



The Compost

**WILLIMANTIC
FOOD
CO-OP**

Vol. 37, Number 4

Late Fall 2015

**91 Valley Street
Willimantic, CT 06226
860.456.3611**

info@willimanticfood.coop

www.willimanticfood.coop

STORE HOURS:

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

Sunday
9:00am - 6:00pm

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Co-op Scoop *Alice Rubin*

Here we are again, heading into the holiday season, heading into winter. Time sure does fly when you are having fun. And we have been having lots of fun at the Co-op. Our staff has really pulled together and stepped it up a notch, working hard to make the Co-op a great place to shop and work. Sasha has jumped in as Front End Manager, and is doing a great job mixing attention to detail with one of the most positive attitudes known to human kind. Avery is switching gears from Produce into the Bulk department, and Wendy has stepped into Avery's full time Produce job. Jesse took on Wendy's part time Produce position while still keeping some of his Front End hours. Paula has stepped up as full time Shift Leader, and rounding it all out is Kara, who will now be working in the Wellness department – where Wendy used to work. All of these changes also meant that we had to hire more Front End staff....It is an exciting time here at the Food Co-op! We have dubbed this shifting of jobs the Great Staff Shuffle of 2015. I think we will all be feeling the excitement of the staff as they take on new responsibilities and bring new ways of looking at things to the Co-op.

We are also excited about the home stretch of another successful year at the Co-op. While we don't yet know what the bottom line will be at the end of the year, we are pretty sure we will have made some money. When we do end up with a profit at the end of the year, we try to be as generous as possible in sharing our profit with the community. The past few years we have been able to make donations to a number of non-profits that benefit many of those in need. This year, I would like to start a new tradition that allows our member-owners to help decide where that money goes. I think it will work like this... when you shop at the Co-op, you will be given a wooden nickel. You can then 'vote' with that wooden nickel by placing it in the jar of your choice in the café area. There will be a jar for the Covenant Soup Kitchen, the No Freeze Hospitality Center, and the Holy Family Shelter. All of these are non-profits that are right here in Willimantic. There will also be a jar with a place to write in other non-profits you would like the Co-op to donate to. I am not sure how much we will have, but we will divvy it all up according to the number of wooden nickels in the jar.

Good wishes for a wonderful winter —*Alice* 🍷

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What's Growing in Windham?

From the GROW Windham Garden Patch *Sally Milius*

In case you don't make it to the end of this story, here's the good news: we just received funding to build a "Community Farm" in Lauter Park, Willimantic. The grant came from the CT DEEP, to the Town of Windham, and it will be used to enhance the existing WAIM Community Garden, and create a new half-acre production garden in the same park. Combined, this "Farm" will be a place for youth, university students, and community members from all walks of life to grow produce to share with residents in Windham. We are just beginning the planning process, and welcome you to join us as a "Friend of the Farm", either to help with logistics, volunteer labor, or to contribute financial support.

For those of you who haven't had the chance to visit, the WAIM Community Garden is a really special place. It's in Lauter Park, on a gentle hillside overlooking the Natchaug River. WAIM has maintained it, with the support of the Town, for almost 20 years, and it is totally Windham: diverse, humble, and resilient.

There are three parts to the garden: the plots—24 total, maintained by individual gardeners and families representing 8 different nationalities; a large communal garden, 75' x 100', maintained by volunteers, that generates over 1000 pounds of produce each season to donate to the Covenant Soup Kitchen and the Access Food Pantry; and, a youth garden, maintained by GROW Windham's high school program, the Windham Youth CORE, where local kids grow food to sell at the Willimantic Farmers' Market.

Last fall, the Youth CORE outgrew their youth garden space, so we asked the Town of Windham if we could extend the communal garden to give them more area to cultivate. We met Scott, from Public Works, over at the garden, and he said of course, and asked how they could help. He then mentioned that there was a nice sunny flat space down by the river that they had been meaning to offer us, and did we want that as well?

We did. We tested the soil, and once that was clear, started figuring out how to get water to the site. Windham Water Works stepped in and said they'd be happy to help, if we could pay for materials. So we started looking around for funding. The State DEEP grant was a perfect fit. We supported the Town to apply, and now have funds to build the site.

Next up is to build the programming to sustain it. That's where you come in. For more information, contact us at info@growwindham.org, 860-423-4534 x312.

I talk to colleagues from other towns, and they are often amazed at how well we all work together—Town, Agencies, Schools, Businesses like the Coop, and residents like you—all collaborating to make good things happen. So if you weren't already proud to be part of this community, think again. 🌱



Hello from the Board *Kathleen Krider*

Thank you to everyone who was able to participate in the survey that took place back in September. Our intention was simply to gather some basic demographic information that would become part of a larger market study that we commissioned our consulting organization (Cooperative Development Solutions/CDS) to conduct for us. What we got back was an experience far richer than we could have imagined. The Coop's front end staff was amazing to work with-- what a professional and pleasant group of people. And all of you, member-owners and non-members alike, who took the time not just to answer the two questions but to ask a few more, say wonderful things about your shopping experience and give us the kind of feedback we don't often get. The experience informed us such that we may choose to use a survey method in the future for communication with our shoppers.

The reason for the two-question survey was to inform the market study about where our shoppers come from (predominantly) and what "kind" of shoppers they are (walkers vs. drivers, lunch vs. household groceries, multiple time shoppers vs. once a week, etc). This information was then added to a much more detailed bunch of information that comes from data sources that exist about our community at large. Things like how much "natural food" competition we have in our surrounding area, how large our "trade area" is, and what the population base of that trade area is. It is information that might seem irrelevant until you develop a business plan- a must for all major

funders (like banks). While we appear to be utilizing a "data collection" system now via our POS (we aren't using the POS for that purpose, and Patty has done a great job of explaining that in the last newsletter), the POS wouldn't have allowed us to survey non-members, an important number of shoppers at the coop.

We haven't written that business plan, yet. We have been given the market study (it has a name: it's called "An Analysis of Present Performance") in its final form and are just beginning to teach each other what it all means, and how to use the information to help develop our next steps-- steps not limited to researching real estate, understanding proformas, and reviewing the current store location for increased performance. Fortunately, some of us on the board have day jobs that are really helpful towards making sense of a heady, somewhat sensitive, and noisy document.

Those day jobs are just that, and having people on the board who are committed to reducing the noise and making good sense of the work is important. The board wants to do a good job communicating information to the member-owners. That means, at the very least, being disciplined and mature about how information is conveyed, having a well-formatted agenda, using the tools of Roberts Rules and cooperative leadership, attending training to help us 'make good sense of the work', understanding our legal responsibility to the membership while finding ways to get out all that there is to get out, and in a way that you can receive it. Being on a board, any board, is not an idle position. There is always a new leading-edge and we are happy to be learning for everyone's sake. ¶

★ *The Willimantic Food Co-op is thankful for our local farmers* ★

Tobacco Road Farm
Lebanon

Shunduhai Farm
Storrs

Wayne's Organic Garden
Oneco

Sweet Acre Farm
Lebanon

Himmelstein Farm
Lebanon

Hurst Farm ~Andover

Provider Farm ~Salem

Crocker Farm ~Ashford
Abington Grown
Abington

New England Green
Tolland

High Hill Orchard
Meriden

Bluebird Hill Farm
Lebanon

High Springs Orchard
Woodstock

Burnap Brook Farm
Andover

Mountain Dairy
Mansfield

Baldwin Brook Farm
Canterbury

Oak Leaf Dairy
Lebanon

Mystic Cheese
Lebanon

Beltane Farm
Lebanon

Cato Corner
Colchester

Farmer's Cow

Kindred Crossings Farm ~Franklin

Green Valley Farm
Eastford

Gourmavian Farm
Bolton

Connecticut Farm to

Table Cooperative
Stafford Springs

Cobblestone Farm
Mansfield

A & Z Apiaries
Hampton

Dominic Shooks
Windham

Alba Flower Honey
Bristol

Bats of Bedlam Maple Syrup
Chaplin

Bower's Syrup
Hebron

And all of the many egg suppliers....

The Importance and Benefits of Staff Diversity *Jesse Ruiz*

As a cashier, a plethora of questions are fielded on a daily basis. Many concern local farms, our suppliers, products, the co-op, and most commonly, the membership. Taking one step further, the most common question regarding the membership is: “what are the benefits of being a member of the co-op?” To which, most employees respond with highlights of our working membership options, pre-orders and the discounts that they entail, or the fact that membership is ownership.

The most gleaming, yet sorely overlooked answer is, the co-op itself. Its very existence could not be possible without the initial and continued support of the community around us. With that being stated, the co-op and its community should ideally reflect each other in their intention, conduct, and make-up. Being in a unique locale such as downtown Willimantic, the co-op is fortunate enough to reap the benefits of its rich diversity and culture. With a growing creatives scene, the improvements to the local university and new small businesses sprouting up consistently, it is crucial to maintain the aim to fight stagnation.

Luckily, the nature of the co-op exudes a laid back demeanor and friendly atmosphere. The apparent welcome begets an ever-growing and ever-changing cast of characters that constitute our customers, member-owners and staff. Not only do we strive to reflect the face of our community, but also the values that each ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, sex, religious and age group brings to the table. In these highly diverse environments, the risk for cultural clashing and conflict at times can be a concern. Yet, incorporating the cooperative spirit establishes a like-mindedness that is often implied at the mere motivation to enter the doors.

In the moments following, the staff hopes to relate a sense of kinship with customers that is usually initiated with eye contact and a smile, something the co-op staff has stressed in every position from cashiers all the way to administration. These interactions become infinitely easier for us once both parties feel they share something in common with each other, whether it be from cues as basic as fashion, skin color, or attitude, or complexities such as perceived sexuality or ethnicity. As the rapidly shifting landscape that is the current zeitgeist becomes far more diverse and progressive the co-op responds swiftly; increasing Hispanic and Spanish-speaking community members? Add Spanish-speaking staff. Increase in student population? Hire younger, yet skilled cashiers in conjunction with hiring slightly older, more experienced staff. Increased panhandling? Introduce staff to conflict resolution skills to deescalate situations with grace and respect while holding safety as the priority.

The preemptive nature of our service mentality has proven to be successful from the first moments in the store to the last step of check out. To mimic a bumpersticker, our goals can all be simplified to “Think Globally. Act Locally.”, and our staff reflects that. We employ beautiful people from all walks of life, generating a safe, secure and engaging atmosphere with perspectives ranging the globe. ¶



Greetings from the Wellness Dept. *Chris Dubis*

When you are sorting through our conglomerate of supplement bottles, herbal salves, protein powders and more, there's an endless number of topics to discuss amongst all these products. Myself and my counterpart, Kara, are always happy to help you find what you are looking for, and answer any questions that you may have. Despite the diverse selection of products that we sell, you are one of our many Co-op owners and we want Wellness to be an area that is comfortable and not overwhelming for shopping. It is our department. Never hold any questions back! We are Wellness nerds and love talking about supplements and body care. Questions and conversations that come about are how we all learn more, and also how Kara and I can improve our knowledge base for the next customer.

One topic that I always love talking about is one I've struggled with for numerous years: controlling oily and acne-prone skin. Like many people, my skin was (and can still be at times) a warzone of pimples, blackheads and greasy skin. I had tried everything from prescription benzoyl peroxide creams and antibiotics to over-priced "miracle kits" that you buy out of a vending machine in the mall. While these conventional methods did help me at times, it felt like I was trying to forcibly stop my skin from generating blemishes with harsh chemicals. It was pretty discouraging at times. Here are my top picks for natural, simple, and superior treatment ideas to help with acne prone skin.

Oils: For me, this was a pivotal tool I discovered that helped my skin immensely. We live in a culture where "oil-free" moisturizers and harsh exfoliants are common practice for treating acne. Stripping your face of all the oil on your skin can

feel liberating, but it's actually the opposite of what it needs, and can worsen your acne. Your skin secretes oil and sweat. While this oil and sweat in excess can cause you to break out, this secretion (called your acid mantle or sebum) is your face's protection against the environment. Good quality nutritive oils can help balance your skin's acid mantle, helping the sebaceous glands to be more mindful of the amount of oil and sweat it secretes, protecting your skin and enriching it with vitamins and minerals. Remember that a little goes a long way! Oils can be used to wash

your face (yes, I said wash your face), be applied in small amounts as a moisturizer and before your moisturizer. A few of my favorite oils to apply to the face are rosehip, jojoba and argan oil.

Most people look at me like I have two heads when I suggest washing your face with oils. It sounds completely counterintuitive but it is incredibly effective at regulating excess oil, maintaining your protective acid mantle and not drying your skin out.

Simply massage your face for a minute with your chosen oil, then with a warm washcloth, gently press away the oil. This really opens your pores to allow for the beneficial elements of the oil to really soak into your skin while also removing any excess oil. I love washing my face with this method, and I swear it has never made me break out! Currently, we have two cleansing oils from the Badger Company on our shelves (with a ridiculous number of manufacturer coupons for them...). I really like using just plain coconut oil, or you can google "Oil Cleansing Method". There are great recipes out there on how to make your own oil cleanser.

Witch Hazel: A great old standby that I've used for a long time. Did you know that most of the United States' witch hazel is made locally in Connecticut? Get an alcohol-free witch hazel-- the ones



"French Green Clay: I call this the hidden gem of our Coop. We sell this in bulk next to our castile soaps gallons."

Continued on page 7

Winky's Food Review *Winky Gordon*

This episode of the Food Review features goats, sardines, two guys from Maine, and spans several countries in three continents: England, the Netherlands, Vietnam, and the USA. The foods themselves are: Delamere Dairy goats butter (\$6.75 /8.8 oz. package); Beemster dairy's goat gouda (\$15.99/lb.); Wild Planet Foods' wild sardines (\$3.29/ 4.375 oz. tin); Gelato Fiasco's Maple Sap Tap Gelato (\$7.99/1 pint container).

I totally dig goats' milk products, including the Beemster goat gouda. What's not to love about a salty, cheddar-like cheese that melts well and satisfies the craving for dairy fat? The label "gouda" refers to a style of cheesemaking, I learned, rather than a specific cheese, that ranges in texture and taste. This one is a hard cheese that has a tang to it – not overpowering, but definitely present. I find it to not have a strong "goaty" taste, making it quite approachable for goats' milk novices or avoiders. It was a fine accompaniment to the sardines I sampled, following Co-op staffer Jason's recommendation for sardine and cheese sandwich, and is a lovely pairing for pears (get it?) and apples. If you want the low down on the origins of gouda cheese and its role in Dutch commerce, go to Wikipedia.

Beemster cheese is made by a farmers' co-op in the Beemster region of the Netherlands. The company's web site reports that the soil in this region is particularly nutrient and mineral rich, and that milk produced there is known for its "sweet and creamy quality." The company follows Caring Dairy standards (apparently also followed by Ben and Jerry's), and has the tag line "Happy Cows, Happy Farmers, Happy Planet." Of course the web site has charming pictures of its lovely, happy cows, and goats.

Hop, skip, and jump to Cheshire, England, where Delamere Dairy makes several goats' milk products, including butter, near the Delamere Forest. Their site gives nutritional info on goats' milk and explains why some people find it easier on their gut, skin, and respiratory systems than cows' milk. More pictures of happy goats and cows! I tried the butter on toast and found it to be an enjoyable novelty. This one does have the distinct goat factor going on, good for those of us who are fans, but likely not for the goat-squeamish. Although it is pricey, I would use it in savory

cooking –probably not for sweet foods. It's made with goats' cream, salt, and beta carotene.

Having finished up in England, we now leap over to Vietnam, where the sardines from Wild Planet Foods are sourced. I admit I did not know we carry sardines (and tuna), until directed by neighbor Joe who reports that they are now a Co-op staple for him. He commented on the purity of taste and reported that

he can eat a whole tin in one serving. I like sardines; he loves them. I am not used to seeing whole sardines so it was a little surprising to see an actual fish – not just fillets- in the tin when I opened it. I was also surprised by the difference in taste when they are packed in olive oil, as opposed to soybean or whatever other oils are generally used. While still packed with protein and all kinds of other nutritional goodies, these guys taste lighter. The "aqueous natural smoke" (???) gives a hint of smoked flavor; I'd be okay with more. As described above, they make a great sardine-melt sandwich.

One of the many things I love about doing this column is researching the business practices of the companies who produce and market the foods I review. On this product, what really interested me was the information provided on Wild Planet Foods' web site, explaining what they mean by "sustainably caught." Their criteria for this label are: "the biomass of fish is healthy and not overfished; the habitat is not damaged by the fishing method; the catch-method is free from excessive by-catch of juvenile fish and other non-targeted species." Apparently this sardine population is healthy and abundant, and caught using pole and troll methods. Wild Planet Foods provides a link to Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch, which goes into greater depth about the many issues surrounding sustainable fishing practices and the overall health of the oceans.

And, finally, back to the USA, New England in particular, Maine to be specific, where Gelato Fiasco is made. The company was started by two guys in their twenties, one of whom spent time in Italy where his family is from. Their motto is "Inspired by Italy, perfected in Maine." I will confess to eating a pint of their Maple Sap Tap Gelato in two sittings, it was that alluring. This flavor is made with milk, sugar, and maple toffee (maple syrup, walnuts, sugar) and has both



great texture and full-bodied taste. The creaminess of the gelato base contrasts nicely with the crunch of the toffee and the burnt sugar taste is an extra bonus when it shows up. We also carry Mascarpone Pistachio Caramel, Maine Wild Blueberry Crisp, and Cookie Therapy flavors. As you might imagine, an “artisan” food like this comes in attractive packaging – a screw top container with a crisply designed label. And, as you may also imagine, the web site tells the story about how this small company uses locally-sourced products when possible, and aims to be good business stewards. No happy goats or cows, but happy people.

What makes you happy? I am happy to have access to good food, a small business I want to support, and the opportunity to give my opinion on all kinds of things – in print, no less! Thanks for continuing to read. As always - be well, and be kind. ¶



WELLNESS continued from page 5

with alcohol tend to be too harsh and can dry your skin up, which can cause more break outs. I really like the Thayer’s brand (made in Westport). Even though a bottle is a whopping \$8.99, they add aloe vera to their formula. So, not only is it excellent for minimizing pores and redness, but also can help with healing any existing acne. After washing your face, you can soak a cotton ball with the witch hazel, apply to your face and follow with a good oil serum.

French Green Clay: I call this the hidden gem of our Coop. We sell this in bulk next to our castile soaps gallons. Clay is incredible for your face! Not only is it full of beneficial minerals for your skin but it has the incredible power to pull out impurities, gently exfoliate and stimulate circulation to help heal. Simply make a paste with at least a tablespoon or so of clay powder and a little water (add a few drops of your favorite essential oil for an extra amazing mask experience). Apply this to your face with your fingers. You don’t have to shlop it on. A thin layer of clay will work just as effectively as a thick one. As it dries, you’ll feel your skin being pulled and tightened. It’s definitely an odd sensation but you may learn to enjoy it! After it’s dry, use a warm washcloth to gently remove the mask or just hop in the shower. Be careful not to be so zealous when taking the mask off as it can often cause one’s skin to burn, especially if they have sensitive skin. It is normal though for your face to be pink afterwards, that’s the blood brought to your skin’s surface to help heal. After removing the mask, I like to rehydrate with a toner and a drop or two of any oil serum. This simple treatment can make someone’s acne improve dramatically very quickly. Don’t be discouraged if your acne worsens at first, that’s the clay helping your body detoxify. If you don’t want to do a full mask, you can apply the mask as a spot treatment on individual blemishes. I like doing this once a week. I have done it up to three nights in a row to really purify, but my skin tends to be on the tougher side.

I could probably talk for several more paragraphs about all the other solutions out there, but those are my top three solutions! If you’ve found other things that work better for you please share them! I love learning new practices for healthier skin. See you in the store. —Chris ¶

Butternut Squash Bisque *Sasha Bajjo-Fournier*

When the autumn months come around, thoughts often turn to stacking wood for the fireplace, wrapping flannel sheets on the bed, cutting in to bread fresh out of the oven, and soup bubbling on the stove. This fall, try some freshly harvested squashes from farmer Frank Himmelstein (Lebanon, CT) in your soup. Get inspired by the colors around you, and get them cooking in the pot. Our produce department currently has buttercup, hubbard, butternut, acorn, and red kuri squashes in stock, all which make great soups. On a recent cooler afternoon, I simmered a lovely butternut squash bisque seasoned with berbere and other spices. I enjoyed that the soup lasted a number of days, each bringing out additional warmth and flavor to the palate. Sometimes, there is nothing more satisfying than a large quantity of soup, just waiting for you to eat after a long day



When I made this soup, it filled a half-gallon sized mason jar. Eat right away, or save for later. I enjoyed this soup with some toasted Cinnamon Raisin bread, made fresh by the When Pigs Fly company, available in our bakery department. Enjoy!

BUTTERNUT SQUASH BISQUE

1 medium or large butternut squash, cut into medium-sized chunks

1 medium piece of fresh ginger, peeled and chopped small

1 medium or large fresh white onion, chopped small

1 large leek, 1/4 to 1/2" slices

Fresh or dried thyme for seasoning

1 to 2tsp berbere seasoning (some like it hot!)

1/2 tsp celery salt

Water (enough to cover the squash while boiling, plus about 1")

Bring water in a large pot to a boil, and add the squash. This water will be used as broth after cooking the squash. When the squash is tender, remove from heat and set aside. Begin sautéing onions, leek, and ginger in a frying pan. Add thyme (generously, if you enjoy it), berbere, and celery salt. Keep in mind this will be added to the squash and broth, so you may end up adding more spices before combining everything. I sometimes add a little water to the pan to make sure spices are evenly distributed, and everything cooks through without burning. When onions are translucent, remove from heat and set aside. Once the squash is a good temperature for blending (unless you have a blender than can handle the heat), begin adding equal portions of squash, broth, and onion sauté to the blender, and combine in batches. You may end up with a little broth left unused, and that is ok.



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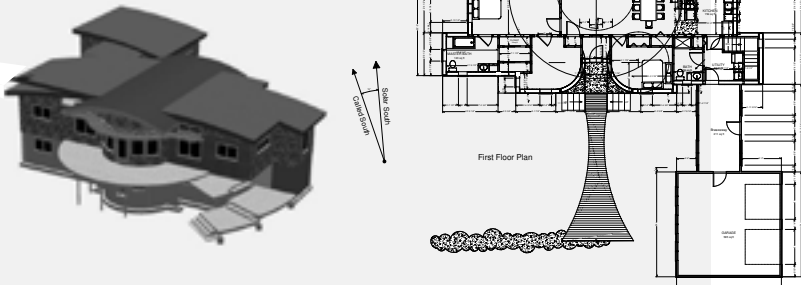
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Local Artisans Holiday Tables

THE CO-OP WILL AGAIN BE HOSTING LOCAL ARTISTS AND CRAFTS FOLK SELLING THEIR WARES IN THE CO-OP CAFÉ THIS HOLIDAY SEASON! LOOK FOR HOLIDAY TABLES EVERY FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY STARTING SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28TH THROUGH SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20TH FROM 10 AM TO 4 PM.

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