



The Compost

WILLIMANTIC
FOOD
CO•OP

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Summer 2015

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STORE HOURS:

Monday - Saturday
9:00am - 8:00pm

Sunday
9:00am - 6:00pm

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Co-op Scoop *Alice Rubin*

Spring has finally sprung and summer is knocking at the door. I have never seen so clearly the value of snow as fertilizer – the flowers this spring have been particularly abundant... and a very welcome sight. Now that we are a bit further along in the season, vegetables are beginning to emerge as well - another welcome sight amidst the news of drought and avian flu that has me wondering what food prices and availability will look like in the next year. This uncertainty makes it all the more important that we put as many resources as we can into supporting the production of local food. Millions (44.7 million, if you can believe what you read) of birds have already been killed in the mid-west because of the avian flu, and I have heard that egg rationing has begun. This is not likely to happen here in the Quiet Corner where most farmers have small flocks that are cared for more like pets than livestock. The Co-op buys eggs from over 20 different farms, some with as few as 12 birds.

Last year was a record year for start-up farms in our state, giving us hope for an increase in food production. I am also hoping for a repeat of the perfect crop producing weather that we were lucky enough to get last year, but I am not counting on it. And, while we went for almost a month without rain in May, it seems like the water table has been able to maintain itself, thanks to the (excessive) snow that we were lucky enough to have melt.

Grow Windham, our local youth food growing contingent is going strong. They recently helped to plant containers full of vegetable plants for the residents of Windham Heights. Now they are busy planting their many gardens—and you will be able to meet the Squash Squad in person at the Willimantic Farmers' Market later in the season.

CLiCK, the newly opened commercial kitchen in Willimantic, is up and running; the Co-op has been working with several of the new businesses that are cooking out of the CLiCK kitchen. Nourish makes freshly prepared vegan salads, sandwiches, and sweets that are available in our Grab and Go case. Bloom Foods has created a line of economical mixes for soup, bread, and pizza crust that helps you to eat well even when you don't have a lot of time. These products can be found throughout the store. We are excited to have these locally-produced foods on our shelves. And, we are excited to be part of new businesses in our community that are creating jobs, and keeping more of our food dollars here in our home. The Co-op has made a commitment to help source ingredients and sell them at close-to-cost for these start ups, as well as to sell their products here. We want these new businesses to succeed! We want more locally-made, delicious food! 🌱

Willimantic Food Co-op

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Kristin Fortier

Front End Manager

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Produce Manager

Bruce Oscar

Facilities Manager

Steve Scanlon

Grocery Manager

Patty Smith

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Member Scan Cards *Alice Rubin*

Hold on to your hats!!! Our new, beautiful, scan-able Member-Owner cards are ready to go! We will be handing them out at the registers starting on July 6. Our front end staff will make this process go quickly and smoothly, but we will also have additional staff on hand to sort out any messes and answer any questions.

Here's what the process will look like:

We've transferred our membership database into our new system, and all members will be assigned a new member account number that will be printed on your new member card/key tag combo. For the purposes of implementing our new system, all member-owners fall into one of three categories, depending on equity status:

Paid in Full Member-Owner = you've paid \$120 in equity.

Active Member-Owner = current on equity payments, and your last payment was made any time after December 31, 2012.

Inactive Member-Owner = you've paid less than the full \$120 equity requirement, and you haven't made a payment since December 31, 2012.

Paid in Full and Active Member-Owners will be in our new system. When you come to the cash register and tell the cashier that you are a Co-op member, the cashier will look you up in the new system by last name. The cashier will confirm that your contact info (name, address, phone number, and email address) is current and will update it, if necessary. The cashier will then inform you of your equity status: whether you are paid in full, or how much equity you still owe, and when the next payment is due. (The Co-op's equity payment policy is that members make annual equity payments of \$20 until the full equity requirement of \$120 is paid in.) Then the cashier will issue you a new member-owner card/key tag combo with your new member-owner number. From then on, whenever you shop the cashier will scan your card or look you up by last name.

Inactive Member-Owners will not be in our new system. When you come to the cash register and tell the cashier that you are a Co-op member, the cashier will look you up by last name in the new system. If your name is not found, it means that your last equity payment was made on or before December 31, 2012, and so, your account is technically "inactive." However, your account will still be in our old system, and your equity still belongs to you. At this point, you have two options: either choose to end your membership and request a refund or activate your account. Either way, the cashier will refer you to the customer/member service desk where you will be well taken care of.

- If you would like to activate your account, you'll need to make a \$20 equity payment. The cashier will refer you to the customer/member service desk where we will look you up in our old system, update and transfer your account information,



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What's Growing in Windham? From the Windham Garden Patch *Sally Milius*

Yesterday, I received phone calls from two community members: one who was looking for plants, and another who wanted to donate her extras. We decided to meet over at Lauter Park for an impromptu plant swap. I had other plants as well, from local greenhouses - Alice's, EO Smith High School, Annie Vinton Elementary - and so invited other local community gardeners to come help themselves. The only cost: to commit to donating some of the harvest to the Covenant Soup Kitchen.

It was a fun afternoon: plants changed hands; hundreds of pounds of food will be grown and donated; and, most importantly, relationships were built. One of the community gardeners is a photographer, who wants to photograph the pea blossoms and chard in the WAIM Community Garden for our Facebook page; another is a new community member with a PhD in nutrition, who is excited to volunteer with our youth program this summer.

This year has been all about making connections. Some of them have been small and personal, like our afternoon at Lauter Park. Others have had a broader impact. In the Windham Public Schools, our work has connected classrooms to cafeterias and afterschool programming. The lessons that we have developed with teachers are also being integrated into the new district science curriculum. Windham has become a regional leader in garden-based programming: our phone started ringing last fall, with neighboring school districts asking for support developing similar programming. Kate Callahan, now director of K-8 Programs at Grow Windham, received a grant from the SBM Charitable Foundation to lead a series of regional school garden workshops next year.

GROW Windham's high school program, the Windham Youth CORE, led by FoodCorps Service Member Bernadette Brandt, has also made its own connections, with youth participants creating satellite projects at their schools and with other regional youth programs. This summer, our program will

culminate in a two-week internship program where participants will serve at local farms and agencies, learning job skills and finding ways to integrate our priorities and programs.

On a larger scale, Ricardo Alavez, GROW Windham's CT Food Justice Youth Corps VISTA Service Member, has spent the year building the Windham Community Food Network, a collaboration of community members, agencies, and stakeholders working to identify projects that meet local needs using local resources. We hosted an exciting series of Community Dialogues last winter, that resulted in six working groups focused on increasing local production, promoting community integration and communication, community education, improving local food access, and improving community health.

Some projects are already underway: Plant-a-Row, mentioned above, has taken off, with over thirty community members committed to donating part of their garden harvest this summer. The local production group organized a planting workshop at the Village Heights Housing Complex, where students from UConn's Spring Valley Student Farm worked with community members to create container gardens at their apartments. The communication group is developing a "Mobilize Windham" Guide, for

local organizations and groups to use to help to get the word out about community events and opportunities. The education group is organizing a community-wide Healthy Windham Initiative, that will engage individuals, businesses and organizations to take a pledge to making changes that will result in a healthier community. And the food access group, supported by the Windham Youth Core, will pilot a "Community Food Share" project this summer, which provides monthly produce "shares" to families that have been given "produce prescriptions" through the Generations Family Health Center.

We'd love to have you join us, whatever your interests or skills, either to support one of the projects or to come celebrate with us at CLiCK (14 Club Road) on August 29th, for a Salsa Festival and Community Food Share. 🌱



Winky's Food Review *Winky Gordon*

On my table and in my kitchen, I have these foods for this review: dried chili lime mango from *Tierra Farms*; the remains of a *Not Your Sugar Mamas* salted caramel chocolate bar; potato salad from local business *Nourish*; a black bean brownie, also from *Nourish*; roasted red pepper brown rice crackers by *Food Should Taste Good*.

Randomly, I will start with the dried chili lime mango (\$12.99/lb., in the bulk foods aisle). Weird, you say. Well...you're right. Weird but not without merit, like many things in this life. At first taste I thought, "This was a mistake." As you may know, I am generally not a fan of hot foods, so why would I try this product? First, it's just so novel I had to. Second, I wanted to try it out on neighbor Joe (you may remember him from previous episodes), who practically eats hot sauce on ice cream, he loves hot that much. His comment was on the order of "It would be best in cooking," with which I agree. I can imagine using this product, chopped, in Indian-inspired cooking, or with fish. However, my great inspiration came last night: what about with chocolate? I am here to tell you that I tried it and it works! We've got chocolate with lemon, chocolate with fruit, chocolate with chili. And how about chocolate with all three? Sheer brilliance. It could also be used solo as a pick-me-up sweet snack; the chili-lime is definitely alerting. It's in my "odd but usable" category. Its all-organic ingredients are: dried mango, lime juice, chili powder, paprika. Let me know if you come up with other uses or combinations for this food.

Segue to the *Not Your Sugar Mamas* (\$7.99/2.2 oz bar) salted caramel chocolate, made on idyllic Martha's Vineyard. It is "free of refined sugar... anti-immune boosting... 100% made with love." It will improve your looks and make you smarter. Okay, I made that last bit up. The young women who developed and produced this product have gone to great lengths to make this a "kick-ass superfood," and I believe the "made with love" part. Their perky web site tells how and where they have sourced all their ingredients, which include these organic ones: raw cacao powder and butter, coconut nectar, maple syrup, almond butter, raw coconut oil, vanilla. It also contains Himalayan sea salt. Considered healthy fats, the cacao butter and coconut oil make this a much creamier chocolate than most I've tasted. The raw cacao powder makes it taste stronger than the 68%

cacao content listed on the label, which I like. The texture created by these unadulterated ingredients may be a turn off to those who are not die hard

chocolate fans. But to this dedicated chocolate lover, the texture adds to the adventure of this product. Because of the cost, I'm afraid it will not be a staple in my cupboard. But I would definitely eat it again, gladly. We also carry *Not Your Sugar Mamas'* coconut crunch and ginger pomegranate chocolate bars.

On to the potato salad (\$4.99/8 oz. package) and the black bean brownie (\$2.49/2.5 oz. bar), both made by *Nourish*, in idyllic Willimantic. Yes, Willimantic, in the kitchen at CLiCK, the Community Licensed Cooperative Kitchen out on Club Road. Who knew you could make a "mayonnaise" with cashews, sunflower oil, lemon juice, mustard, vinegar and sea salt? The clever people at *Nourish*, whose tag line is "A plant based alternative." In addition to red potatoes and the cashew mayo, this salad also contains celery, scallions, dill (all veggies grown at Tobacco Road Farm in Lebanon), as well as salt and pepper. Alice Rubin loves it. It's fairly mild, but not bland, and is likely to please even those who don't eat "health food." You could bring a large dish of it to a picnic with diverse guests and it would be eaten up.

The black bean brownie will pass that same test. I will admit I was skeptical, fearing an unsatisfying version of the beloved brownie. This discriminating chocolate lover was satisfied, however. It's made with black beans - of course - cocoa powder, coconut sugar, rolled oats, maple syrup, coconut oil, and chocolate chips as well as vanilla extract, baking soda, sea salt, and stevia. It's moist, is distinctly chocolate - not just an approximation - and the chips give it both extra pizzazz and a bit of crunch. And there's no gluten. Hurrah! It's an excellent price and will probably make it onto my list of occasional treats at the Co-op. Check out *Nourish's* other products in our prepared foods cooler: roasted beet salad, baked doughnuts, chocolate pudding among them.



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Willimantic Farmers' Market *Stephanie Clark*



The market season kicks off for the Willimantic Farmers' Market on Saturday, May 23rd from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. There will be a wide range of healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables, potted plants, eggs from local hens, baked goods and jams, goat's milk soap and hot breakfast prepared onsite for customers to purchase. Thanks to a grant from the USDA to improve the market, there will be a number of free family events planned throughout the season. Kids' days are scheduled for the second Saturdays of the month, with activities geared toward children. We will also offer Cooking Demonstrations every fourth Saturday of the month starting in June. The foods prepared will use fresh, local produce and recipes will be made available to market customers. To stay informed of market events, please visit the website: www.willimanticfarmersmarket.org.

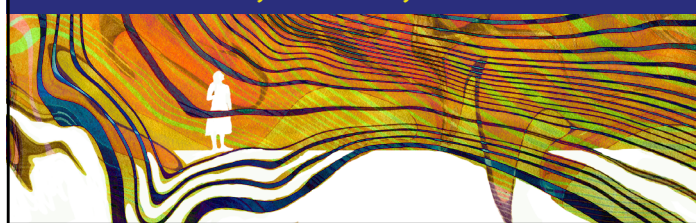
This year, the market is fortunate to offer Double Dollars to our SNAP recipients, thanks to a grant from Wholesome Wave of Bridgeport. When a customer spends \$10 from their EBT Connect Card they will receive \$20 in fresh, local fruits and vegetables. This is an incredibly important program that supports both the health of low-income community members and the economy of local farmers. This program has been extremely effective at other Farmers' Markets across the country, and we're happy to bring it to Willimantic.

We're looking forward to a busy market season of connecting with our community and of course, eating the best of what Northeastern Connecticut has to offer. 🌱

Stephanie Clark is the Willimantic Farmers' Market Master., Stephanie.clark@growwindham.org, 07-761-4091

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FOOD REVIEW, continued from page 4

While I do like the *Food Should Taste Good* roasted red pepper crackers (\$4.39/4.25 oz. box), I am disappointed to have read the ingredients. Brown sugar is second. Oh...that's what makes them so good. They also contain: whole grain brown rice flour, rice flour, brown rice flour (now I'm a little confused), high oleic canola oil, and dried red bell peppers, as well as several other ingredients. For a rice cracker, they've got good texture – not too grainy – and you can taste the bell peppers. I ate 'em plain, just as a snack. I'm sure they'd be good with roasted red pepper hummus, some cheeses, and whatever other food likes a sweet cracker to go with it. We also carry this company's sea salt crackers and tomato basil crackers. As an interesting aside: while

its parent company, General Mills, has fought the labeling of GMO foods, this line has taken the stance of not including GMO ingredients in its products. Curious politics, eh?

Until the next episode of this Food Review, I am signing off for now, dear Co-op members, shoppers, and lovers. Eat well, live well, and be kind to one another. 🌱

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Get to Know Your Co-op Staff Members

Sasha Bajjo-Fournier

As you can see when you shop, the Coop employs a motley crew of staff from a variety of backgrounds, and with a lot of different experiences to share. But, maybe you haven't put a name to all the faces you've seen around our store. Here are just some of our newer staff members:

Paula joined the Coop staff as a cashier ten months ago, and loves to share her passion for gourmet food and confections. Her favorite item in our produce department right now is Strawberries. When she's not at the Coop working, Paula enjoys cooking, gardening, cleaning, landscaping, and is working on starting her own business.



Paula

Wendy has been working as a cashier and Wellness team member for six months, and brings experience from years working in Produce and retail. Her favorite item in our produce department right now is Rainier Cherries, and she thinks they're Delicious! When she's not working at the Coop, Wendy likes to be outside as much as possible, including gardening and hiking.



Wendy

Louisa has been working at the Coop as a cashier for one and one-quarter years; her zeal for raw produce inspires all around her to try many items in our produce department, and get creative in preparing fresh fruits and veggies. Her favorite item from produce right now is English Peas. When she is not working at the Coop, Louisa likes sewing, pattern making, and running.



Louisa

Jessica started working at the Coop as a cashier two months ago. She shares her years of experience and zest for learning new things like gardening and cooking. Her favorite items in produce right now are Celeriac and Berries. When she is not working at the Coop, Jessica works at two other jobs, works out, and goes bike riding.



Jessica

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MEMBER SCAN CARDS, continued from page 2

including all previously paid equity, to the new system. You'll make your \$20 equity payment to activate your account, and we will issue you your new member-owner card/key tag combo.

- If you would like to end your membership and request a refund of your equity, you'll fill out a refund request form, and we will mail you a check within a month.

As with any new system, there are bound to be some snags. If you hit a snag, please let me know so that we can sort it all out. The trust that our Member-Owners have put in the Co-op by investing equity is important to the Co-op, and we believe that this new system will serve us well in keeping track of the money that all of you have invested in the Willimantic Food Co-op.

Thanks. 🌱

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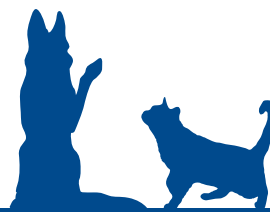
The Willimantic Downtown Country Fair...is in the works, and we could use some help! Our core group consisting of Sarah Keleher, Ursula Roskoski, Angela Walker, Johnnie Walker and myself have met twice to get all of our ducks in a row – you know, the basics - the date (Sunday October 4th) and who is responsible for what. We have it pretty much covered, but we thought we could use some new people on the committee. It is a great event - a perfect day to hang out with your friends, make new ones, have some good food to eat and learn more about your community. There are also many wonderful handmade items to shop for. It could be even better! So if you have some ideas, time and energy you would like to put into our fair please send me an email or call the Co-op (860 456-3611). It is a great way to earn a working discount to boot. ~Alice

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Local Honey Shoutout

Sasha Bajjo-Fournier

That's right Coop Members, as the weather gets warmer, we're seeing and feeling the effects of allergens around us, but there is a way to ease some of the discomfort, and it is.... Local Honey!

When the snow melts, old leaves and debris are exposed to fresh breezes, lawns start getting cut regularly, and allergens are released into the air that may affect some of us by way of itchy eyes, runny noses, throat tickles, coughs, and the dreaded sinus congestion. Thankfully, our local bees are kind enough to share their homemade superfood with us, and with the use of their honey (pollen, nectar, and enzymes), we can gradually develop a personal remedy against our common allergies. When bees cross-pollinate flowers, they collect spores from a host of plants surrounding the area they gather in. When these spores are combined with the nectars, pollens, and bee-provided enzymes, we consume them in our local honey, and thus build up an inflammation resistance. That way, when we come

in contact with our local allergens again, our immune systems do not have the same over-reaction to these elements, and we can enjoy the landscapes and scents around us with ease and pleasure. A teaspoon of local honey a day is all you need, and while outward results are not always immediate, the internal benefits start adding up right away. We carry local honey from A&Z Apiaries in Hampton, CT, in a number of sizes and great prices. A squeezable 12 oz. honey bear is \$5.99, a 1lb. glass jar is \$7.29, and 1lb. glass jar of Raw honey is \$10.99. There are also larger glass jars of honey available, in addition to the same local honey being sold in the bulk aisle for \$5.25 per pound. Buzz on down and try some local honey this season.

Be Well! 🐝

