

CO-OP NEWSLETTER

INSIDE:

KNOW YOUR FARMER
FRED JOHNSON

FAVORITE KALE
RECIPES

OUR SOURCES FOR
THE FRESHEST
PRODUCE

GROWING CO-OP
CAPITAL

CO-OP IN THE
COMMUNITY

FEEDING HUNGRY
KIDS AROUND THE
WORLD

ASTORIA
cooperative



PHOTO: MICHAEL MATHERS

WORLD FOOD DAY: CO-OPS WORKING TOGETHER TO END HUNGER

Every parent knows that a hungry child is a disadvantaged child. He can't grow, develop and learn like other kids. She has trouble focusing and getting along. They complain often of headaches, stomachaches and other ailments. They fall behind in virtually every way.

In the world's wealthiest nation, no child should grow up hungry. Yet over the course of a year, more than 16 million children in America cannot count on having enough nutritious food. That's one in five kids in America today who struggle with hunger.

We can help. World Food Day is October 16th. In support of this worldwide event designed to increase awareness, understanding and action around hunger issues, our co-op is joining other food co-ops across the country to raise \$100,000 for Share our Strength's No Kid Hungry® campaign, a national effort to end childhood hunger in America.



Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry® campaign is ending childhood hunger by connecting kids to the healthy food they need, every day. No Kid Hungry brings together governors, mayors, businesses, chefs, federal and state agencies, educators and community leaders to connect children at risk of hunger with food and nutrition programs where they live, learn and play. No Kid Hungry also teaches families how to cook healthy, affordable meals through Cooking Matters® and invests in community organizations that fight hunger.

How can you help? Our Co-op is donating 1% of all sales from Saturday October 13th, which is a 10% Member Discount day too, so you can shop big and help fight world hunger. You can also take the No Kid Hungry Pledge at nokidhungry.org.

Help us fight childhood hunger in our communities. It's just one of the ways food co-ops and our shoppers and owners are building a better world. We are Stronger Together!

CO-OP IN THE COMMUNITY

HEALTH CARE WORKSHOP

The Co-op catered a workshop in July at Columbia Memorial Hospital. "Self-Care for the Self-Aware" was geared toward nurses and other health care professionals. Co-op member, Cindy Nemlowill, a nursing supervisor at CMH, spearheaded the workshop and approached the Co-op with the idea of providing healthy snacks for this event. Kenlynn Nelson, our new Outreach Director, and her husband, Mike Nelson, who manages our deli, jumped at the opportunity. They are in the photo below with the workshop speaker, Dave Markowitz, (left) author of *Healing with Source: A Spiritual Guide to Mind-Body Medicine*.

Markowitz, who is known as a medical intuitive, inspired attendees by sharing tools to keep their energy levels high while caring for others. He stressed the role of organic, non-GMO veggies, and the energy they get from the sun, for our health and vitality. For many here, this was a good introduction to the Co-op.

"They loved the kale salad, Caribbean bean salad, fresh fruit platter, sampled tofu pate and red pepper hummus. Hospital staff asked about the deli and they are very excited about buying things with us," Kenlynn said.

Kenlynn says this type of outreach is paying off, that we're seeing lots of new faces in the Co-op. Membership has reached nearly 1900. By the way, a big thanks to Astoria Crossroads, for sponsoring the food at the workshop.



FARMERS MARKET

The Co-op has a booth at the River People Farmers Market. Board members take turns staffing it. In the photo above, Mark Albrecht of our board and Outreach Director, Kenlynn Nelson are handing out samples to the Judson family. These Portland residents spend as much time as they can in Astoria, and we are very pleased they recently became members of the Co-op.

The River People Farmers Market is held every Thursday from 3pm to 6pm at 1343 Duane Street (across the street from the Co-op).

ASTORIA CO-OP
 All shoppers welcome
 Just \$25 per year to start a membership
 Members get sale prices & discount days
 Open 7 days a week 8 am-8 pm
 1355 Exchange Street Astoria, Oregon
 503-325-0027
www.astoriacoop.org

PRODUCE REPORT

BY KELLY HUCKESTEIN PRODUCE MANAGER



Summer is the time for local produce! We are seeing a number of veggies and fruits coming directly from our local farmers as well as more Oregon growers from our main distributor. The closer our food is grown, the more nutrient rich and full of flavor it is when it gets to us. You can definitely see the difference in freshness! Our climate might not be quite as accommodating as the Willamette Valley, but we can still grow some delicious food.

KALE

Kale from the North Coast is amazing. Our cooler climate is a perfect home for this vegetable. Kale is amazingly versatile, so try it fixed up in a new way this summer. Come in and try the raw kale salads from our deli department, use it to replace spinach in your favorite lasagna recipe, or put it in a smoothie for a nutritious and delicious kick. If we had a vegetable mascot for the coast, it would be kale!

We also have wonderful salad mix from our local farmers. We get regular deliveries from

Fred's Homegrown Produce and Stockhouse Farm to keep us stocked up in fresh salad mix. This is an easy addition to any meal. The mixes are full of different greens depending on what the farmers thought looked best that day. You are guaranteed a fresh salad with these mixes. Also from our local farmers: carrots, peas, beans, zucchini, potatoes, fennel, kohlrabi, and much more. Keep checking in as we continue to get these deliveries.

BERRIES

Most exciting, local berries are in, including raspberries and blueberries. The Northwest is known for its berries, and our area does not disappoint. We will have wild harvested huckleberries and blackberries as well.

Along with these farm direct veggies and fruits, we are seeing other northwest grown vegetables and fruits. Cherries, berries, peaches and other stone fruits are closer to home. And although they don't grow well on the coast, we will be seeing Oregon grown peppers, tomatoes, eggplants and other warm weather crops as the season heats up. And don't forget about grilling with our Northwest grown portabella mushrooms!

This is definitely the time of year for fresh produce! You can be sure that your dollars spent at the Co-op are helping support local farmers and organic practices throughout the Northwest. We work hard to bring you the freshest most nutritious produce that you can find and will do our best to keep you informed about where your food is coming from. Look for farm names on the price tags in the produce cooler and throughout the rest of the produce department. If you have any questions about where a particular item is coming from, don't be afraid to ask. This is an important step to feeling confident in the food that you are putting in your body as well as how your dollars are helping your regional economy. Have a delicious summer!

PINE NUT DELIGHT

This salad is one of our favorite deli recipes. You can find it in our cooler from time to time, and now you can make it at home too using ingredients from the Co-op!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 bunches purple kale torn into small pieces
- 1/2 cup pine nuts
- 1/2 red onion sliced very thin
- 1 cup bulk cranberries
- 1 batch lemon dressing (see dressing below)

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in large stainless steel bowl. Pour dressing over and toss thoroughly.

LEMON DRESSING

INGREDIENTS

- 1 quart size glass jar
- 3 cloves of garlic, pressed
- 2 fresh lemons, juiced
- 100 mL of sunflower oil
- 1 T ground cumin
- 1 t salt
- 1 t pepper

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in jar and shake.



MEET YOUR FARMER

FRED JOHNSON FRED'S HOMEGROWN FARM AND PRODUCE

Special thanks to Photographer Michael Mathers

Farmer Fred Johnson is like a big ripe juicy tomato. His smile and hands are big, and so is his personality. He's bursting with passion for farming and local food. A decade ago Fred made the untrellised move of selling his restaurant in Seattle and buying a farm in the small town of Naselle, Washington. The former chef admits he had essentially no farming experience. He's been learning through trial and error how to grow food in our soggy climate, and he's getting it. Fred has recently been selling more of his produce at the Co-op, which is why we went to the source to meet our farmer, the man behind some of the best local tomatoes, greens, and many more vegetables and herbs.

Fred does not speak in sound bites. Sometimes he curses, usually followed by one of his big tomato grins and an apology. He greeted us with one of those grins. He had been in the middle of making lunch, but was eager to welcome us and show us around. He bounded out of his farmhouse dressed in work clothes and barefoot, which made sense when we got to the threshold of his new greenhouse. He scrambled across the dirt, exclaiming with glee, "I love the feel of freshly tilled soil!"



Outside garden beds were beaming with the contrast of rich green kales, spinach, and chard, and bright orange Calendula blooming nearby. Fred's farming partner, Cesily Stewart, pulled some fresh spinach leaves out of the dirt and handed them to us to taste. This plain spinach was so good, nothing could have been added to it to make it taste better.

"I've always thought fresh was good but



Fred Johnson and his farming partner, Cesily Stewart, recently completed construction of a new greenhouse, which has the potential to triple tomato production.

never had it quite so fresh. The overall quality of food starts to decrease rapidly once you get it out of the garden, so trying to get it to people as soon as possible is important. Once they taste the food they're hooked," Cesily said.

As we entered Fred's 1890's farmhouse to do an interview, our produce manager, Kelly, whispered, "I want this kitchen". It was easy to see why. It was charming. Parts of it were stuck in a different era, when life was simple. There were baskets of fresh eggs. Husky chopping blocks and stainless steel shelving from more modern times echoed of Fred's past in commercial kitchens. The smell of fresh garlic wafted from a huge salad his friend Sophie was preparing, slowly and joyfully, honoring the food that had come from the gardens in view. We sat around a table in the center of the room, with a bowl of strawberries Cesily picked from a little patch right outside the farmhouse front door.

This scene must have been exactly what Fred had dreamed of when he was cooking in his restaurant in the big city. He says it was tough to realize that a lot of his skills were geared toward masking food that had no inher-

ent quality with fancy sauces. He became intent on getting fresh local foods. A customer told him about this old dairy farm that went bankrupt in the 1980's; he was smitten, and purchased it in 2003.

"I love it. It's very vexing. I'm not a farmer. I was 40 when I bought the place so it's a bit of a learning curve, but it feels right. Unlike restaurants, where beginners have a lot of op-



portunity to get first hand experiences, and inclusion into a vetted working model, I just kept trying and failing until successes gradually outnumbered the, well, failures." Fred said.

By bits and spurts the farm is growing, but it's not yet paying for itself, which means Fred

does a lot of unpaid hours and does hardwood floors on the side to help pay the bills. In a way, Fred can empathize with the Finnish pioneer farmers who built the house and barn.

"I have growing respect for a pioneer starting a freaking dairy with no roads, no infrastructure... that's pretty impressive, I have no idea how they did that. Just because you want to eat local doesn't mean you have to go back to pioneer days for god sake," Fred said.

More than a century later, he faces different obstacles than the pioneer farmers though. Our food comes from all over the world, and his little farm has to compete with industrial farms that supply large grocery store chains. But Fred remains optimistic that it's possible for small farms to have a ripe livelihood, and that it's essential to have food that does not rely on fossil fuels to reach us.

"We've got to evolve our food systems or we're in a world of hurt, so for me, this is sort of my cause. Farms are societies' placenta to the planet that sustains us, real farms, that's

"FARMS ARE SOCIETIES' PLACENTA TO THE PLANET THAT SUSTAINS US, REAL FARMS, THAT'S WHAT THIS IS."



Co-op Produce Manager, Kelly Huckestein, & Farmer Fred Johnson



what this is," Fred explained.

Relationships with Fred and other local farmers allow the Co-op to carry products that other stores in the area don't have. Monetarily this gives us a competitive edge, but walking in the store and seeing farm fresh food on the shelves is also an experience that money can't buy.

"We've been working on this relationship for 4 plus years now, since I've been able to grow. I'd show up every month or so, hey you want to buy some greens, it was almost an aerial attack of lettuce... you have to have consistency. I hope I don't sound like I'm full of crap, but if I'm winning, you're winning with quality head and shoulders above the rest, I'm very snooty about this," Fred said.

After we said our goodbyes and drove away from the farm, loud jazz music drifted out of Fred's farmhouse as he settled in for his long-awaited and much deserved lunch break. Fred's a cool guy, the kind you'd want to be friends with. In spite of the hardships, he makes farming seem attractive and accessible. But lucky for us, we won't have to quit our day jobs and

become farmers to get the freshest produce. Just keep an eye out for Fred's Homegrown produce at the Co-op.

HOW YOU CAN MEET FRED

A great opportunity for you to get out to Fred's farm yourself is Labor Day weekend, September 1-2, 2012. Coast Community Radio presents, Farmstock, a regional homegrown festival. There will be farm goods, workshops, food, beer, music, art, and more. It all happens at Fred's farm in Naselle, WA. Check out coastradio.org to for the details.

In addition to Fred's produce being available at the Astoria Co-op, he also has CSA members, restaurant customers, plus he and Cesily are at the River People Farmers Market Thursdays.

Fred is harvesting new vegetables, herbs, and flowers as the season progresses. For a complete list of the many items the farm produces, go to <http://fredshomegrown.blogspot.com>.

LOCAL FARM GUIDE

OUR SOURCES FOR THE FRESHEST PRODUCE

STOCKHOUSE'S FARM

Diane & Rob Stockhouse
www.stockhousesfarm.com
Birnie Slough Rd, Cathlamet, WA

- Farm Size: 11 acres (2 acres in production)
- Years Farming: since 2006
- Growing Practices: organic

Carried at the Co-op: salad mix, eggs, other veggies (kohlrabi, peas, beans), flowers

Located on beautiful Puget Island, Stockhouse farm operates a CSA (with multiple types of subscriptions), a farmers market, flowers for special events and guest cottage. The Co-op receives salad mix regularly from Stockhouse farm. Other vegetables, like kohlrabi, peas and beans, as well as flowers, are also sold from time to time in our produce department. The Co-op is also a drop site for the Stockhouse's CSA.

FRED'S HOMEGROWN PRODUCE

Fred Johnson
www.fredshomegrownproduce.com
Valley Rd, Naselle, WA

- Farm Size: 70 acres (1 acre in production)
- Years Farming: since 2003
- Growing Practices: Sustainable practices, no sprays or synthetic inputs

Carried at the Co-op: salad mix, spinach, arugula, lettuce, other veggies, tomatoes

"We believe in returning to a localized food system where this community invests its food dollar into local farms rather than sending it out to big corporations in faraway places. We believe that the food system has been transformed to maximize profits while minimizing the value of taste, nutrition and community support. To return to our historic local farming roots, it is important that we work together as a community to make the changes we want to see."

ZIMMERMAN (GLORY B) FARMS

Tom and April Zimmerman and Family
www.glorybfarms.net
Grays River, WA

- Farm Size: 17 acres
- Years Farming: since 1976
- Growing Practices: Certified Organic

Carried at the Co-op: kale, chard, strawberries, zucchini, cucumbers, celery, dandelion greens, mint, basil, and various other vegetables.

Tom started farming when his family moved to the Gray's River area in 1976. He started with a small patch behind the house and now farms over 10 acres. Each year he and his family strive to improve the farm and to offer the best organic produce that they possibly can.

STEWARDSHIP FARM

Brady and Aida and Family
www.stewardshipfarm.net
Clatskanie, OR

- Farm Size: 30 acres of field crops, 40 acres of pasture and forage, 50 acres forest and wild harvest
- Years Farming: since 2006
- Growing Practices: Certified organic, locally sourced inputs, local homegrown labor, internal audits aim for "net positive" in all impacts of the operation

Carried at the Co-op: potatoes, kale, various other veggies and herbs

Stewardship Farm's aim is true sustainability and renewal of exploited resources and ecosystems in and around the farm. To them, "farm stewardship" means tending a farm and forest ecosystem for the benefit of all native creatures, themselves, and a share of the 100 mile radius community. They search for the best heirloom and hybrid varieties available and couple this with an expanding farm testing and vegetable breeding program.

46 NORTH FARM

Teresa Retzlaff and Packy Coleman
www.46northfarm.com
Olney, OR

- Farm Size: 18 acres (1 acre in production)
- Years Farming: Since 2003 (since 2009 in Olney)
- Growing Practices: Sustainable practices, no sprays or synthetic inputs

Carried at the Co-op: plant starts

"We grow and sell for our local North Coast communities: edible plant starts, herbs, cut flowers, produce and—hopefully soon—fresh eggs. As our farm gains strength, we will be able to spend more time here growing and harvesting the many things that our local communities are hungry for: fresh produce and fruit, beautiful flowers, plant starts that do well in our sometimes challenging coastal growing conditions, edible native plants, eggs, honey and anything else that we are inspired to produce on this beautiful piece of land."

BERRIES

We get our local berries directly from growers in our area. Many of our berry growers do not have production farms, but have been supplying the co-op with berries for many years. We have good relationships with these growers and you can feel confident in the quality of our local berries.

WILD HARVESTED

Just like our berries, we know our wild harvesters and are confident in their ability to source us with the best wild foods from our area. They know their plant identification and have been supplying the co-op consistently over the years.



The Astoria Cooperative is dedicated to providing its members with the best produce available. The fresher your produce is the more nutrients it has available, and the better it tastes. This is why we try to source directly from local farms whenever we can. Not only does this make our produce look and taste better, it also keeps your food dollars in your local economy. Growing can be a challenge here on the coast, so our availability of farm direct produce can change throughout the season. However, we try to always source locally before we source from anywhere else. If you ever have a question about where your food is coming from, don't hesitate to ask us.



KALE LASAGNA DIAVOLO

This is a great recipe for using fresh local kale, and it freezes well too!



(Vegetarian Times)

- 1 tsp. olive oil, plus more for oiling pan
 - 1 8-oz. bunch kale, stems removed
 - 1 15-oz. pkg. fat-free ricotta cheese
 - 4 oz. chèvre or soft goat cheese, softened
 - 2 cloves garlic, minced (2 tsp.)
 - 2 cups prepared tomato purée
 - ½ tsp. red pepper flakes
 - 6 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained, or 6 no-cook lasagna noodles
 - ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat 8-inch square baking pan with oil.
 2. Cook kale in large pot of boiling salted water 2 minutes. Drain, and rinse under cold water until cool enough to handle. Thoroughly wring out kale, then chop. Season with salt and pepper, if desired, and set aside.
 3. Mash together ricotta and chèvre in bowl, and set aside.
 4. Heat 1 tsp. oil in small saucepan over medium-low heat. Add garlic, and cook 15 seconds, or until fragrant. Add tomato purée and red pepper flakes; simmer 5 minutes, or until thickened.
 5. Spread ¼ cup sauce in prepared baking pan. Place 2 lasagna noodles on top of sauce. Top with half of cheese mixture, half of kale, and 1/3 cup sauce. Top with two more noodles, remaining cheese, and remaining kale. Top with remaining lasagna noodles, and cover with remaining sauce. Sprinkle with parmesan, and bake 40 minutes, or until cheese has melted and lasagna is bubbly.

SUMMER ARE WE THERE YET?

BY MERIANNE MYERS CO-OP BOARD PRESIDENT



HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO CELEBRATE SUMMER:

The 4th Thursday food tastings have moved across the street to the River People Farmers Market for the season.

Now you can taste fabulous food and stroll the market every Thursday from 3 to 6pm in the parking lot of Astoria Indoor Garden across from The Co-op. Our store booth is hosted by board members who are there solely to share good food, conversation and a friendly invite to visit the store.

The increasingly spectacular flower beds bordering The Co-op parking lot.

The produce section is tempting us with melons, peaches, plums and heirloom tomatoes. Despite a slow summer start, we are now fully immersed in garden watering season, sometimes twice a day in the greenhouse where



the tomatoes, peppers, lemons and limes are so used to being coddled they take no notice of what's going on outside. They know they're special. Outside the peas, beans, potatoes, onions, carrots, turnips, beets, artichokes, asparagus, garlic and salad greens are doing just fine, thanks. Waiting for summer on the Coast is an annual test of our collective patience. But, oh so worth it! And it beats almost everywhere else in the country right about now.

Thanks Jennifer Rigley for turning a gravel bed and a concrete retaining wall into a glorious garden. Pulling into a slot to be greeted with color, scent and bees, strolling past folks picnicking at the table by the window, inhaling the perfume of herbs and plant starts from 46 North Farm is a lasting promise that something fine is going on inside.

The evolution of the deli case.

We have come to expect the comfort of the remodeled deli area and the always fabulous soups bubbling in the pot. The added gift of almost daily surprises in the grab and go case is proof that too much is never quite enough. I love discovering new sandwiches, salads and spreads. There is clearly no end to the imagination running free in the deli kitchen. If you haven't tried the Oregon Chopped Salad, all I can say is GOOD! More for me.

In retrospect, summer in our neighborhood is really quite lovely, easily worth waiting for and annually able to dress our gardens in their party duds and invite us to dinner.

CHOCOLATE WITH A CAUSE

Be on the lookout for these chocolate bars, celebrating the International Year of the Co-op, in October. A .50 donation from each bar will support the Capi Café cocoa co-op of Peru and the Fortaleza de Valle cocoa co-op of Ecuador.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

LIZ COVEY

You can catch Liz Covey shopping at the Co-op most mornings then walking up the hill with her grocery bag and baby. They walk to and from her four year-old daughter's pre-school, located in the former Star of the Sea. Liz is a psychotherapist and her husband is book designer, who works from home. They relocated to the area a year ago from Seattle in search of a more simple life. They now live on their "farmette" in the Young's River area. Liz says she has a French-mentality of shopping for fresh food at the market daily.

Q: Why do you shop at the Co-op?

A: I believe in everything the Co-op stands for: healthy and locally-sourced food, minimizing the steps between the food in the ground (or stable) and my shopping cart, and the collective-ownership model, which results in more of my dollars remaining in the economy in Astoria.

Q: What are your favorite products?

A: My favorite Co-op products are all in produce, which are the best in the county, hands-down. A close second would be a tie for Columbia River coffee and the generous offerings in the bulk section.

Q: Are there any methods you've found particularly successful to get your kids to eat healthy?

A: It takes work to get kids to try new things, so we see it as our task to feed them well and expect some push-back. I believe that kids can normalize almost anything, so if what they see is good food and healthy eating, that is what they have, and ultimately, want now or later in life. Oh, and treats are requisite in childhood, so they get thrown in for good measure too.

Q: What's for dinner?

A: It's a challenge to make anyone happy at dinner. Wait, I just re-read that. I meant to say, "it's a challenge to make everyone happy", but the former statement sums it up better. If pressed

for a formula, it would look something like this: something healthy paired with something my 4 year-old and/or husband will eat, and then some left-overs on the side. Done!

Q: Anything you'd like to add?

A: I have shopped at co-ops around the country for over 20 years. This is the friendliest co-op staff I have ever encountered. It well-represents Astoria, and more than that, it makes the mundane task of shopping a pleasant one, which, now and again, can feel like an exercise of neighborly good-will that seems downright old-fashioned. But then, that too feels like the spirit of this kooky town.



OUR CO-OP JOINS NCGA

A recap for those who haven't heard the news: the Astoria Co-op joined the National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) in the spring. NCGA is a business services cooperative for retail food co-ops nationwide. This brings affiliate totals to 128 food co-ops with combined annual sales of more than \$1.4 billion.

Since its inception almost 40 years ago, Astoria Co-op's mission has been to serve the Lower Columbia River community by providing fairly priced, wholesome foods and other goods in an ecologically sustainable, social responsible and economically appropriate manner.

Astoria Co-op joins NCGA during the International Year of Cooperatives, a designation declared by the United Nations to raise awareness of ideas or initiatives that are helping to build a better world.

"We are thrilled to be a part of NCGA," said Matt Stanley, Astoria Co-op Manager, "especially as we all celebrate the economic and social benefits of cooperative businesses during this International Year of Cooperatives."

"Consumer demand for good food from businesses they trust has fueled the growth of co-ops across the country," said Robynn Shrader, chief executive officer for NCGA. "We're proud to welcome Astoria Co-op and excited to support them as they continue to grow and serve their community."

NCGA helps unify food co-ops in order to optimize operational and marketing resources, strengthen purchasing power, and ultimately offer more value to natural food co-op owners and shoppers everywhere.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

BUILDING CO-OP CAPITAL

BY MATTHEW STANLEY GENERAL MANAGER



Frequent Co-op shoppers are noticing some new signage popping up in the store. We are now implementing the store's use of the Co+op Stronger Together support branding available to us through our affiliation with the NCGA (National Cooperative Grocers Association). We like this branding because it reminds us all why we organize our business cooperatively. By pooling our community's resources we are able to achieve something that none of us as individuals can accomplish, unless you happen to be wealthy and have time to run a grocery store.



THE HERE AND NOW

Currently, our co-op builds capital funds through our member equity system. Each time you make an equity payment you contribute to the cash savings that the co-op uses to build infrastructure, make capital purchases, and ultimately grow our business. Currently, the co-op

takes in around \$3,000 in equity a month.

But there is another way that co-ops raise capital, one that many consumer co-ops underutilize. Our co-op board of directors and management is starting to think strategically about how we can use patronage dividends to raise co-op capital and position us for a strong and long term future.

You may be familiar with patronage dividends. At a basic level, patronage dividends represent a percentage of co-op profits that are redistributed to members based on the level of their patronage (i.e. how much you shop at your co-op). If and when the Co-op is profitable, and if and when the board of directors decides to redistribute those profits, the IRS requires that at least 20% of the net earnings be returned to members. This cash portion of the dividend can be paid out in a check, store credit, or it can be given back to the Co-op to support its outreach and charitable endeavors.

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

But co-op profits represent much more than a thank you to members, although this is a meaningful component of the patronage dividend system. Beyond the reminder of how much you shop co-op, the patronage dividends, specifically the retained portion (80%), can serve to build co-op cash reserves tax free. Unless the co-op specifically decides to pay out these retained dividends, the funds remain in the co-op in perpetuity.

From this perspective, retained patronage dividends are not for the individual owner. The funds belong to all co-op members, to be put towards the good of the cooperative. As banks become more conservative about their lending, our co-op may one day need capital funds. At the very least they can be leveraged to secure necessary loans for future projects or expansions.

I write about this topic because it has been a consistent theme in discussions with other co-op leaders, our co-op members at the annual meeting, and with our current board of

directors. We are learning about how the dividend system can benefit our co-op. It becomes clear that building capital will always be crucial to our business, and patronage dividends can be an important part of this goal.



YOU AND PATRONAGE DIVIDENDS

You may wonder how implementing a patronage dividend system might influence your shopping at the co-op. Currently, members receive a discount when they shop on the specified owner discount days. These discounts add up to quite a lot over the year. From one perspective, they are an excellent way to increase our sales and sign up new members. On the other hand, they seem to put the cart before the horse. In other words, before we know whether or not the co-op will be profitable in a given year, we are already giving away some of the excess earnings we can achieve. Of course, there is a tradeoff here. No discount days probably means fewer sales too.

There is also a certain level of unfairness to discount days. Instead of being able to shop whenever you need groceries, some owners rightly feel that in order to receive a benefit as an owner, they have to wait for a discount day. I do want to be very clear. Co-op owner discount days will not entirely disappear. In fact, many co-ops run successful businesses using both member discount days and patronage dividends. But in comparison to other co-ops, we spend a relatively high amount on discounts.

CONTINUED...

Patronage dividends can help us strike a better balance and ensure that we are building capital for the future of our business.

THE BIG PICTURE

Could the cooperative model be a last ditch effort at making capitalism work for the planet and the planet's inhabitants? That I cannot say. Are patronage dividends, well understood and used effectively, a crucial component of our business model? One that can position us for another 38 successful years as an Astoria business? These questions, I think, can be answered with an undeniable yes. Here's to several more decades of eating cooperatively.



BULK ITEMS NOW ON SALE

Look for monthly specials in our bulk department!

NEW PRODUCTS

WITH KENDALL MCEUEN CO-OP STORE BUYER

NW WILD PRODUCTS

All hail Omega 3's!!! Our very own Astoria-based, NW Wild Products is now supplying us with fresh, sustainably-caught and locally processed seafood. You can find halibut, Chinook salmon, and black rock cod located in our frozen section, next to our grass fed, local meats.

PASTA PLUS

For those who love fresh pasta but don't have the time to prepare noodles from scratch, Pasta Plus is for you! This fresh pasta, located in our refrigerated section, is the fastest way to enjoy any noodle dish without sacrificing homemade quality.

PB2

Love peanut butter, but not the calories? PB2 is the new peanut butter powder that contains 85% less fat than traditional nut butters. Just mix all natural PB2 with water, and enjoy the rich creamy taste of dry roasted peanut butter, without the guilt!

TWO HILLS TEA MATCHA COCONUT LATTE

The tea house comes to you with this mix. Two Hills has combined premium grade, high antioxidant matcha green tea, with rich aromatic coconut to deliver a tasty, healthy pick me up.

Just combine with your choice of milk or water, and enjoy wherever, because you can't wear your bathrobe to a tea house!

OREGON CRACKER COMPANY

The gluten free cracker world has gotten a little bigger thanks to Oregon Cracker Company.

These delicious little crackers are made in small batches, by a two man operation to ensure quality and consistency. Made in three tasty flavors: Garden Vegetable, Harvest Bounty, and Sharp Cheddar, every crunchy cracker is a great addition to any gluten free snack attack.



YOUR CO-OP CALENDAR



Thursday August 23rd 7% Off All Purchases

Thursday August 23rd 7PM Board of Directors Meeting at the Co-op

Monday September 3rd Co-op Closed for Labor Day

Saturday September 8th 7% Off All Purchases

Thursday September 20th 10% Off All Purchases

Thursday September 20th 7PM Board of Directors Meeting at the Co-op

September 28th-30th North Coast Brew Cup – Your Co-op will be selling healthy snacks to all the fine beer connoisseurs!

Saturday October 13th 10% Off All Purchases

Saturday October 13th World Hunger Day – Your Co-op will donate 1% of all sales on October 13 to US hunger relief programs!

Thursday October 25th 7% Off All Purchases

Thursday October 25th 7PM Board of Directors Meeting at the Co-op

**CO-OP NEWSLETTER
ASTORIA COOPERATIVE**

1355 Exchange Street #1
Astoria, OR 97103

