



2012: The International Year of Cooperatives

Co-ops around the world will celebrate, including ours.

The United Nations has declared 2012 the “International Year of Cooperatives,” and National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) and its 122 member and associate food co-ops, including Berkshire Co-op Market, are joining other cooperatives in marking the occasion.

Titled, “Cooperatives in Social Development,” the United Nation’s resolution recognizes the diversity of the cooperative movement around the world, and the economic and social contributions cooperatives make.

“The United Nations is giving co-ops a global platform to tell our stories, and we are eager to share the many benefits of cooperative grocers,” said Robynn Shrader, chief executive officer of NCGA. “This is a great opportunity for food co-ops to connect with each other, celebrate the dedication of our existing shoppers and owners, and help more people across the country discover that food co-ops are about fresh, delicious foods and so much more.”

2012 International Year of Cooperatives



NCGA is planning a variety of activities throughout the year, including an online video series hosted by Kevin Gillespie, co-owner and executive chef at the Woodfire Grill Restaurant in Atlanta and sixth season finalist

of the Bravo TV series, *Top Chef*. Gillespie will journey through farm fields and grocery aisles showing the unique role co-ops have in building local food systems and their impact in their communities. These videos will be made available for viewing throughout the year, beginning with a virtual premiere in mid-January 2012 at www.strongertogether.coop.

NCGA’s member and associate food co-ops will also host a variety of special events and activities to promote co-ops and their importance to local and global communities.

“The International Year of Cooperatives calls attention to the transformational role co-ops play in our economy and our lives,” Shrader concluded. “We’re always incredibly proud to be a part of the cooperative community; even more so at this historic moment.”

For more information about the International Year of Cooperatives, visit www.2012.coop.

COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES BUILD A BETTER WORLD



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School Lunches on the Menu

The Community Comes Together to Support a Healthier High School Meal Program

By Matthew Novik

Way back in the beginning of November, the Co-op was approached by two high school students named Zoe Borden and Sophie Randolph. The girls, both students at Monument Mountain Regional High School, were working with some fellow students to improve the quality of their school lunches. They had some justified complaints, describing a school lunch program that offered too much processed food, too little nutritional value and zero opportunity for nutrition education.

The group eventually got the attention of State Representative Smitty Pignatelli, who joined them for a school lunch one day and listened to their story. Smitty was so impressed that he reached out to his friends on Capitol Hill to discuss the idea of a pilot program that would allow the school and the students the organizational and financial flexibility to design their own school lunch program using local growers and businesses to create healthier meals for Monument Mountain students.

Don’t think for a second that this is any kind of easy task. Consistently providing meals that teenagers will actually eat is hard enough. Combine that with the strict (and sometimes ridiculous) requirements of the National School Lunch Program, which provides subsidies that are needed because schools are expected to create meals for somewhere around a dollar a plate, and you can imagine the difficulties. Success in this effort will depend on creative thinking, administrative support and lots of help from the community.

This is where the Co-op comes into the story. We were asked to attend a public meeting with Representative Pignatelli and Representative Jeffrey Sánchez, the House Chair of the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Public Health. The students were going to get the ear of not just their own rep, but **LUNCH cont on page 11**



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NOTES FROM HQ: THE GM REPORT

By Art Ames



Happy winter, everyone! Regardless of how we all feel about the holiday season, I think most of us look forward to a return to normalcy once January 2nd rolls around. At the Co-op, we usually have a staff “after holiday” party because we just don’t have time or focus to do it amid the holiday craziness. Once the party is over, it’s our opportunity to work on the projects that we set aside earlier in the season. We also take advantage of the time to work on projects that we won’t have time for once the weather warms up and our additional warm weather owners arrive. This year is no exception.

Physical Store

So...you have already seen that we changed our Seafood Department to reflect our new Sustainable Seafood Program. I know that a few of you were not happy to discover that certain favorites were no longer available. On the other hand, we now have a better source and supply of Northwest salmon coming to us that is sustainable, and at an appealing price. Maybe it isn’t as low a price as farm-raised salmon, but it absolutely tastes better and is a compromise that fits our sustainable efforts. Anyhow, within the next several weeks we will finally change over our Meat Department to reflect similar upgrades, and will be changing the location of meat, cheese, grab ’n’ go, and some of the grocery items that tie into these products. It may be initially confusing for you. Please be patient with us. Once you get used to it, you’ll see that it will end up being easier for you, and I am confident you’ll be happy with the changes in selection and prices.

To prepare for this, we needed to bring in a new refrigerated storage unit, which is now located behind the seafood display. I know. We don’t like that big piece of machinery being there either. However, we just have no other place to put it. We’ve simply maxed out our space and are trying to make the best of it while not only providing the items that you need, but improving on them.

Also, over the next several weeks we will be painting the area behind the Owner Services desk, the area near our cash office where we display local artist pieces and the metal cash register check stands. We always use low VOC paints, do the work late at night, and will use ozone blowers to break down residual scent. That being said, the process of repainting those metal register stands is involved. We will break up the work into three nights to minimize the effects, yet I suspect there will be some residual “aroma” in the morning. Prior to work nights, we will send out a note on our e-mail list serve to tell you the actual times that the work will be done. By the way, if you are not getting e-mail from us, I strongly encourage you to sign up, either at our website or when you visit us. Help us help you stay informed. We are simply transitioning away from writing and printing and mailing letters and notices, for economic and environmental reasons.

Expansion & Publicity

We’ve been in the news—a lot. There have been local articles and radio interviews, and I suspect that you’ll see your co-op pop up even more in media from the region and beyond in coming months. As we remain active in our efforts to support and assist the growing cooperative movement, we are also creating more curiosity and interest in our own co-op. I admit that I personally struggle with some of this. It’s nice to be recognized, but the real reward is in the work. Also, occasionally what we read is less than accurate, or is opinion, and often rumors and invention can take over.

Yes, indeed, we have cause for concern, based on potential town improvements around Bridge Street. We were made aware of the major downtown street project that will take place in the summer of 2013. We were less informed about upcoming projects such as the replacement of downtown water pipes this coming spring, and the beginning of grant applications that could affect additional work on Bridge Street. I am speaking with town government and have asked them to give us more information so that we can plan accordingly. It is my responsibility to pursue expansion/relocation opportunities and to recommend a course of action to our Board of Directors. In order to do so, I need more information.

It is also my responsibility to explore all potential courses of action. Our Board of Directors continues to agree that our first and best choice is to remain in the downtown area. However, I need to continue to pursue alternatives, just in case we can’t get the necessary information from the town and to have a plan on the back burner for a worst-case contingency that would embroil us in three years of construction around our current location. In an expansion project, we would raise funds through owner loans, local bank financing and our own assets. Significant and prolonged construction would affect our own assets, not to a stage where we would be at risk, but where it could impact the extra resources needed for expansion.

I will also explore another strategy. We are often invited to investigate other locations for satellite or additional co-op stores. It’s all very flattering. It may make sense to open a smaller second location somewhere where we already have a significant owner base so that we can better serve that portion of our ownership. We would love to have the opportunity to offer our services in another community. It would also allow more people to consider becoming owners. We have to remember that it is a financial and community benefit to increase the percentage of our shoppers who are owners. It increases the patronage dividends that you could conceivably receive and allows us to build a stronger financial base. I continue to believe that our country will see further economic erosion in 2013 and beyond, in spite of currently improved economic indicators, so this is the time to work on all of this.

I understand that some of this is vague. Because of the nature of all that is going on, sometimes I just can’t give you all the details involved in our planning and operational stages. Instead, I want to assure you that I will continue to direct our team to develop a variety of contingencies, to get excited about possibilities, and to be willing and able to be creative and innovative in our thinking and planning. That’s the operational culture that we have. I’ll also be fiscally conservative (isn’t it funny how certain phrases can take on different negative or positive connotations?) when it comes time to deciding on whether to pull the trigger, or not, in my recommendations to our Board.

It’s All About Me

Well, it really *isn’t* about me, but I do want to tell you a bit about what is going on in my life. The whole concept of being a community-based co-op is fascinating. We all know each other in some way, and when one of us is missing—shopper or staff—our absence is actually noticed. I kind of like it. Anyhow, sometime in May, I will have been here for ten years. Wow! To say that “time flies” is an understatement. Until the last year or two, I did not take a lot of time away from work. My travels consisted of cooperative focused work and outreach, and I would tack on a few days here or there to take advantage of my travel. This last year or two, I’ve finally found the time to pursue other interests. For those of you who do know me outside of the Co-op, you realize that I love the performing arts, and music in particular. I do a radio show on Sunday nights at WBCR, and it really is one of the highlights of my week. One of my favorite quotes is a simple one. “Music is what feelings sound like.” OK, I’ll give you one more. “Music is enough for a lifetime, but a lifetime is not enough for music.” Anyhow, I’ve gone to lots of concerts and festivals all over the country, yet going for a few days here or there still has not given me the right kind of “time away” to reinvigorate. I’m a bit tired, mentally. There’s a reason I’m telling you this...

I have one of those VW Westfalia camper bus/vans. It has sleeping berths, a stove, and even the kitchen sink. It’s my plan to take a couple of months off, hopefully for most



My home for the months of February and March. I can’t wait!

of February and March, and see where the road takes me. I know my first destination, which is a roots music festival in Florida. I know that I’ll end up in southern Arizona, returning to an amazing hiking area that I didn’t have the time to complete last year when I visited. En route, I will stop in perhaps New Orleans and definitely Austin, two of my favorite music cities, and depending on the weather, I will explore that Americana/Appalachian music trail through some of the southern states. I’m going to leave the rest up to whim and happenstance. That could even be a good name for a blog, or a new age music group. Maybe I should also reread *Blue Highways*. We’ll see.

I wanted you to know this for a couple of reasons. My absence will be noticed. As mentioned earlier, that’s kind of a nice feeling. Also, I want to assure you that we have a fantastic leadership team, staff and Board of Directors. In my almost ten years here, it has never been stronger. I am fortunate to not only be able to “take off” for an extended time, but to be able to do so knowing that the Co-op is in more than capable hands. I wrote in the last newsletter about our evolving leadership structure. A team of four managers will continue to make sure that all is as it should be. That team consists of Bob Crowle, Business Manager; Daniel Esko, Non-Perishables Manager; Matt Novik, Communications Manager, and Jeff Schilling, Fresh Foods Manager. As a team, we will figure out the division of responsibilities. I’ll also let you all know when I actually head out, and will also let you know whom to reach out to in my absence with your suggestions and/or concerns. I’m really looking forward to this adventure. I assume the time away will be a mix of new experiences and yet-to-be-made friendships. I’m sure there will be the occasional sense of isolation as I’m traveling solo, but the trip should help satisfy my own desire to know what’s around the next bend.

Have an amazing and fulfilling winter, y’all.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS BOD@BERKSHIRE.COOP



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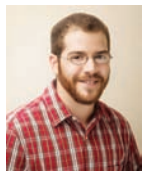


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ENDS STATEMENT (Developed By The Board of Directors)

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

To this end, the Berkshire Cooperative Association:

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

OPERATIONAL VISION

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

2012 OWNER APPRECIATION DAYS

10% OFF TO OWNERS IN GOOD STANDING

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20TH, 2012

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18TH, 2012

THURSDAY, JULY 19TH, 2012

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20TH, 2012

2012 BOARD MEETINGS

HELD THE 4TH WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

SCHEDULE CHANGES NOVEMBER & DECEMBER DUE TO THE HOLIDAYS

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

JANUARY 25TH - FEBRUARY 22ND - MARCH 28TH - APRIL 25TH

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

SEPTEMBER 26TH - OCTOBER 25TH - NOVEMBER 28TH

DECEMBER 19TH

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

Send requests to bod@berkshire.coop

THE FARMER'S POINT OF VIEW

REFLECTIONS ON WINTER

By Jen Salinetti



This time of year brings tremendous opportunity for farmers in the Berkshires to take a deep breath. We take the time to reflect upon our bounty from the year before and begin the creative process of anticipating a new season. As seed catalogs flood in, a smile immediately forms on my face, with enthusiasm for what could be.

For over ten years my husband and I have been experimenting with growing vegetables in the Berkshires. No matter how many times I've done it, I never fail to be amazed by the potential of one tiny seed. Every time I plant a seed, I give thanks for its wisdom and for the small part I get to play in its journey. My seeds become a part of my family. I nurture them with a cozy home and good food. I offer them encouragement to grow to their fullest potential. And when that fullness has revealed itself, I help the resulting plant to move on and be a part of others' lives.

I am constantly reminded how food provides sustenance, creativity and community. I can see it within my own family and within the Co-op community. I am graced with beautiful conversations from our Co-op owners and customers about how fresh, local food has touched their lives. I have been told that people have discovered a depth to and an appreciation for eating that they had never experienced before. They feel connected and that they are part of a greater whole through their food. Some people have shared with me stories of how they haven't had food that tasted like this since they were in their grandfather's or great-grandfather's garden. They can taste the love and the care and can truly see that freshness makes a difference.

During this last growing season, I had one particular touching experience at the Co-op. There was a mother and child within earshot. I overheard the mother say to her daughter, "Look, honey. There's one of our heroes." I looked all around me to see whom they were speaking about and slowly realized that they were talking about me. For a moment, I couldn't figure out why this statement had been made. Then I listened to the mother explain how I played a direct role in the meal they had eaten the night before. The child looked at me with a smile of admiration and contentment. Perhaps for the first time, this child was able to make a connection about where her food comes from. She was proud. I was honored.

Moments like these warm my spirit and keep me inspired to continue growing for our community. Images of friends and family sharing a meal with gratitude and acknowledgment of where it all came from are so simple and so profound. Knowing that the importance of eating local and connecting with our food is being passed on to the next generation fills me with hope and encouragement. I continue to be impressed by the connections I see our growing community making. I thank you for your participation. I thank you for your commitment and I look forward to growing with you.

Jen and her husband Pete own Woven Roots Farm in Lee, Massachusetts, a small family farm that grows vegetables and culinary herbs using traditional farming practices. Along with selling their produce to the Co-op, they supply local restaurants and offer Community Supported Agriculture shares.

INTERNATIONAL

A thirteen-part online video series explores food co-ops and how they positively affect their communities

Kevin Gillespie, celebrity chef from the Woodfire Grill in Atlanta and sixth season Top Chef finalist, has been traveling around the country exploring farm fields and co-op grocery aisles as part of this year's celebration of the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives. That 2012 has been named International Year of Cooperatives presents a great opportunity for food co-ops nationwide to shine the spotlight on the role co-ops and delicious food play in bringing communities together.

On Saturday, January 21, 2012 at 8 pm EST grab your favorite movie snacks and visit www.strongertogether.coop/premiere to take part in an online streaming "premiere party" featuring the first three videos in the thirteen-episode series that features co-ops from Vermont to California.

Following the premiere, new videos will be released online every other Monday from February 6th through mid-June at www.strongertogether.coop

EPISODE RELEASE SCHEDULE

www.strongertogether.coop

JANUARY 21 • 2012 - VIRTUAL PREMIERE

A Community of Shared Values:

Seward Co-op Grocery & Deli and Backyard Harvest
Minneapolis, MN

Grow Where You're Planted:

Valley Natural Foods Co-op and Gardens of Eagan
Minneapolis, MN

Celebrity Farmers:

Just Food Co-op and L&R Produce
Northfield, MN

February 6 • 2012

Three Generations of Cooperation: Putney Food Co-op
Putney, VT

February 20th

Five-Star Eggs: Community Food Co-op & Misty Meadows Farm
Bellingham, WA

March 5 • 2012

A New Breed of Farm: Community Food Co-op & Heritage Lane Farm
Bellingham, WA

March 19 • 2012

Feeding the Community: Community Food Co-op Celebration & BUGS
Bellingham, WA

April 2 • 2012

One Farm at a Time: Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op & Davis Food Co-op
Sacramento & Davis, CA

April 16 • 2012

Co-ops Helping Co-ops: The National Cooperative Bank

April 30 • 2012

A Farm for the Future: Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op, Davis Food Co-op & Good Humus Farm
Sacramento, Davis & Capay, CA

May 14 • 2012

Local Power: La Montañita Co-op & MoGro
Albuquerque, NM

May 28 • 2012

Everyone Agrees on Good Food: La Montañita Co-op & Los Poblanos
Albuquerque, NM

June 11 • 2012

An Economic Engine: Los Alamos Co-op & La Montañita Distribution Center
Los Alamos, NM

www.strongertogether.coop

YEAR OF COOPERATIVES

Mark the International Year of Cooperatives by Noting the Role Co-ops Play in Our Lives

When you hear the word “co-op,” what springs to mind? For some people, “co-op” may be their local grocery store; for others it may be a housing community. Whatever your initial association, you may be surprised by the many types of co-ops around you.

More than 800 million people around the world belong to cooperatives, and at least 100 million people are employed by co-ops. And more often than you might realize, co-ops play a vital part of your everyday life. Grocery stores, credit unions, housing co-ops, utility co-ops, health care cooperatives and food producer co-ops are just a few types of co-ops you have likely encountered, knowingly or unknowingly.

Declared by a United Nations resolution, 2012 is being recognized worldwide as the “International Year of Cooperatives.” The International Year of Cooperatives aims to share and celebrate the social and economic contributions of cooperative businesses, in which users can become owners. National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) and its 122 retail food co-ops are marking the year with a variety of initiatives to help showcase the many benefits of cooperatives.

Consider the cup of coffee and cranberry muffin you recently enjoyed at your breakfast table. That coffee was likely purchased from a grower co-op in Indonesia, Sumatra or Peru. The flour in the muffin may have started as wheat from a farmer-owned grain milling co-op, and those cranberries could be from Ocean Spray, a producer-owned co-op. Those colorful walls? Perhaps they were painted with supplies purchased at Ace Hardware, a co-op owned by individual store operators. Maybe you're wearing clothes bought at REI, a customer-owned co-op, or standing under a light fixture with electricity powered by an electricity co-op owned by residents in your community.

“From grocery stores and New York City apartments to credit unions and coffee producers, co-ops are all around us,” said Robynn Shrader, chief executive officer of NCGA. “Whether the co-op is operating on behalf of producers, workers or consumers, their general purpose is the same: to serve the needs of owners.”

Types of co-ops you may encounter everyday include:

Grocers. For nearly 80 years in communities across the country, retail food cooperatives have been leaders in providing consumers with high-quality local, organic and sustainably produced food. Food co-ops take pride in building relationships with area growers and

The twin pines symbol was adopted in 1922 by the Cooperative League of the USA, as the National Cooperative Business Association was then known, as a universal cooperative emblem.

suppliers, and supported the concept of “local” long before local was cool. Food co-ops continue to lead and innovate; to nurture and promote the growth of the local sustainable food systems – something that benefits both producers and consumers.

Financial services. Cooperative lending institutions often go where many investor-held banks won't, which means they're pumping billions of dollars into urban neighborhood stores and small-town businesses – and everything in between. Credit unions' rich history begins in the early 1900s, when poor and working classes were denied credit from established banks and were forced to borrow from pawnbrokers and other unscrupulous moneylenders. They came together and took action, forming “people's banks.” In 1934, President Roosevelt signed into law the Federal Credit Union Act in support of their community-minded stance. Today, the act regulates approximately 12,000 credit unions, serving more than 76 million consumers around the country.

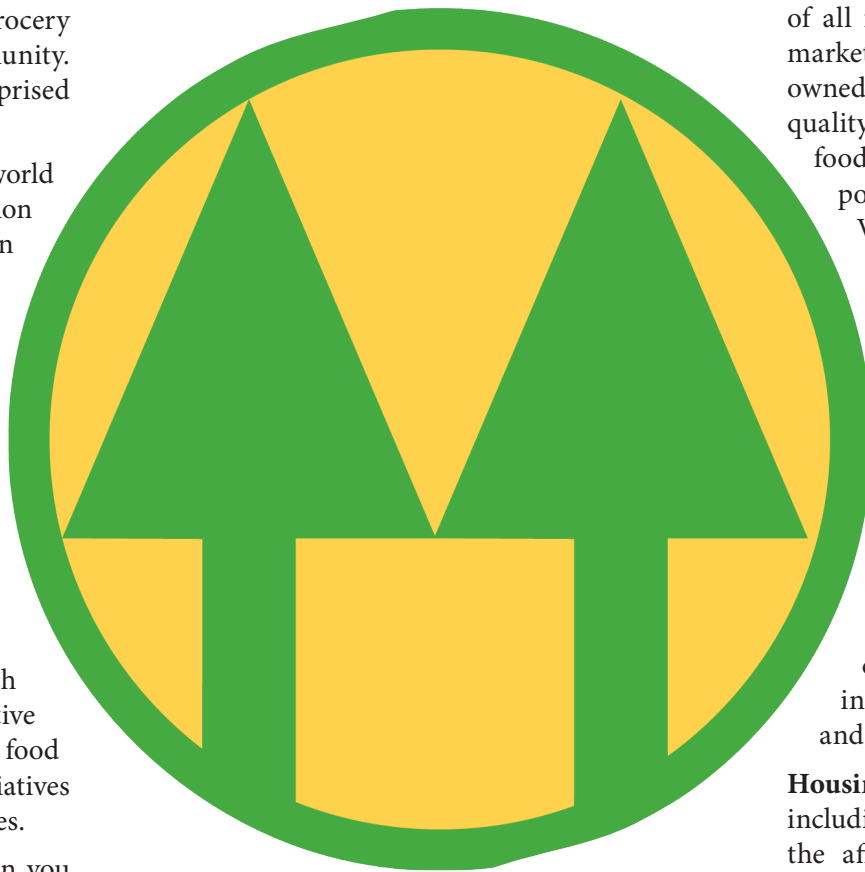
Food brands. Did you know that nearly 30 percent of all farmers' products in the United States are marketed through more than 3,000 producer-owned cooperatives? Co-op food brands offer high-quality local, organic and sustainably produced food. And of course, you can find many of these popular co-op food brands – such as Organic Valley Family of Farms, Frontier Natural Products, Equal Exchange, Florida's Natural and Cabot Creamery – in retail food co-ops.

Health care. Health care premiums and prescription medication costs are at an all-time high. But health care co-ops can help provide relief to both consumers and local business owners. Co-ops such as HealthPartners advocate for affordable premiums for members and small businesses, and they help community-owned nonprofit hospitals and independent pharmacists remain autonomous and affordable.

Housing. More than 1.2 million Americans, including upwards of 10,000 students, enjoy the affordability and community support of a housing co-op — from townhouses and high-rise apartments to senior citizen residences, mobile home parks and student housing. Members own a share in the cooperative, which manages the property where they live, and they pay a monthly fee to cover expenses like mortgage and maintenance.

Utilities. Electricity cooperatives are owned by those who buy power and other services from the co-op. Their formation began in the 1930s, when private, investor-owned utility companies refused to serve rural areas that were considered insufficiently profitable because they contained only a handful of customers per mile of line. The local farmers and residents banded together to found rural electric cooperatives. Today, electricity co-ops own and maintain more than half of the nation's power lines and provide service to communities large and small across the United States.

This article was provided by The National Co-op Grocers Association (NCGA). For more information on co-ops, visit www.go.coop. Berkshire Co-op Market is one of the more than 100 members of NCGA, a co-op of food co-ops that represent food co-ops across the nation and support them with sales, coupons and other promotional assistance.



ARE YOU A FARMER INTERESTED IN SELLING YOUR PRODUCE TO BERKSHIRE CO-OP MARKET?

BERKSHIRE
CO-OP
MARKET
ANNUAL
GROWERS
MEETING
2011
2

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST 2012 - 3:00 PM
BERKSHIRE SOUTH REGIONAL COMMUNITY CENTER

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 413.528.9697 X39 OR
EMAIL COMMUNITY@BERKSHIRE.COOP

CHECK THIS OUT



OUTREACH REPORT: BACK TO SCHOOL

By Jenny Schwartz, Education & Outreach Coordinator

Eat Well and Learn Program

It's a community effort at the Eat Well and Learn program as Berkshire Co-op Market, Fairview Hospital and the Sheffield Senior Center have collaborated to continue the program at Undermountain Elementary School in Sheffield, MA. Along with Susan Weinstein, first-grade teacher and director of the Eat Well and Learn program, and Robert Hoehster, staff nutritionist at Fairview Hospital, we met with students for a fifteen-week session, teaching them how to cook in addition to some of the routines and rituals of the kitchen. Children were assigned different jobs each week, taking charge of the transition from cooking to cleaning up and setting the table. The focus of the classes was for the children to learn how to make simple, healthy recipes with local produce. Washing and preparing their foods, culinary skills, use of different cooking instruments, and composting were some of the many lessons learned in the class. We made a variety of simple reci-



The kids received cookbooks at the conclusion of the class, and a beautiful handmade ornament made from salt dough from our volunteer, Betsy!

Food Adventures

Our collaboration continues with the Food Adventures program, a collaboration with The Nutrition Center in Great Barrington. Together with Nerissa Bardfeld, Nutrition Educator at the Nutrition Center, we have met with several classes at Monument Valley Middle School, Williamstown Elementary School and Undermountain Elementary School. The funding the Nutrition Center received for Mount Everett Middle School and Williamstown Elementary School was made possible through the generosity of Berkshire Taconic Foundation. The grants received were the Williamstown Ele-

We have begun working with the Conte's Community School's Connected to Success After-school program. We met with students twice a week and focused on recipes and ingredients from various places, beginning with the Berkshires and how to prepare seasonal produce. Thanks to Hannah Bracken, the school's garden coordinator, the students worked with produce that was harvested from their own school garden. At the conclusion of the program, a showcase of the work from the after-school program was presented at the Berkshire Museum. Our Food Adventures students made vegetarian dumplings to serve to family and friends.

Kids Can Cook and DIY Kids Workshops

Our Kids Can Cook, free, monthly in-store workshops and DIY Kids continue to grow as we offer different ways of using a variety of ingredients and materials in our store. From bottle caps to applesauce jars, kids are making creative crafts in our café every second Friday of the month from 4-5 pm. Friday is also pizza night at the Co-op. Families are welcome to stay and eat freshly made pizza. What a way to end the week! This fall kids have made snack bags from old fabric, gift wrap and our most recent project, snow globes! Thank you to Amie Decker and Samantha Zepeda, our new Communications Associate, for helping to make this great idea come to life.

Our Kids Can Cook workshops take place every third Saturday of the month (subject to change) in the Café from 10-11 am. This workshop is open to children of all ages. This fall we have made a wide range of dishes for kids to try. We made carrot raisin coleslaw, a variety of healthy Halloween snacks, warming pumpkin soup, delicious whole wheat cookies and spiced hot chocolate. We have some great activities coming up this winter and spring. A full list of the workshops offered can be found on page 7

Upcoming Adult Workshops

The farmers at Community Cooperative Farms will be offering a variety of interesting workshops that will take place at Berkshire Co-op Market. Topics will include a discussion on food sovereignty and food systems and you; No till bed preparation, raw food preparation and gardening intensive are the workshops scheduled to take place this summer. Stay tuned for more details.



Get Unplugged

April will be here before we know it, and we will be working on our second annual Get Unplugged, which will take place at Berkshire South. What is Get Unplugged? It is a collaboration between the Berkshire Co-op Market and Berkshire South that takes place during a very important week in April – Spring Break! Another important date in this week is Earth Day, and it is also “National Turn Your TV Off Week” during the week of April 16th – April 20th. This is a weeklong series of free workshops for children ages 5-18. We are planning to offer even more workshops at this event than we did last year.

If you are interested in teaching a workshop or volunteering for the program, please contact Jenna Bronson or Jenny Schwartz at getunplugged@berkshiresouth.org

mentary School Endowment and The Berkshire Hills Funds for Excellence. At Monument Valley Middle School, we have specifically been working with Nick Van Sant and

Diane Arnold, the fifth- and sixth-grade science teachers, and middle school health teacher, Pat Boland, to incorporate our program into their curriculum. We have covered topics such as the reduction of packaging and choosing foods that have been minimally processed. For a hands-on experience, the students learned how to make refrigerator-pickled carrots. Other topics included the nutritional benefits of eating seasonal produce. Mrs. Arnold's science room was temporarily converted into a kitchen, where the kids made mashed butternut squash. Two weeks later we returned to discuss the importance of whole grains in the diet. Some kids experienced whole grain millet for the first time when we made vegetable millet cakes. Most recently, we met with students in Pat Boland's health class, where we compared the nutritional content of a kale chip to that of a potato chip. The kids made their own kale chips with nacho seasoning.

In November and December, Food Adventures traveled to Williamstown Elementary School, also promoting our neighboring co-op, Wild Oats Co-op in Williamstown, MA. The first grade classes worked to make a Food Adventures favorite, vegetable stir-fry with seasonal vegetables such as squash, carrots, garlic and broccoli. The kindergarten class worked to make another Food Adventures favorite, a sushi snack sandwich. We continued to focus on the importance of seasonal, local and organic produce and the nutritional content of the specific ingredients.

Food Adventures continues to work with children at Undermountain Elementary School during the school day. To meet the needs of the core curriculum standards, we placed an emphasis on geography. Each month we provided a different geography lesson, tracing ingredients and talking about their nutritional content. So far we have focused on Africa and Asia. We made sweet potato-chickpea fritters and tofu lettuce wraps.



pes that can be used for snacks, lunches and dinner. One of the favorites this semester was zucchini pizza bites, where we used fresh, local zucchini as the crust of this favorite child-friendly dish—a creative way of getting some green into your child's diet. For a simple snack we worked with the children to make popcorn flavored with a variety of seasonings. We collected small jars and they each made popcorn seasonings to give as a gift for the holidays. Other recipes made in the class were: butternut squash enchiladas with a mole sauce; spaghetti squash with roasted red peppers; lasagna cups; an apple brown betty, and whole wheat soft pretzels. After completing the recipes, we would eat together as a group, tasting what they made and allowing for a variety of reactions to the food. The finished products were met with a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down,” and room was left to discuss what they would do differently to make a particular dish more to their liking.

There was no shortage of assistance in the Eat Well and Learn program. Between our high school volunteer, Eve, youth mentors, volunteer mom Cathy Devoti, and volunteer Betsy Garcia from the Sheffield Senior Center, there were many helping hands to go around.

Community was the key word of this program and we made this happen in several ways. It was a goal to have aprons made for the children. Volunteers from Sheffield Senior Center agreed to make them, and Pine Cone Hill graciously donated some of their fashionable fabric. Thanks to the generous efforts of our community, the children and teachers received their aprons just in time to learn how to make potato latkes. Thank you to Judy Magenis, Martha Eggenberger, Marion O'Lean, Barbara Delmolino, Virginia Markum, Barbara Fletcher and Dorris VanDeusen for using your tremendous talents to make these beautiful garments.

The Eat Well and Learn program was one of three programs that benefited from the Co-op's dividend donations given out at annual meeting.

CO-OP KIDS

SCHEDULE

DIY KIDS teaches your kids to Do It Yourself. Workshops range from post-consumer arts & crafts to making homemade household items from all natural ingredients.

KIDS CAN COOK is our in-store healthy snacks program. Workshops explore healthy, easy to prepare recipes that are fun and educational!



DIY Kids: Collage Cap Locket - Friday, February 10th - 4:00 pm

Make your Valentine a special locket. We will be using old bottle caps to make this sentimental gift. Learn how to make collage materials with melted crayons to place inside. Take it home and place a picture of you and your valentine.

Kids Can Cook: Cherry Rice Crispy Treats - Saturday, February 18th - 10:00 am

Let's celebrate George Washington's birthday and the cherry tree he chopped down by making rice crispy treats with dried cherries and brown rice from our bulk department. It's President's Day weekend, let's celebrate by making this easy and healthy snack.

DIY Kids: Bird Habitat - Friday, March 9th - 4:00 pm

Birds need to eat too, and that becomes more difficult during the winter season when food is scarce. Learn how to make a bird habitat that you can take home and place outside. We will be using a nut butter to make these habitats; please be aware when signing up if your child has a nut allergy.

Kids Can Cook: Green Smoothie & Spinach Artichoke Dip - Saturday, March 17th - 10:00 am

Green smoothie and spinach and artichoke dip- get some greens into your diet and celebrate St. Patrick's day at the same time. We will be working on some tasty treats to get you into the holiday spirit.

DIY Kids: Potato Stamp Reusable Napkin - Friday, April 13th - 4:00 pm

In this workshop we will be using old fabric to make our own reusable napkin. Bring them to school. Keep them in your bag to use instead of paper napkins. We will be making our own potato stamps to decorate the napkins. Young children will need to be supervised by a parent. Please come dressed in "project-friendly" clothes. We will provide aprons for the children to wear.

Kids Can Cook: Deviled Eggs - Saturday, April 28th - 10:00 am

Celebrate spring by learning how to hard-boil eggs and make a tasty filling to go inside. A healthy snack that's packed with protein. Enjoyable for kids of all ages!

DIY Kids: Magazine Beads for Mother's Day - Friday, May 11th - 4:00 pm

Don't know what to do with all those magazines lying around the house? Come to the Co-op and learn how to make a simple paper bead that will make a great necklace to give to mom for Mother's Day.

Kids Can Cook: Spring Vegetable Frittata - Saturday, May 19th - 10:00 am

Spring is here and it's the beginning of the growing season. We will be making a popular breakfast dish using fresh, seasonal ingredients that are beginning to come from our local farms.



IN THE AISLES: A NEW FOCUS ON LOCAL

By Daniel Esko

Non-Perishables Manager

one thing is clear. We will sell a lot more local products this year than we did last year. The Co-op has been given a directive by our Board of Directors to continue to increase the local sales total in our store. And we intend to oblige. Frankly, we're tired of produce getting all the attention when it comes to local products. Sure, they support local farmers, and locally grown produce is better, fresher and tastier than the alternative. But center store has local products too, and we intend to stock more jams, jellies, sauces, dairy products, bars, juices, canned goods and anything else we can find from sources within one hundred miles of the Co-op.

Focus on Local

Last year, the Co-op sold over \$2 million in local products, 28% of the stores sales total. \$754,000 of that came from packaged grocery, dairy and frozen. In 2012 we are setting a goal to increase our numbers by at least 10%. Here's how:

We will offer at least one new local brand per month;

We will expand preexisting lines to include more items from our local vendors;

We will focus merchandising and marketing efforts on local products, including sale promotions, demos and product placement;

We will offer assistance to local vendors to help them get their products on our shelves.

What We've Already Done

Work toward these ends has already begun. We have been bringing in lots of new local brands and expanding our existing lines whenever possible. Here are some examples.

Fire Cider from Shire City Herbals in Pittsfield, MA (19 miles) has become a great seller and a wonderful addition to our shelves. The good folks at Shire City are always willing to visit and demo their products and, when they do, you should try their version of a traditional New England folk remedy.

People's Bakery Spelt Breads from Warwick, MA (61 miles) was a Co-op favorite some years back until they limited their distribution and could not deliver to Great Barrington. We were thrilled to bring them back a couple of months ago. Their breads are the softest and tastiest spelt breads we have ever sold.

Hawthorne Valley Farm strawberry and lemon yogurts from Ghent, NY (16 miles) have been a hot item in the dairy section since we brought them in. We always carried some of their yogurt, but we were eager to add flavored options in the 32 oz and 6 oz packages.

It's a few weeks into a new year. Around the packaged grocery department, that means it's time to define our goals for the coming year. As we do so,

Vermont Bean Crafters from Rutland, VT (99 miles) offers frozen black bean patties that are made from beans exclusively sourced from regional organic farms. They are an exciting alternative to their more processed, nationally distributed competition.

Klara's Gourmet from Lee, MA (15 miles) has added savory shortbreads to their existing cookie line. This one was especially fun for us because Klara brought these delicious devils to our managers meeting to use us as a test group. We offered advice on packaging, flavor profile and marketing, and then we got to sell the product in our store.

What We are Going to Do

And that's just the beginning. In the early part of 2012, you can expect to see a great deal of new local offerings in the aisles. We are working with Community Cooperative Farms, a local worker-owned produce supplier, to package, label and sell their homemade jams, applesauce and apple butter. We are also talking to Shaker Mountain Canning Company in New Lebanon, NY, about carrying a range of their products including tomato sauce, fruit spreads, pickles and more.

Why is Local Important?

As we continue to grow our local selection it is important to keep in mind that this is not just a marketing strategy. Local is, of course, the new organic. And all stores are trying to capitalize on the public's desire to buy local products, sometimes at the expense of authenticity. The Co-op is not in it for those reasons. As I wrote at the beginning of this article, our Board of Directors has mandated that we sell more local products, and they do this not for profitability of the store, but for value to our community as a whole.

It's a generally accepted fact that dollars spent locally tend to stay local, whereas dollars spent conventionally leave the area.

Most reports say that out of every dollar spent locally, between 30 and 35 cents leave the area. For that same dollar spent at a chain store or on nationally or internationally distributed products, about 60 cents will never be seen again in your town's economy. That's a pretty striking difference when you consider that the money you spend goes to feed families, employ neighbors and pave your streets, among countless other good causes.

So, come to the Co-op in 2012 to shop locally. Not only are we a local business, but we also sell more local groceries than anybody else in the area. We do it for the right reasons and we intend to do it a whole lot more.



SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: THE CO-OP MODEL

By Matthew Novik

As 2011 came to a close, my mind was drawn to social movements. In 2011 we saw one of the greatest surges in popular unrest this nation has ever seen. The Occupy Movement sparked the curiosity of the media and the public for months as nonviolent protesters showed their frustration with corporate greed by occupying public property all over the country. People were motivated to stand up for what they believed, and the 99% was gaining the interest of national and international media. But now, here we are, 2012. There are still people Occupying Wall Street. But most of the camps in cities around the country have been broken by police or have dwindled in numbers due to harsh winter weather. By this January, what was one of the biggest stories of 2011 can barely be seen in the media at all. But that doesn't mean that things have stopped happening. Planning is underway. A future is being planned. And hopefully those efforts, while not noticed by many people, will be the force that achieves change over the long term.

There is an inherent problem with many social movements today. In this sensationalistic media, it takes blood, guts, tears and turmoil to get in the news. Once the commotion subsides, the general public loses interest. The Occupy Movement was amazing. But, by its nature, it may have been somewhat unsustainable. Once it began to grow into something that can last, the nation stops paying attention. How do you create a movement that

can capture the imagination of today's sound bite culture while also sustaining the long-term presence that is necessary to make change happen?

There is another movement that "occupied" my life for most of 2011. This movement held very similar values to those held by the 99%. It's democratically controlled. It offers an



Photo from educationnews.org.

help but think about cooperators. Without much fanfare and no blood, sweat or tears, co-ops have been offering what the 99% want since the mid 1800s. But, for the most part, co-ops don't really get much atten-



Photo From www.holdrege.org.

alternative business model to traditional capitalism. It puts the health of the many over the health of the few. Unlike the Occupy Movement, this one has been around for a while — over 150 years, in fact.

I am, of course, talking about the Cooperative Movement. The whole time the nation was consumed with occupiers, I couldn't

tion. Even the people that support co-ops every day with their patronage are less than active in supporting co-ops with their words and passions.

You may not know it, but co-ops are everywhere (see page 4 for more on this). In the U.S. alone, co-ops own more than \$3 trillion in assets, create \$500 billion in revenue and pay \$25 billion in wages. According to the National Cooperative Business Association, there are 30,000 U.S. Cooperatives that operate 73,000 places of business nationwide. And every last one of them has a structure that offers an alternative to the

money first/money only version of capitalism that has created our current economic climate.

What co-ops don't tend to do is generate sensationalism. Therefore, co-ops have never been at the top of American minds. Co-ops have never been the story of the year, as the Occupy Movement was for 2011. But the quiet, organized, well-founded cooperative model that makes them invisible to the media and forgettable to the general public are the very qualities that make the movement as strong and sustainable as it is.

2012 has been named the International Year of Cooperatives by the United Nations. Never before has there been an international platform on which to display cooperative qualities. It will be a great year to be a Co-op owner. So, we ask you to hold these values up high this year, for everyone to see. Hopefully the nation will notice.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD: IT'S GOOD TO OWN

By Matt Syrett



The other day I was speaking to a new arrival in the Berkshires about how much they liked shopping at our co-op and all the good things the store stood for in the community. At the end of the conversation, I asked him if he had become an owner yet. He suddenly looked perplexed and asked why he would want to be an owner at the Co-op.

This is a good question and got me thinking about what ownership at the Co-op really means. It is easy to consider ownership just in terms of its immediate benefits: dividend checks; access to the buying club; local discounts; appreciation day, etc. These are all good and wonderful, but I would argue that they miss the real point of ownership at a cooperative market.

Ownership means that you are not standing passively by while others are making decisions about food in your community and on your table. By being an owner, you have a vote and an actionable stake in our future as a community. It is a small and important step in the right direction.

We are experiencing a food revolution at this moment where many of us are taking back the right to have an active role in how our food is produced and procured. The recent history of food production in our country has seen our nation becoming more and more passive about where and how our food is produced. We have all suffered because of our collective neglect as a few corporations have begun to make almost all the decisions about our food. To improve their bottom lines, these corporations have dropped the cost of food production while increasing our addiction to mindless eating. Good nutrition, local commerce and sustainability have been neglected in

this process. Change is now coming in the form of us taking back responsibility and control of our food in our communities and our homes. We can all be a part of this change.

There is a lot you can do to make this happen. You can start by creating a garden to feed your family, buying a local CSA share, changing how your local schools get their foods, supporting local food producers, and becoming an owner at the Co-op. The key is to stop being passive.

Last summer, my wife Cynthia directed a series of documentary segments for a Sesame Street primetime special on food insecurity in America (Growing Hope Against Hunger). What was incredible about the documentary was how each character affected by hunger reacted to the food stress. It gave me hope. Instead of just relying on handouts, each character now took control of their food insecurity and was doing things in their community to lessen their own food stress and the stress of others. They were participating in their own solution to feeding their families in hard economic times by gardening, volunteering, supporting farmers' markets in urban food deserts, and collecting foods for their local food bank. They stopped being passive.

Even if not similarly stressed, we should all aspire to a similar active approach to our food. The American ecologist Garrett Hardin in his work on the Tragedy of the Commons made the compelling argument that if we fail to take ownership as individuals of what goes on in our community and environment we risk being compromised by the selfish intents of the few who are willing to degrade that community and environment for their own gain.

I need to check back with my new Berkshire neighbor to see if he has become an owner. I hope he has, both for his sake and the sake of our community.

jovial[®]

inherently good

Jovial is a product line that is new to the store, but the ingredients they use are far from new. That is because they use heirloom grains in all their products. Actually, embedded in their mission is the promise to "rediscover the purest ancient and heirloom varieties of ingredients, replenish their supply and transform them into products that enhance nature's innate goodness." And we at the Co-op love this. They take seriously their efforts to support small businesses. This is why they promise to support small-family farmers and pursue a sustainable business model in which they are directly monitoring the growing, harvesting and processing in limited geographical areas to reduce their fossil fuel consumption.

The folks at jovial hold in high regard a love for good, healthy food options. More than unique ingredients is the goal for unique flavor. The search for heirloom grains uncovered an ancient form of wheat called einkorn, one of the first forms of wheat to be cultivated. Its first use dates back almost 10,000 years. By using heirloom ingredients and traditional methods, Jovial products are easily set apart from other products available in the United States.

All of the jovial product line is organic, and they take food allergies very seriously. They promise to "honor individuals with food intolerance by sourcing only the finest allergen-free ingredients to create delicious and wholesome foods they can enjoy with confidence." Pick up some Jovial pasta on your next visit to Berkshire Co-op Market.





My Faves

the co-op 50

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



Kira Smith Owner Services Manager

My Co-op 50

One thing people quickly learn when they meet me is that I am a very picky person when it comes to—well pretty much everything. I know what I like, but I also have an undying curiosity about anything food related. What I love about the Co-op is that there is always something great to try; something for everyone.

Bambu Coconut Bowl \$14.99 each - I love these bowls, especially the green (it is my favorite color after all). Not only do they look great, they are also lightweight and durable.

Badger Balm Classic Lip Balm \$2.99 each - This is a lip balm that actually works. It is made of organic extra-virgin olive oil, beeswax, aloe, sea buckthorn and rosehips, all of which moisturize and protect your lips. The company is from New Hampshire, so there is the added bonus of buying local.

Boulder Canyon Malt Vinegar Kettle Chips \$2.59 each - If you like salt and vinegar chips and you haven't tried these, do yourself a favor and try them. The malt vinegar really brings out the tart and sweet flavors. It always makes my day when I open a bag.

Crab Cakes from our Seafood Department \$3.99 each - Take 'n' Bake Seafood is new to the Co-op and so far it's been a success. As soon as I tried the crab cakes, I was hooked. Not only are they a tasty, sustainable, eco-friendly option for a quick meal, but you can prepare them in so many ways: sandwiches, salads or even on their own.

Fire Cider \$11.99 bottle - This has become a regular bottle in my fridge. I originally bought it to ward off cold and flu this season, also loving the fact that they are a local Berkshire County company. Since then I have found it has many more uses, from salad dressing to spicing up a bloody mary, or just as a quick pick-me-up.

Windy Hill Farm Pippin Apples \$1.99/lb - Fresh, local apples are my favorite snack. Paired with a good cheese, I couldn't be happier.

Plymouth (VT) Original Artisan Cheese \$9.49/cut - My mother used to call my sisters and me her "little dairy cows" because we all love cheese. Plymouth Original is a full-bodied, cows' milk cheese and one of our favorites. Its strong taste is great on grilled cheese or paired with apples.

Ronnybrook Whole Milk \$1.99/bottle - Those ads claim that California has the happiest cows in the world, but I have to disagree. The cows at Ronnybrook Farm in New York must be even happier because they make some of the best milk I have ever bought in a store. They also use glass bottles, which takes me back to when I was a kid and would wait for the milk to be delivered in the morning.

Total \$50.02

RECIPE RESOURCE

THAI FISH SOUP



Ingredients

- 3 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 half-inch piece of ginger, peeled and sliced
- 2 stalks lemongrass, peeled, trimmed and minced
- 1/2 cup fresh lime juice (about 3 limes)
- 2 medium jalapeños, seeded and diced
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce (or tamari)
- 1 cup carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 1/2 cups mushrooms, sliced
- 1 1/2 cups light coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons cilantro, minced
- 12 ounces white fish fillets (such as tilapia or flounder), cut into 2-inch wide pieces

Preparation

In a large stock pot, combine the broth, ginger, lemongrass, lime juice, jalapeños and fish sauce. Bring to a simmer and cook for about 10 minutes. Add the mushrooms, coconut milk, cilantro, and fish. Return to a simmer and cook for another 10-15 minutes until the fish is thoroughly cooked.

Serving Suggestions

Just add a spring roll appetizer to this main-dish soup for a quick meal. Substitute small chunks of extra-firm tofu for the fish, and use tamari instead of fish sauce for a vegetarian version. If you spot oyster mushrooms in the produce aisle, use these for an even more authentically Thai dish.

Total Time: 35 minutes

Servings: 4

Nutritional Information Per Serving:

Calories: 294, Fat: 12 g, Cholesterol: 46 mg,
Sodium: 1076 mg, Carbohydrate: 46 g,
Dietary Fiber: 2 g, Protein: 23 g

Recipe from strongertogether.coop

PROFILE OF A RENEGADE LUNCH LADY

Chef Ann Cooper is Taking Healthy School Lunches to New Levels

By Matthew Novik

Most of us remember school lunches. And, unfortunately, most of us also try to forget them. The Co-op has entered into a project at Monument Mountain Regional High School to address the quality and nutritional value of their food options. As I attended the meetings, I was flooded with memories. I went to Monument in the '90s but hadn't spent any time there since I graduated. Not much has changed. The furniture is the same, the lighting is the same, even the smell is the same. And, as it turns out, the school lunches are the same too.

Overprocessed, high-sugar, high-salt, low-quality food has been the hallmark of the National School Lunch Program for decades. And that's what most of us remember from our chicken nugget and Salisbury steak filled youth.

These days however, kids in California and Colorado are experiencing school lunches in a completely different way. And the woman they can thank is starting a revolution in school lunch production that is taking the country by storm.

Chef Ann Cooper was a highly trained celebrity chef before she wrote her first book *Bitter Harvest* in 2000, which started what became a lifelong investigation into the connection between food and health. A few years later, she became the head of nutritional services for the Berkeley, California, school system. It was with that job that the Renegade Lunch Lady was born.

Ann has spent the better part of the last decade attempting to improve the nutritional value of school lunches. What started in Berkeley soon traveled with her to the Boulder Valley School district in Colorado and has since become a national movement.

Cooper's message is simple. "What we're doing is at the same time so simple and so complicated," she said in a recent radio interview. "What we're trying to do is to get kids to eat better food. It's just that simple."

As most lunch ladies could tell you, this mission is no easy task. What seems simple is, as Ann tells us, very complicated. Lunch ladies are asked to provide nutri-

tious meals while coping with limited staff and adhering to strict National School Lunch Program requirements and subsidized food options. And, to top that off, they are expected to do that for somewhere around a dollar a plate!

"There are five big challenges in this. Food: Where you're going to get it. Finances: How are you going to pay for it? Facilities: What do you do if you don't have a kitchen? Human resources: What do you do to train your staff? Marketing: How do you get the kids to eat

Way We Feed our Children, a book dedicated to lessons and recipes to create a healthier community. In 2009, she founded Food Family Farming Foundation (F3) as a nonprofit focusing on solutions to the school food crisis. F3's pivotal project is The Lunch Box—a web portal that provides free and accessible tools, recipes and community connections to support school food reform.

Today, chef Ann is happily working overtime as a chef, nutrition services director, consultant, author, public speaker, and advocate because she sees a need for change and has the gifts to help. She envisions a time soon when being a chef working to feed children fresh, delicious and nourishing food will no longer be considered "renegade."

For more information:
www.chefann.com
<http://www.thelunchbox.org>
<http://www.foodfamilyfarming.org>



© Kirsten Boyer Photography

it?" Says chef Ann, "With all these changes and so little money, school districts have thrown up their arms."

But, challenges aside, Ann Cooper has figured out a way to do it. By increasing efficiency, reducing waste, simplifying meals, training staff and creatively using national subsidies, Ann has proven that not only is it possible to change school lunches for the better, it can be done within current budget expectations.

The Renegade Lunch Lady has turned on its head every assumption about the limits of the school lunch program and proved that not only will kids be healthier if they eat better food, but they'll enjoy it more too. In 2006, she published *Lunch Lessons, Changing the*

MONUMENT MOUNTAIN LUNCHES GETTING HEALTHIER

LUNCH cont. from page 1

one who had real sway on the public health agenda in this state. Our role was to join other local businesses and activists in showing community support for their efforts.

"The meeting went well," said Randolph, who appeared with Borden and two other students, Charlie Gibson and Kelt Wilska. "It was an excellent opportunity to raise a concern that we are beginning to understand is not unique to our district. Our ability to convey our understanding of the many layers and aspects of this project as well as our recognition of the difficulties and the lengths we must go to to learn more seemed to gain the respect of some powerful people locally and at the state level."

As the project continues to grow and mature over time, no one knows where it will end up. Nobody knows for sure if the students will be granted their exemptions or receive any support from the government. Nobody knows if the school's financial requirements will allow for more local and fresh food. With all that uncertainty, it's hard to really know where the project stands right now. But one thing is for certain. The Co-op will be there to help.

In our initial meeting with the students, before the state reps came to visit, we mentioned that we already



Photo by Kim Lopez

Reps Pignatelli and Sanchez at Monument Mountain Regional High School.

have a presence in the lower grades with our healthy snack cooking programs. Zoe smiled and said, "I know. I was in one of them."

"We always hope our programs have an effect on the kids over the long term," said Art Ames, General Manager of the Co-op. "It was really nice to meet a student who provides real evidence

of that and to know that participating in our programs as a young kid helped her to become a strong and health conscious young adult today. And now we get to help do the same kind of work in the high school. It's going to be a great project."



IN 2011
THE CO-OP SOLD

16,061 GALLONS
OF BULK FILTERED WATER

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

FRESH FOOD *Jeff Schilling*

Well, it finally happened. For longer than I care to admit, we have been talking about resetting our meat, cheese and to-go foods sections. And this January, it's finally in the works. As I write this, we are planning the biggest reset the store has ever seen. By the time you read this, it all *should* be done.

For those of you that think this kind of project is simple in a store like ours, I invite you to really think about it. We are moving and expanding *four* major refrigerated sections of our store. The amount of planning, organizing and coordinating that needs to go into a project like this is simply staggering. This is especially true when you have the kind of space restrictions we have here.

We ended up hiring a meat and seafood consultant as a project manager of sorts to help us do the project right. Pete, formerly a co-op buyer from Northampton, has been a blessing in this project. We actually started the reset before Thanksgiving when we revamped our Seafood Department. With Pete's help, we launched a sustainable seafood program along with prepared seafood items like crab cakes and Cajun catfish.

Now it's time to do the meat section. In short, it goes like this. Deli meats move to the cut meats section, the cut meats section gets expanded and goes to the cheese section, the cheese goes to the to-go section, the to-go section goes to the produce, drink and bakery section, and the drinks and bakery section gets consolidated from two sections to one. You got that? Good, because I'm not going over it again.

Anyway, barring any more delays, this should all be done by the time this newsletter goes to print. Please let us know how you think it went.

GROCERY *Daniel Esko*

New Items



SeaSnax chipotle and onion seasoned nori sheets: These are a delicious addition to the existing SeaSnax line that so many have come to enjoy at the Berkshire Co-op. They are very low in sodium, and free of gluten, fat and sugar.



We recently added **jovial** einkorn cookies. These are all-organic cookies made from einkorn, the most ancient wheat variety in the world. It was first cultivated about 10,000 years ago in the dawn of agrarian society. These are "adult" cookies that seem to emanate an air of sophistication not found in your run of the mill chocolate chip cookie (See page 9 for more on jovial).

Pachamama coffee is in the house! "The Pachamama Coffee Cooperative of Small-Scale Coffee Producers (Pacha) is a farmer-owned cooperative organization based in the United States. Formed in 2001, Pacha is wholly owned by thousands of family farmers in Peru, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico and Ethiopia. Farmer-owners send their best organic coffee to the USA, where it is fresh-roasted in small batches and delivered straight to customers. Pacha's mission is to provide customers with premium coffee in the most direct way possible and, in doing so, improve the lives of small-scale farmers and their families." Pachamama means "mother world" in the indigenous Peruvian language called Aymara. We have four varieties in our selection: Farmers' blend; French Roast; Peruvian, and Five Sisters blend.



FARMER-OWNED

Staffing

There's a new face in the Grocery Department. We would like to warmly welcome Devan Arnold to the Co-op family. You can see Devan working hard in the aisles on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Devan is a musician, videographer, and "green thumb," who enjoys cultivating plants. He can also be found videotaping town meetings and other community happenings for CTSB in a southern Berkshire town near you!

Food Policy in Action:

The January Co-op Deals flyer included a product called Think Thin Bars. We decided against bringing it into the store because it contains non-organic soy protein which makes the product more at risk to contain genetically modified ingredients. Through our new food/product policy, we have committed to not introducing any new items in the store that could potentially contain genetically modified ingredients. The following food ingredients are at high risk for contamination if not sourced organically: soy, corn, canola (rapeseed), sugar (beet), and cottonseed (although that is seldom, if ever, used in organic and natural foods).

Reset/Merchandising News:

In bulk, we have added many new items over the past two months, such as wasabi peas, milk chocolate peanut sun drops, Bhutanese red rice, Oriental snack mix, jolly beans, Diamond real salt, cold cereals (multi-grain flakes, golden flax crunch), new

PRODUCE *Andrei Smerechniak*

What Happened to My Clementines?

You might have noticed that a holiday favorite was absent this season. No, Santa still made his rounds. But our co-op was lacking the annual appearance of boxed clementines, a perennial top seller during the holidays. Why would we remove an item that was so popular with customers? Why would we deny ourselves bonus sales? Because of our Food & Product Policy, that's why.

In June, we published the latest version of the Berkshire Co-op Food & Product Policy. In the produce section, we made it clear that all of our non-local produce would be certified organic unless there was no organic alternative available. This was always a general intention, with few exceptions—including boxes of clementines. Because we believe in our policy, we pulled a proven holiday seller from our shelves.

What did we do instead? Funny you should ask. We were able to source organic satsumas and clementines. But they were more expensive than our previous product and didn't represent the best we had to offer.

What else? We got a great deal on organic kiwis and were able to offer them to our customers for fifty cents each. Could kiwi be the new clementine? Maybe, but there was something else that filled the void even better.

We focused on introducing you to the Cara cara navel orange. These medium-size oranges are sweet, low in acid and have a more complex flavor than most citrus that includes hints of cherry, rose petal and blackberry. In other words – they are wonderful! We offered Cara caras throughout the holiday season and customers loved them. Nobody even remembers those silly old-fashioned clementines.

Our policies are what make the Co-op special. And we hope every time we remove popular products for the right reasons that we get the same type of support as shown this winter. Here's hoping you have a happy new year filled with delicious Cara cara oranges!

WELLNESS & GM *Brenna St. Pierre*

Greetings from Wellness! Our department is full of new items for the new year, as we have been working on bringing in products our customers requested. You will have noticed quite a difference in our face care section, with the addition of W.S. Badger Company's beautifully pure Damascus Rose Facial Oil and Beauty Balm, and the MyChelle and Suki lines. I am very happy to bring in these much-requested lines. Suki is made locally in Northampton, MA, and is pure from the roots up. Ninety-nine percent of the Suki products have a wild-crafted rose infusion as their base, instead of water, to provide potency at the foundational level. We are thrilled to make room for such terrific, local products.

We continue to work on expanding our local selection here in Wellness, both among the beauty products and supplements. One of our favorite local brands is Vibrant Health, the makers of Green Vibrance, right down the road in Canaan, CT. You will now find their terrific joint formula, Joint Vibrance, on our shelves. This intense formula has everything the body needs for building healthy joints and we welcome further inquiry about it. We are also working on permanently offering the newest and largest size of Green Vibrance, the kilo size, and the Green Vibrance capsules, for the best greens on the go!

Valentine's Day is fast approaching and we're happy to help you select the perfect gifts for the ones you love. HimalaSalt massage stones, salt scrubs and cups are beautiful local options. Botanical coconut oils, bubble baths, candles and scarves are also great gifts. And if that doesn't do it, Urban Moonshine's Chocolate Love Tonic will help turn any steely heart soft. We're also glad to offer vegan condoms from Sir Richard's Condom Company. Most condoms are made with a dairy byproduct in the lubricant, but Sir Richard's are animal free and come in wicked plaid packaging.

Lastly, I would like to thank the customer that suggested we order Party In Your Pants Pads. These fabric pads, in cotton, flannel and organic cotton, will help you eliminate the need for disposables with style. Their designs are fantastic and the fold and snap feature makes for sanitary transport. We have demo pads available. The selection is incredible from size to fabric to pattern; there is something for everyone.

We hope everyone is well in the new year, but if it isn't quite so bring your questions and curiosity to the Wellness corner. We're here to help.

organic and gluten-free pastas, honey roasted peanuts, sprouted green lentils and mung beans, germinated brown rice and sprouted quinoa, among others. Stop on by the corner to check out the new items, and be on the lookout for more items in 2012.

In the aisles, we will be revamping the household goods section (bathroom, laundry, detergent, etc.). Look for a slimmed down selection as we minimize duplication, add some new items that will enhance the section, and make some price adjustments to help the items in this category be more competitive with other area markets.

That's all for now from the center store. See you all at the Co-op!