important to us that the focus is less on winning and more on acknowledging the groups for what they excelled at. The areas are often taste, presentation, cooperation, cleanliness, and/or making a balanced recipe. Certificates could be awarded, cheap trophies could be given out, but we don’t do that. Instead, we invite teachers and principals from the school to be guest judges for the activity. The groups have time to present what they made and talk to the judges about it. In the moment in which they hear where they excelled, we hope the anxieties of wondering, “What’s the other team doing?” or “Is theirs better than ours?” fades, and feelings of success and competency prevail. One can hope that feelings of accomplishment stick around longer than a plastic trophy.



# Up Close & Personal With Fire Cider

## Making the Fire Cider with Shire City Herbals

By Daniel Esko, Non-Perishables Manager

One of the most gratifying and exciting aspects of my job at Berkshire Co-op Market is building strong relationships with our local vendors, working together to achieve mutual success while delighting our owners and customers along the way. In fact, everything we do at Berkshire Co-op Market is guided by our operational vision, which states: "The Berkshire Cooperative Association cultivates a sustainable local/regional economy and cooperatively builds a vibrant community." To this end we "foster the growth of local/regional food systems," which allows us to work closely with local farmers, producers, and entrepreneurs to bring the highest quality local food to market. Over the past ten years I have had the opportunity to work closely with Klara's Gourmet Cookies, Route 7 Grill, Cookie Head Cookies, Bola Granola, South River Miso, Hosta Hill, High Lawn Farm, The Gluten Free Bakery, No. 6 Depot, Harney & Sons Tea, Shire City Herbals, and Tierra Farm, among numerous others. The work we have done together has varied from product development and retail and marketing consulting to promotions planning, new item introductions, farm and facility visits, education through product demonstrations, and most importantly sharing their stories with the community. All of this work has resulted in various successes for our local vendors and the Co-op, one of which I am particularly proud to share with everyone today.

On the retail floor of the Co-op in 2010, I ran into a couple of old friends from high school, Amy Huebner and Dana St. Pierre. In the process of catching up, they told me they had gotten married recently and when asked what they were up to, they excitedly proclaimed that they were going to make Fire Cider. For a moment I tried to play along like I knew what it was, but soon thought better of it and had to ask. They explained that Fire Cider was a health tonic made from apple cider vinegar, honey, and other whole food ingredients including garlic, ginger, and habanero pepper. Dana had been exposed to the individual whole food ingredients through his family experience and upbringing. His parents, uncle, and grandparents used these foods separately and in different combinations in their daily cooking, and medicinally to help alleviate seasonal allergy symptoms, ward off the cold and flu, and strengthen their immune systems. Over the years he continued experimenting and adding ingredients. Then, in a collaborative effort with Amy, they developed the unique blend that eventually became what we know today as Shire City Herbals Fire Cider. Although impressed by their enthusiasm and excitement, I knew that they had a long road to travel before they would have a product ready for retail. In my capacity as a representative of the Berkshire Co-op I offered to provide them any support they might need as they prepared to pursue their dream of making Fire Cider for the public. Over the next year I provided a small amount of assistance, such as information about retail licensing and insurance requirements, UPC and packaging advice, and of course an open door to introduce and promote the product at the Co-op when they were ready.

Amy, Dana, and Brian (Amy's brother) worked hard over the next year and we received our first delivery of Fire Cider on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011. In only three months, Fire Cider became the number one unit seller and number two dollar seller in the supplement department. This is no small feat for a small local start-up. Fire Cider was now selling better than our number one vitamin supplement! I attribute this early success first to the superior quality of this uniquely marketable product, its effectiveness, and of course its following in the community. In addition, the level of success we achieved would not have come about if we had not worked closely with Amy and Dana on a strong promotional plan that included an introductory sale, placement in our Local Deals flier, and several product demonstrations. By the end of 2012 Fire Cider was still number one in unit sales and had become number one in dollar sales. In 2013 we started to promote Fire Cider more aggressively with more frequent sales, product demonstrations, and a huge cross-merchandising push to get Fire Cider in more places throughout the store. We had introduced the 16 oz. size in late 2012 and saw an amazing 378% unit increase in 2013, while still achieving 10% growth with the 8 oz. size. All year, people were raving about the product. Fire Cider was getting national press, sales continued to increase, and this fiery tonic had quickly become a staple in many households across the Berkshires and beyond. Admittedly, the Co-op was and still is only a small part of their huge success, but what the success represents for the Co-op is our values in action—strengthening the local economy by cultivating strong vendor partnerships and of course harnessing the incredible power of the third principle of cooperatives: member economic participation. Simply put, Fire Cider is an amazing local success story and Berkshire Co-op Market is proud to have played a role in helping them achieve this success.

But let me back up a moment. Some of you may still be wondering what exactly Fire Cider is? Who makes it? How is it made? Where is it made? Well, one day I decided to pay a visit to the folks at Fire Cider and had the opportunity to make some with them.

Fire Cider is made from organic raw apple cider vinegar, raw wildflower honey, organic oranges, organic lemons, organic onions, organic horseradish root, organic ginger root, organic habanero peppers, organic garlic, and organic turmeric. They use locally produced honey from Merrimack Valley Apiary in Billerica, MA, which they purchase by the ton directly from the beekeeper. One ton comes on a heavy-duty pallet and contains 36 x 60 pound buckets, or 2,160 pounds of honey! Although they continue to search for a supply of



From left to right: Brian, myself, and Dana getting ready for a day's work.



A batch of steeped Fire Cider, ready for pressing.

local (New England), organic, raw apple cider vinegar, they currently source from Spectrum Organics in California, a trusted name in the industry and a reputable producer of the highest quality organic and natural oils and vinegars. The remaining ingredients are sourced through Albert's Organics and Frontier Natural Products Co-op, long-time organic produce and herb/spice suppliers in the natural foods business.

Fire Cider is marketed as a dietary supplement and is generally used as a natural, whole food remedy for common symptoms related to cold, flu, and seasonal allergies among numerous other medicinal uses. Many of the ingredients have known immune boosting, anti-inflammatory, antifungal and antibacterial properties and have been used safely and effectively the world over in herbal healing traditions for centuries. As a whole food product, Fire Cider has a wide variety of culinary uses as well, including sauces, dressings, marinades, and beverages (in a Bloody Mary is particularly delicious). I have been making some amazing salad dressings with it and have recently heard of Fire Cider infused meatballs and even Fire "Soder" (Fire Cider and soda water). But like most people, I usually take a shot a day to keep me going.

Fire Cider is made by a company called Shire City Herbals, which is located in Pittsfield, MA. Incorporated in January 2011, the company is a family affair, co-owned by husband and wife Dana St. Pierre and Amy Huebner, Brian Huebner, and several other family members. A homegrown business, they started making Fire Cider in the kitchen of their home and then at the neighborhood Unitarian church on Wendell Avenue in Pittsfield. Starting off in just a handful of stores, farmers' markets, and fairs, they are now in almost 350 stores across the country. They currently produce in a licensed commercial kitchen in Greenfield, MA, owned by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation. The FCCDC is an economic development nonprofit organization providing comprehensive business development education, access to capital, and a commercial office and manufacturing space to small business owners and entrepreneurs in the greater Western Massachusetts area. The facility is called the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center and is the same facility where Co-op favorites Ooma Tesoro's, the Bean Cake Company, and Katalyst Kombucha produce their fine local food. **FIRE cont. on page 9**



# Plastic Bag Free in GB

By Art Ames, General Manager

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, Great Barrington will become one of the few but growing numbers of towns instituting a ban on single-use plastic bags. This is a result of the vote that was made at last year's town meeting. So what does that mean for all of us? Essentially, you won't be given plastic bags at stores in town anymore. There are exceptions, such as the thin produce and bread bags most often used in our grocery stores.

Speaking of grocery stores, that's where you'll see the biggest difference. Our town has actually postponed implementation of the new regulation until March 1<sup>st</sup>, and has worked closely with local businesses to get ready for the changes. The town has presented a couple of citizen meetings to discuss changes and get feedback, and has actively discussed the prevailing issues with the four largest grocers in town: Guido's, Price Chopper, Big Y, and Berkshire Co-op Market. A cool new logo will be unveiled shortly as well. For most of you, this won't be a big deal. After all, the Co-op has never offered the choice of "paper or plastic," recognizing that both have issues, though in our opinion, the use of plastic is the more insidious. Additionally, since 2009 we've charged you a dime for every new paper bag while offering alternatives such as boxes, inexpensive multi-use bags, and recycled paper bags. We never wanted your money, so we decided a long time ago to donate all of these proceeds to local nonprofit organizations with a focus on environmental issues. The first year or two, these organizations benefited by receiving quarterly checks from us that were significantly higher than they are now—and that's our collective greatest success. Today we use 66% fewer bags than we did back in 2009 because we have all changed our shopping habits and use our own bags far more frequently. At one time, I think most of us considered this to be an imposition, and now it's no big deal because we know it's the right thing to do.

In any case, attending the meetings with other grocery retailers was enlightening for me. Sometime during the summer, Guido's took the bull by the horns and started making changes in anticipation. They are no longer offering plastic bags and have decided to charge a dime for new large paper bags. I don't know if they are taking in these funds to offset their extra costs or donating the funds as we do. You'd have to ask them. By the way, why are fees charged? Paper bags really do cost more for a retailer than plastic bags, and take up more storage room. You should know that there is nothing in the new regulation that addressed bag fees, so each retailer will make their own decision as to whether to charge or not. I would guess that they will arrive at a dime because our Co-op basically set a precedent. Anyhow, the other retailers spoke of their customers transitioning and are concerned that there will be many angry people in March. Additionally, the other retailers will need to train their staff to pack groceries differently, and there will be a cost associated with the changeover.

At the Co-op, we know that initially our changes were met with some resistance. In fact, we did lose a few customers who were irate at the prospect of paying for bags. However, within a few short months, we all adjusted and it is now a nonissue. We expect that the other grocers will experience the same thing, although their "pain" may be lessened by the fact that all stores are now in the same boat. I think that conventional retailers often make the mistake of underestimating the wisdom of the public, and rather than make changes or communicate properly, they fall victim to that fear of not being liked. I predict that by summer, this will again be a nonissue.



By the way, I did share with the other grocers our own experience: that we offer boxes as a replacement; that we donate our fees; that since the transition, our customers use far fewer bags; that our trash pickups are reduced because we give away our grocery boxes, and that our Co-op now saves money because we purchase fewer bags. We even supplied them with a breakdown of our sales and supply costs over the last four years as proof that the initial hit on supply costs will go away over time. Everybody and the environment wins. I also suggested that we all pool our collected dimes into one fund and make a quarterly donation to local nonprofits. Every business has the right and responsibility to decide their own structure, and the others didn't embrace this proposal.

I do want to let you know that I am impressed with the positive attitude that all of the grocers are taking toward this change, and am also impressed by the effort that our folks at Town Hall have put in to make sure that these changes take place with minimal disruption and misinformation. I admit that I felt a tiny bit smug at the meetings, because this is such a nonissue for our shoppers. After March 1<sup>st</sup>, if or when you shop at other grocery stores, keep your eyes open. You may see signs of cashiers being harried or other customers being argumentative. You would be doing the store and their employees a kindness by thanking them for making the change seamless and supporting this action. You are the seasoned "no plastic" veterans and can really help other stores transition as well, and help them understand that this is not only the right thing to do, but the only way to move forward.

## CO-OP EVENTS

Sign Up at the Front Desk  
or Call (413) 528-9697  
for more information

### Vendor Tour: Klara's Cookies

Friday, February 21st, 2014 • 10:30 AM

### Kids Can Cook! Healthy Beet Brownies

Saturday, February 22nd, 2014 • 10:00 AM

### DIY Kids: Make Your Own Pet Treats

Saturday, March 15th, 2014 • 3:00 PM

### Owner Appreciation Day!

Wednesday, April 16th, 2014 • 8:00 AM

# A Sustainable Fishing Day Trip

Continued from Page 1

of his youth. After graduating college and spending a decade in corporate sales, Wes yearned to start his own business and incorporate what was dear to him: fish and his hometown, Scituate. Now living in the Berkshires, Wes took a plunge and invested in a refrigerated truck to drive to Boston twice a week to meet lobstermen from Scituate and buy fish from day boats fishing around the New England coast. In 2012, BerkShore Native Seafood was founded. Starting with restaurants, BerkShore was soon receiving rave reviews as being perhaps the freshest seafood option in the Berkshires. Shortly after, Wes and the Co-op made a deal to start carrying BerkShore fish and is currently the only retail location in the Berkshires that sells his fish. During the summer, Wes occupies a stall at the Great Barrington Farmers' market as well.

When I assumed the position of seafood buyer at the Berkshire Co-op I, of course, knew of Wes and was thrilled to work with him and get to know him more. Naturally I was honored to tag along for a day with Wes to Boston to pick up a round of seafood to be delivered to restaurants.

In a time of increased awareness of sustainability and knowing where your food comes from, Wes brings his strong knowledge and passion of relationships to the seafood business. "Coddle good relationships," he told me. "By nurturing these relationships you are investing in a long-term relationship and securing quality and trust from these guys." When Wes first had the notion of starting BerkShore he spent many months scouting out different fish houses and wholesalers around Boston and establishing these relationships. Wes sources his fish from day boats, meaning boats that stay out on the water and fish for 24 to 36 hours and then return with their catch to sell, rather than larger ships that stay out at sea for weeks on end and cannot tell customers when the fish was brought from the water. Wes does business with people who respect the fish and are supporting fishermen who employ the best practices, regulations, and catch methods. "I wasn't trying to settle on any wholesaler and make a relationship work if it wasn't transparent from the beginning," Wes said. We walked into a very small warehouse on the Boston pier where Wes gets the majority of his fish and the owner set aside everything he was doing to greet Wes, show him the fish, and explain where it was from, when it was out of the water, and what to expect in terms of availability and pricing down the road. The owner turned to me and said sternly, "Be appreciative. You have one heck of a picky fishmonger here. You don't see that very often." The four suppliers we visited in Boston that day were hands down the most pristine, organized, and efficient operations I have ever encountered in the way of seafood.

In a world of heavy industrial overfishing and overprocessing of seafood, it is becoming harder and harder to figure out what is a sustainable fish option. It is a fact that about 85 percent of the seafood served at restaurants and grocery stores in the United States is imported from countries like Indonesia, Thailand, China, or Vietnam, where fishing is not as regulated and overfishing is overlooked. Despite the lower prices of these commodity seafood options, one cannot be entirely sure how long that fish has been out of the water, how the fish was caught, what environmental hazards or threats the fishing methods imposed, or even if preservatives or other chemicals were used to prolong the freshness while it traveled to its final destination. Seafood is often hauled around huge warehouses and carelessly loaded on and off trucks several times before one sees it in a grocery store display or restaurant. By choosing to support native seafood you are supporting local economy and more heavily regulated fishing practices and environmental preservation. Just as there is a higher price to pay for quality meat or organic produce, the same goes for fish.

What exactly are examples of native seafood, one may ask. Fish that are native year-round to the coastal waters of New England and slightly beyond include



lobsters, cod, haddock, pollack, flounder, halibut, scallops, porgy, mackerel, and hake, to name a few. Next to lobsters, white fish is Wes's "bread and butter" There are other fish as well, such as albacore tuna, yellowfin tuna, mahimahi, wahoo, bluefish, striped bass, and swordfish, which are called migratory fish, meaning that these fish migrate to our waters at different times of the year (mostly spring through late summer) and then head south to warmer waters in the colder months.

Time after time, I get asked about the differences in flavor and what's the best way to cook a particular fish, and I usually reply, "Not a lot, but once you cook a certain fish a few times you see a few differences in the way in cooks, flakes, or retains juiciness, and then you can decide on a personal preference." While most of these fish are in the same family and taste fairly similar, there are certain nuances and textural differences. Mahimahi, for example, is a lot like cod but a little denser and less "flaky." Hake tastes a lot like haddock but is thicker and slightly more delicate.

For the reason that most of these fish are similar in taste and appearance, they are easily adaptable in traditional recipes that call for the more common white fish such as sole, cod, or haddock. Based on freshness or seasonality, one can use any white fish interchangeably for another. The saying "know thy farmer" can translate perfectly to "know thy fishmonger" in the sense that the fishmonger should not only tell you where and how the fish was caught but when it was caught and perhaps suggest a fresher offering. Fish is one of the simplest and quickest proteins to prepare. Broiled, pan-fried, grilled, or baked, it is a highly versatile protein that makes fish an exciting way to cook.

If you are serious about eating the freshest and most sustainable seafood in the Berkshires, then look no further than the fish we buy from BerkShore. Remembering that the Co-op has only been dealing with BerkShore for about two years, I think that this is going to be the start of a beautiful friendship.

## Simple BerkShore Fish Recipes

### Broiled Mahimahi with Tomatoes and Fennel

- 2 lbs mahimahi, skin off. (Substitute cod or pollack)
- 1 lb tomatoes, diced. Substitute butternut squash or celery root
- 1 medium fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- 1 T shallot, minced. Substitute red onion
- 1 T olive oil
- Chopped parsley. Substitute cilantro
- Lemon wedges. Substitute lime
- Sea salt and ground white pepper (or black pepper)

1. Place oven rack 4 inches from the heat source in oven and set the oven to broil, high.
2. Season fish on all sides with salt and pepper and place on a lightly oiled oven tray.
3. Mix tomatoes, fennel, shallots and olive oil in a bowl and spoon over fish.
4. Broil for about 10-15 minutes or until a metal skewer inserted into the center of the fish is warm (not hot).
5. Serve with chopped parsley and lemon wedge.

### Roasted Hake with Potatoes

- 2 lbs Hake fillet, skinless. Substitute hake, cod, or haddock
- 2 lbs sliced new potatoes. Substitute Yukons, red potatoes, sweet potatoes or celery root
- 1/4 cup + 2 T olive oil
- 2 T chopped sage. Substitute parsley, rosemary, or tarragon
- 1 t chopped garlic
- Sea salt and pepper
- Lemon wedges

1. Heat oven to 425°F and toss potatoes with olive oil, pepper and a good pinch of salt.
2. Roast in casserole dish or tray, turning occasionally until brown.
3. Meanwhile, season fish on all sides with salt and pepper.
4. Mix sage and garlic into the potatoes after about 15 minutes. Place fish on top and drizzle remaining 2 T olive oil over fish.
5. Put back in oven and cook for another 10-13 minutes or until fish is done.
6. Serve potatoes on a plate with fish on top and pour any juices from the pan on top of fish. Finish with a squeeze of lemon.



# Organic in the Winter: How We Source

Continued from Page 1

## Organic Here vs. Organic There

Lately, there's been a buzz around the store about the validity of the NOP. There are a few possible factors influencing this. Changes by the Organic Standards Board, the committee that sets the rules for organic certification, have etched away at consumer trust and the national press has responded by lessening their editorial opinion of organic food. Whatever the reason, some customers have expressed concern about organic standards, especially those of produce grown in other countries. In terms of international organic products, the concern is an interesting one. One can assume that the worry has to do with the standards of those countries as compared to the United States. While it is an understandable concern, there are some points that one should understand in order to have a fully educated opinion.

When two governments agree to mutually accept each other's organic standards, it's called an *Organic Equivalence Agreement*. Currently the United States has just three such agreements. These are with Canada, Japan, and the European Union. In addition, there are several *Recognition Agreements*. These allow a foreign government to accredit certifying agents in that country to the USDA organic standards. These agreements exist with New Zealand, Israel, and India. All other imported organic produce in this country is certified by an agency that is accredited by the USDA to do so. These certifying agencies are held to the same standards whether they are in this country or abroad. That means that an organic farm in Mexico, for example, is monitored in the same exact way as one in San Diego, or Vermont, or Chile.

There is simply no reason to assume that USDA-certified products are any different depending on the country in which they are grown. If you don't trust the USDA, that's another matter that puts *all* USDA organic products in question, including those from the United States. If that's the case, we suggest that you consider some of the storage crops we offer from local farms. You won't get lettuce or kale this time of year. But you can be sure that you can trust the farmer who grew your root vegetables. As for the crops that don't grow in our winter, the National Organic Program is still the best option we have for offering high-quality options. And we will continue to do our best.

## West Coast vs. East Coast

Another subject that has been coming up a lot recently is whether we buy from East Coast or West Coast sources. Food miles have always been a concern for the Co-op and its customers. However, because we only offer organic produce when we're not buying local, our options for ordering are usually slim. Sometimes we can only get garlic from Mexico or apples from Australia. But, as long as they carry the USDA Organic Seal, we will bring in the product. Now, due to the problems at the Japanese nuclear plants, there are more people than ever concerned about West Coast farming.

At the Co-op, we are not scientists, and therefore cannot substantiate the concerns about nuclear contamination one way or the other. What we do know is that several customers have asked that we tell them what state the vegetables were grown in. And when we get requests like that, we try to inform you as much as possible.

Because of our focus on food miles, our produce department started emphasizing regional and East Coast produce long before the Fukushima issues started. When given the choice and all other factors the same, we choose Florida over California every time. However, we often don't have the proper information to make that decision.

Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) laws only require companies to label the country in which the food was grown, not the state. That means that our distributors are completely within their legal rights to simply mark everything with "Product of USA" and move along. For years, we have been asking for more information. Sometimes we get it, sometimes we don't.

Another challenge is the fact that the larger organic farms often have land in more than one state. And, because they are not required by law to do so, they put several state's products into the same bin for packaging. The sign might then read "Product of FL, GA, AL, and/or LA." That's not exactly a user-friendly format.

In recent months, we have increased the pressure on our distributors to provide us with state of origin information on our invoices. And I'm glad to say that the last holdout agreed this week to post the information for us. As this article is being written, we are preparing a meeting to figure out how best to serve you on this issue. We will figure out a way to give the information you need to the best of our ability. And, by the time you read this, we will have gotten started.



European Union Organic Logo



Japan Organic Logo



Canada Organic Logo



USDA Organic Logo

## WELCOME NEW OWNERS

Every day, new people come to us wanting to be part of the Co-op ownership. Since July 1st, 2013 we have added 100 new owners. We'd like to take this space to welcome them all.

|           |           |         |           |          |        |         |         |         |          |
|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Alan      | Benny     | Claire  | Eliza     | Jacob    | Judith | Kirstin | Marilyn | Peter   | Sherry   |
| Alexander | Brett     | Conrad  | Elizabeth | Jane     | Justin | Kristin | Mark    | Rachel  | Stacey   |
| Alexcia   | Bruce     | David   | Emily     | Janet    | Karen  | Landis  | Mary    | Robert  | Sue      |
| Andrew    | Bryan     | Dawn    | Eric      | Janice   | Kari   | Laura   | Maureen | Robin   | Susan    |
| Andy      | C. Linda  | Deidre  | Erica     | Jeane    | Karl   | Lauren  | Maxine  | Ron     | Susan    |
| Anthia    | Candace   | Denise  | Erin      | Jeffrey  | Karyn  | Leon    | Michael | Sabine  | Ted      |
| Asa       | Carole    | Dmitriy | Frances   | Jennifer | Kate   | Lisa    | Montana | Sabrina | Theodore |
| Audrey    | Catherine | Dorthe  | Fred      | Jennifer | Kate   | Louis   | Nancy   | Sarah   | Tom      |
| Austen    | Catherine | Ed      | George    | Joan     | Katie  | Malvina | Paul    | Shannon | Victoria |
| Barry     | Charles   | Edith   | Guy       | John     | Kim    | Maria   | Perry   | Sharon  | Wendy    |



# Doing the Work with Local Vendors

Continued from Page 5

So, on a warm sunny day in early September I hitched a ride with Amy, Dana and Brian up to the processing center in Greenfield. As we ascended the winding road of beautiful Route 9, our eyes were greeted with lush green foliage and the expansive ridgelines of the eastern edge of the Berkshire Hills in the background. On the way we stopped off at the Old Creamery Co-op in Cummington, MA. The Old Creamery General Store recently converted to a cooperative and the Berkshire Co-op has been assisting them in various capacities over the past several years. We left with some of the Old Creamery's famous deli sandwiches. It turned out to be a classic late summer Berkshire day, with the sun shining warm and bright as we continued on our journey to Greenfield. When we arrived at the facility, I found out that Katalyst Kombucha (now Artisan Beverage Cooperative) is one of the anchor tenants at the food-processing center and I learned that they are actually the co-packers for Fire Cider, doing all of the bottling on their behalf. This is also where Real Pickles, a huge local favorite, got their start. I felt a profound sense of connection to the local food movement. I was excited to take a look on the inside and have another experience of getting to know more deeply the food we provide to the owners and shoppers at the Co-op.

We began by suiting up in heavy waterproof boots and other necessary gear as they explained how things would get quite messy in the process. They told me their process includes three phases – production, pressing, and bottling. That day was a pressing day. We started by setting up a stainless steel IBC (Intermediate Bulk Container) filled with 350 gallons of organic apple cider vinegar and almost 700 pounds of solid ingredients. This is no easy task. Fully loaded, the IBC weighs over two tons (4,250 pounds). Dana and I used a pallet jack, slowly pushing and pulling the hulking IBC into the kitchen, careful not to let the pallet jack wheels roll over the floor drains. We then lined up another temporary holding container adjacent to the IBC. This IBC was prepped about six weeks prior, during the production phase of the process. After we got the tanks in place, Dana and I began to set up the pump and hoses necessary to pump the cider back and forth between the IBC and the holding tank during the pressing and filtering operation. He described the production phase to me while we were setting things up. Production starts with raw fruits and veggies, peels and all. They engage in minimal processing, scrubbing the horseradish and rinsing everything, cutting the citrus and garlic in half, and pulping the ginger, horseradish, and onion. Everything then goes into the tank with the vinegar, habanero pepper, and turmeric and is allowed to steep for a minimum of six weeks (1,000 hours). Meanwhile, Amy was setting up the 35-ton hydraulic juice press in the cold room and Brian was washing and sanitizing all of the utensils, buckets, and containers to be used in the process.

After all the setup was complete, we were ready for pressing. Dana fired up the pump and the cider slowly started to flow from the stainless steel IBC into the adjacent holding tank. He had to bang on it several times with a mallet to get the aging pump up to full pressure. Dana was like the engineer on an old steamer ship, coaxing the turbines to produce as much power as possible. The klaxons, bells, and whistles from the Beatles song "Yellow Submarine" played through my head for a second and I could not hold back the huge smile and accompanying laugh that followed. Once the holding tank was filled, he opened up the door of the IBC and we proceeded to scoop out all of the solid ingredients for pressing. Suited up in full production gear, Amy was in charge of the pressing. Utilizing the incredible hydraulic force of the 35-ton juice press, she made sure to squeeze every last vital drop from the vinegar-infused oranges, lemons, onions, garlic, and other solid ingredients, with the liquid from each press being poured back into the IBC. The pressing is a crucial step in the creation of Fire Cider because the vitamin- and nutrient-rich liquids are essential to the nutritional composition and the taste profile of the finished product. We all helped Amy at various times with the pressing, cleaning, sanitizing, and disposing of compost and other waste throughout the day. Next, Brian, Dana, and I blended in the raw wildflower honey, filtered the batch one final time and we all muscled the IBC back into the warehouse. Finally, there was end of day cleanup, a very extensive and meticulous process, removing all traces of production from the shared commercial kitchen space as well as washing and sanitizing every piece of equipment used that day. From start to finish, it took four people seven hours to complete, and after all of this hard work, we had produced 350 gallons of Fire Cider ready for bottling. One finished IBC can yield roughly 5,600 8 oz. bottles of Fire Cider. They currently have five IBCs in regular production, with several more lined up for purchase in the near future.



The Fire Cider press: cleaned, assembled, and ready for steeped Fire Cider.



One IBC will fill six of the white crates with Fire Cider pulp.

The entire experience, from the day Amy and Dana told me of their dream over three years ago, right up to the moment we finished cleaning everything up at the end of the pressing day, helped me fully understand what it really takes to create a wholesome, local product for market. I thought of their tireless dedication, working around the clock to build their business in a very grassroots and personal way with limited resources. What the folks at Shire City have been able to accomplish in three years is truly an inspiration to all of us at the Co-op and in the greater Berkshire community and beyond. For me it all comes back to the power of food and the idea that food is destiny. It truly has the power to transform the lives of people, the communities in which they live, and the world as a whole.

Over dinner at the People's Pint in Greenfield, a favorite brewpub serving wholesome local food and handcrafted beer, I learned of their dream of buying a farm one day and growing the ingredients for Fire Cider themselves. They told me about their mission statement, which is borrowed from Hippocrates: Food is the best medicine and the best medicine is good food. They explained the idea of Fire Cider as a gateway food; something that is unmistakable, potent, and which can immediately convince people of the power of raw, whole foods. I ended the day feeling incredibly grateful to have had this amazing opportunity to build a better world through food—in my daily work with all of our valued local farmer and vendor partners, and especially with the good folks at Shire City Herbals.

**Note on Fire Cider: At the time of this newsletter's printing, Shire City Herbals was embroiled in a controversy over their trademarking of the term "Fire Cider." The herbal community took issue with their trademark and a campaign was started to reverse it. The Co-op has no position on this issue except the one we gained through our work with Amy, Dana and Brian, which has shown them to be valued vendor partners and a great example of a small local business that has become a success. They have our full support.**



# Solar Initiative Comes to GB/Egremont

By Malcolm Fick, Great Barrington Solar Coach

Solarize Mass has come to Great Barrington and Egremont. Solarize Mass has already been successful in four Berkshire towns—Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, and Williamstown—resulting in the installation of 170 solar power systems with a total capacity of more than 1.3 megawatts. And this spring is our opportunity to join in!

This initiative is a partnership between the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), the Green Communities Division of the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER), and participating cities and towns across the state. It is designed to increase the adoption of small-scale solar electricity systems through a grassroots educational campaign, driven mainly by local volunteers. It includes a competitively bid, tiered pricing structure that increases the savings for everyone as more people in a community sign up.

I am coordinating the Great Barrington volunteer effort in a role the program designates as “Solar Coach.” Juliette Haas is Solar Coach for Egremont. We serve as facilitators coordinating efforts among our community volunteers, the solar installer, the Solarize Mass organization, and you.

We volunteered for this program because we are convinced the time is right to go solar. Everyone with a generally south-facing, unshaded roof or ground location can benefit. If you own a residential, business, or nonprofit property, there is a financial option for you. The program has a zero-money-down option, where you essentially “rent” your roof in return for a twenty-year guaranteed reduced electricity rate. If you can afford to put the money down to purchase a system, you will benefit even more. Rebates, tax credits, reverse metering (where the utility buys back any excess electricity you generate), and other incentive payments, add up to thousands of dollars of savings over the life of the system.

Our volunteer team is also driven by the positive impact of going solar in reducing our carbon footprint. A typical 5-kW system will reduce your annual CO2 emissions by about 4,800 pounds. This is equivalent to driving about 6,000 miles less, planting half an acre of pine trees, or recycling 1,400 pounds of waste instead of throwing it out.



We kicked off Solarize Great Barrington – Egremont with an initial “Solar 101” meeting at Crissey Farm in January. The meeting was televised by CTSB and is being rebroadcast. Check the CTSB schedule for rebroadcast times. Other meetings are being held until the program ends on June 30. Check our website for the schedule of events.

Beginning in mid-February, our installer began visiting people who have already signed up for free, no-obligation assessments of the solar potential of their properties. If the site is suitable, the solar installer will offer a contract, which must be signed by June 30, 2014.

Sign up for a free, no-obligation assessment of your property by visiting [www.solarizeGBandEGR.com](http://www.solarizeGBandEGR.com). At our website you can also learn more about Solarize Great Barrington – Egremont, including event schedules and informative FAQs. You can email me at [SolarizeGB@gmail.com](mailto:SolarizeGB@gmail.com) or Juliette at [SolarizeEgremont@gmail.com](mailto:SolarizeEgremont@gmail.com).

## Thoughts on this Small Town

By Matthew Novik, Communications Manager

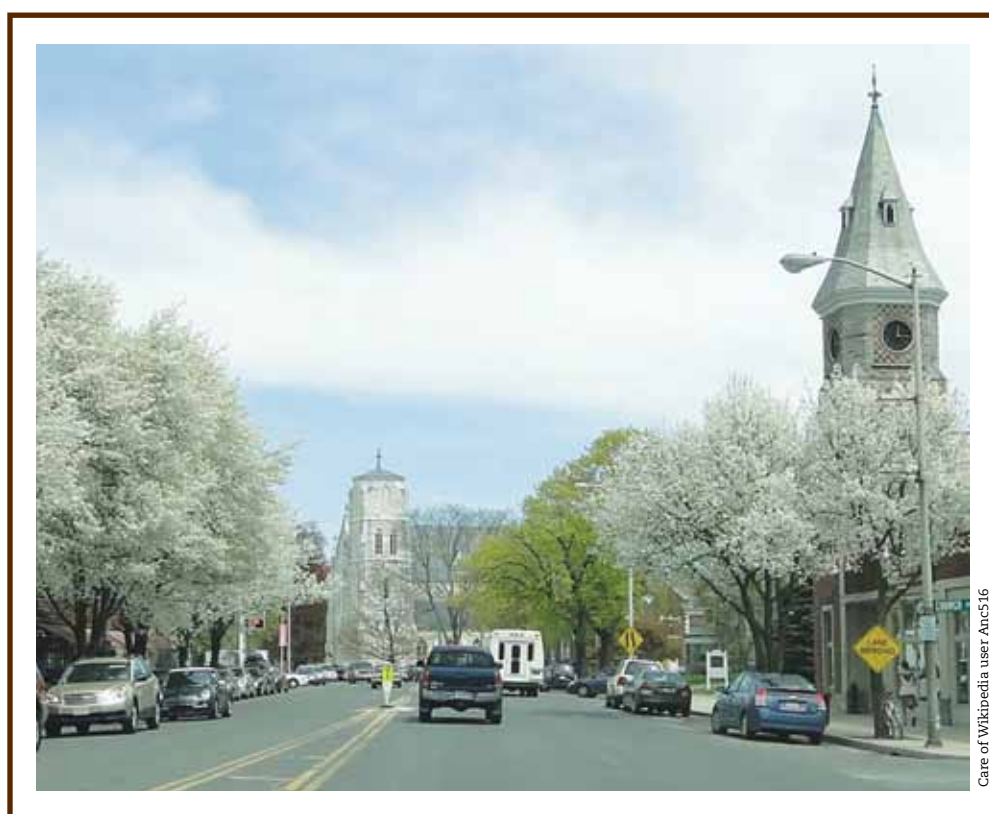
I live in a small town. The truth is, when I was young, I never pictured myself as an adult living in the town of my birth. I thought I was destined for urban life; instead here I am in Great Barrington. Sometimes it can be frustrating and I wonder why I’ve stayed as long as I have. Then there are moments that remind me how wonderful it is to be a part of this small and connected community. One of those moments occurred about a month ago, and I just had to share it with you.

I walked into the Co-op that morning and noticed something strange. Some of you may know that we often have small, plastic animal toys at the front desk for kids to play with while their parents shop. On this morning, two of them (the cow and the goat, I think) were connected with a tiny set of handcuffs. I asked Samantha, who was at the front desk, what the handcuffs were doing there. “A customer turned in a set of keys they found on East Rock the other day,” she said. “We called the police and Volkswagen to try to identify the owner, and had no luck.” As it turned out, the handcuffs had been on the key chain and she had no idea who had “arrested” the animal toys. We took them off and reapplied them to the key chain in preparation for delivery to the police. That’s when I had a moment of clarity.

I had recently talked to someone who had mentioned losing keys on East Rock. But who was it? Those who know me well know that memory is not exactly my strongest skill. I lose things with ease, barely recognize people, and forget names all the time. But I *knew* that conversation had happened. And, after about five minutes of hard thinking, I managed to remember. Several weeks before, a friend and I were walking our dogs. We were about to exit the park when we saw another person with a dog entering at the other end. We walked back to the entrance to see if that dog might want to play. As often happens in Great Barrington, the “stranger” turned out to be somebody I knew pretty well.

We chatted while the dogs roughoused and two subjects came up that I remember well. First, he told me that he no longer drove the station wagon I knew as his car and had switched to a Volkswagen. Second, he told me that he had just lost his keys while hiking East Rock and wasn’t holding out too much hope of ever finding them.

That was it. I didn’t think about that interaction again until that morning, weeks later, when I saw the handcuffed farm animals on the Co-op desk. Once I remembered everything, I called my friend’s place of work (I didn’t have his home number) and left a message that said if his key chain had a tiny set of handcuffs on it, then I had found his missing keys.



Just for a moment, think about the strange series of events that this story recounts. They all say a lot about the community in which we live. Seeing a stranger entering the park in the dark made us go toward him to see if his dog wanted to play with our dogs—in the city, the opposite would likely be true. Furthermore, that stranger wasn’t a stranger at all, but rather a friend to catch up with and share some stories. And last, but certainly not least, a customer of the Co-op felt that the best chance to locate the owner of the keys he had found was to leave them with us, even though he found the keys in the woods, almost a mile from our door.

In most places, none of the factors that make this story interesting would even have happened. Let alone in a sequence that actually got the lost keys back to their owner. Here, in the town of my birth and the community I love, it all just comes together.



## Southeast Asian Pork & Kale Stir-Fry

In open markets across Southeast Asia, you'll find all sorts of leafy greens, a testament to the role that deep green veggies play in the local cuisine. The assertive flavor of kale is perfectly matched with the Southeastern flavors of chiles, lime and fish sauce, which combine to bring out the sweetness in the leaf.



### Recipe Info

Total Time: 20 minutes  
Servings: 2

### Nutritional Info

Per Serving:  
751 calories  
26 g. fat  
41 mg. cholesterol  
1550 mg. sodium  
106 g. carbohydrate  
8 g. fiber,  
26 g. protein

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound kale, stemmed and chopped
- 1 teaspoon oil, peanut, soybean, grapeseed or canola
- 4 ounces ground pork
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger
- 1 large red chile, chopped
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 scallions, slivered
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds, toasted
- 2 cups cooked rice

### PREPARATION

1. Strip the leaves from the stems of the kale, then chop the stems and leaves separately and reserve. In a wok or large sauté pan, spread the oil and turn the heat on high, let the pan heat for a few seconds. Crumble the pork into the pan, and stir. Add the garlic, ginger and chile and stir until the pork is cooked through. Add the lime juice, sugar and fish sauce and stir, then add the stems of the kale and stir for 1 minute, then add the leaves and stir until the kale is bright green and softened.
2. Serve over rice, topped with scallions and sesame seeds.

## Asian Collard Wraps

Serve these Asian-inspired wraps with peanut or ginger-spiked shiitake mushroom sauce and a bowl of hot and sour soup. You can also use this filling with rice paper wraps to make your own spring rolls.



### Recipe Info

Total Time: 45 minutes  
Servings: 6

### Nutritional Info

Per Serving:  
135 calories  
2 g. fat  
0 mg. cholesterol  
338 mg. sodium  
26 g. carbohydrate  
5 g. fiber, 4 g. protein

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch collard greens, washed well, large stems removed
- 4 ounces rice noodles, uncooked
- 2 tablespoons tamari
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
- 1 cup carrots, shredded
- 1 cup red cabbage, shredded
- 1/2 cup red bell pepper, julienned
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons cilantro, chopped

### PREPARATION

1. In a pot of boiling, salted water, blanch the collard leaves for about one minute each. Set them gently on a towel to dry.
2. Prepare the rice noodles according to the package directions. Drain the noodles well and toss them with tamari, rice vinegar, and toasted sesame seeds. Set aside.
3. To prepare the wraps, lay out one blanched collard leaf with the stem side towards the bottom. Place about 1/4 to 1/2 cup of rice noodles at the bottom of the leaf. On top of the rice noodles, pile a few pieces of carrot, red cabbage, and red pepper. Sprinkle with a pinch of green onions and cilantro. Fold the bottom of the collard leaf up over the fillings. Fold in each side of the collard leaf and continue to roll upwards until you have a burrito-like wrap. Set aside and repeat process with the rest of the leaves and filling.

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# The Departmental Reports

## Produce From Jake Levin

Well, we are deep into winter now, and it seems as if everything is fighting against produce: citrus greening in Florida; cold weather then drought in California, and local storage vegetables dwindling, but that doesn't stop us having fun and keeping things exciting here in Produce land. We are still getting what we can from Red Fire Farm in Granby and Montague, MA, including carrots, parsnips, turnips, daikon, and watermelon radishes. We continue to have delicious apples and preservative-free apple cider from Hilltop Orchards in Richmond, MA. We just started carrying locally grown micro-greens from Mill River Farm in three varieties: spicy, mild, and arugula. And while citrus has had a tough season due to greening and cold weather, we are still getting great stuff, including Meyer lemons, pink grapefruits, tangelos, and Hamlin oranges.

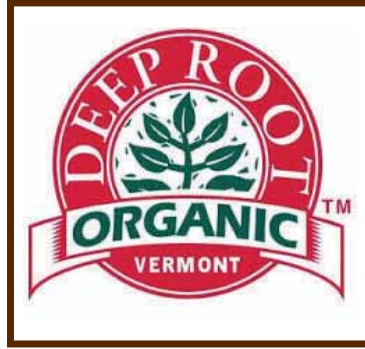
On another note, we have heard concerns from customers about produce from the West Coast. We have taken this to heart and are making a concerted effort to buy as much as possible from East Coast farms, as well as putting pressure on our distributors to do the same. If you want to stick to East Coast farms, look out for Uncle Matt's for citrus; Bryson Farm, Alderman Farm and Lady Moon for bunched greens; Deep Root for root vegetables, and Lady Moon for tomatoes. If you are unsure, please feel free to ask. We are here to help.

Looking around the bend to warmer days, we had our Annual Growers Meeting this January and we are looking forward to the beginning of the local season. We have also begun meeting one-on-one with growers to see what they will be bringing us this spring and summer, and it looks like it's going to be another tasty and exciting season!

## Wellness From Brenna St. Pierre

Hello from the Wellness Corner! We're making Weleda fans happy this spring by offering the full line of their hair-care products in our store. Find the perfect product with these great new choices from Weleda. If you're feeling flaky and dry after the Berkshire winter, look to their Wheat Balancing Shampoo, which promotes healthy scalp and hair with wheat germ oil, organic sage extract, and a lively rosemary, tea tree oil and copaiba balm scent. These soothing ingredients help strengthen hair, reduce flaking, and moisturize dry, irritated scalps. If you're looking for deeper scalp treatments, try out the Rosemary Conditioning Hair Oil. This treatment restores moisture, softens split ends, and adds shine with organic rosemary leaf extract. The organic burdock root extract revitalizes and nourishes the hair and scalp. If you need to mend breakage and split ends look for the Oat Shampoo, Conditioner, and Hair Treatment. This trio of replenishing products is full of moisturizing organic ingredients, including jojoba seed oil, coconut oil, sea buckthorn oil, shea butter, and oat extract. Weleda suggests the Oat Replenishing line for anyone converting to natural hair care or looking for organic formulas, as the shampoo contains 72% and the conditioner 89% organic ingredients. Replenish with oats and immerse yourself in the inspiring scents of mimosa and tonka beans. For normal hair, Weleda offers the Millet Nourishing Shampoo to gently cleanse and strengthen hair with organic millet seed extract and organic macadamia nut oil. Ideal for the whole family, this shampoo will awaken your senses with grapefruit and peppermint. All formulas were developed under the guidance of holistic hair-care experts and with Weleda's deep understanding of how natural ingredients support health and beauty.

The new year brought two distinctive packaging changes with it. Rainbow Light products are now available in taller, streamlined packaging with green tops. Herb Pharm has also introduced a new label design featuring seven color-coded functional categories of Immune Support, Nervous System, Energy & Vitality, Respiratory System, Cleanse & Detoxify, System Restoration, and Optimal Well-Being. There are guides available for Herb Pharm's new label and functional categories. As always, we are happy to help with any questions!



## Non-Perishables From Daniel Esko

Greetings from the center store! It has been a fun but long holiday season, with more changes taking place and many new products coming into the department. Back in May, we moved some things around in the Bulk Department, including coffee, tea, spices, and fruit. Most of the changes were positive, but we realized over time that there were some negative effects, and we wanted to remedy that. Through customer feedback and analysis we found that people were having trouble finding the bulk spices in their new home and that it would be wise to move them back to their original location. We also realized that, although the move to prepackaged dried fruit from Tierra Farm was the right move in so many ways, many people were less than pleased with the changes. It became likely that we were going to have to fast-track the introduction of bulk fruit (in bins!) and not wait for the Co-op expansion. So here is what we did. We consolidated and moved all bulk teas and medicinal herbs into a brand-new set located at the end of aisle 3 (commonly referred to as the pasta aisle). We moved all bulk culinary herbs and spices back to their original location closer to the Bulk Department. Finally, and more importantly, we introduced the following dried fruits into the department. Yes, I'll say it again: in bins. We now have Thompson raisins, white Turkish figs, black mission figs, cranberries (apple juice sweetened), Turkish apricots, mango, and crystallized ginger. We will try to add prunes, Medjool dates, pineapple, flame raisins, and apple rings if we can make the space for them. If that is possible we will gradually add them to the bulk set over the next month or so. We hope you are pleased with the changes and that this department will better serve your needs in the coming months.

Upcoming changes to report on. The big center store reset of 2014. Our goal is to reorganize and expand certain categories and shrink others in an effort to better meet your needs. Some category locations will change in the process, but we will do our best to communicate the changes in more detail in the coming months. We will certainly introduce some new product and likely discontinue a few in the process. Please let us know what new items you would like to see the Co-op carry, and we will do our best to accommodate your request. While no date has yet been set, we would like to get this done by early May, in time for the busy summer season.

### Product Updates

**The Gluten Free Bakery Biscotti:** We have two flavors: Chocolate Almond and Ginger Almond. They are already a hit among the gluten-free crowd and many others as well.

**Tierra Farm Organic Almond Butters:** We have three varieties: Maple, Salted, and Unsalted. Freshly ground on site in Valatie, NY, these almond butters are the best we have tasted and our customers are sure to agree.

**Number Nine Chips and Salsa:** We have carried these products in the past but ran into distribution issues that caused us to stop carrying them. These issues have since been resolved and we are ready to give them another go. We will have three flavors of their chips: Original, Nine Veggie, and Ancient Grain; and three flavors of their salsas: Mild, Medium, and Black Bean and Corn.

**Leahey Farm Cream-Top Whole Milk:** From right down the road in Lee, MA, Leahey Farm is a small family operation producing 100% Jersey milk from grass-fed cows. Unhomogenized, this milk is truly something special. By not homogenizing, the fat in the milk is not emulsified or broken up into smaller particles, thus the cream in the milk rises to the top, making a more flavorful product.

**Cocomels:** These absolutely decadent, melt in your mouth caramels are not your traditional caramels. They are 100% vegan, made with brown rice syrup, coconut milk, and cane sugar. Try some today; you will not be disappointed. That's all for now from the center store. See you all on the floor!

## Fresh Foods From Jeff Schilling

Did you notice the new look in the café? A while back, we did a reset of the sandwich station, which has been hugely popular. A few weeks ago, we completed the plan with a slight shuffle of the bakery section. We were able to make the cookies slightly smaller and reduce the price to 99¢ apiece. We are also offering those cookies unwrapped in cookie jars along the café counter. The new setup allows us to offer you a fresher, more affordable product that uses less packaging and is just as delicious as ever! We are continuing to evaluate the changes, so please let us know what you think.

In meat & seafood, Austin has been working hard to increase and improve our offerings every day. His work with Wes Malzone of BerkShore has been providing us with some of the freshest and most sustainably sourced fish available on the East Coast. Wes works with small, day boat fishermen off the Massachusetts coast. For more information, read Austin's article on the front page of this newsletter. Austin is also working on a preorder meat and fish program that will allow customers to order more exotic varieties and larger portions in advance. Keep an eye out for more information soon.

All in all, we continue to do our best to provide everyone with nutritious and delicious whole food options that fit your dietary needs. We hope you like it.