

Belfast Co-op Store



Member Booklet

An Introduction to the Belfast Co-op

www.belfast.coop

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CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAY

***THIS ANNUAL AUGUST EVENT
INCLUDES BANDS, FOOD SAMPLES
AND MORE***

Welcome to the Belfast Co-op

Congratulations! You are now a member-owner of a community-based business that sells whole and organic foods and other natural products to residents of Midcoast Maine. This booklet will introduce your Co-op, a longtime leader in Maine's natural foods movement. Keep it handy for future reference.

Co-ops worldwide share a common creed: a fundamental respect for all human beings and the belief that people can improve themselves economically and socially through mutual help. The "Statement on the Cooperative Identity," approved by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) in 1995, defines the standards by which all co-ops should operate:

“Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.”

The principles that guide cooperatives were developed in the mid-1800s by groups struggling to provide good food at fair prices. This philosophy has evolved into seven principles that guide how cooperatives do business:

- 1) Voluntary and Open Membership** Cooperatives are open to all who want to use their services and accept their responsibilities. They do not discriminate based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, or religious or political beliefs.
- 2) Democratic Member Control** Cooperatives are controlled by members who participate in setting policies and making decisions.
- 3) Members' Economic Participation** Members contribute equally to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. This benefits members in proportion to the business they conduct with the cooperative.
- 4) Autonomy and Independence** If the co-op enters into agreements with other organizations or raises capital from external sources, this is done in ways that ensure democratic control and maintain cooperative autonomy.
- 5) Education, Training and Information** Cooperatives educate and train members, directors and employees and provide public education and outreach.
- 6) Cooperation among Cooperatives** Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
- 7) Concern for Community** While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of communities.

Member Benefits



Patronage Dividend If profits allow, members receive an annual store coupon equal to up to 2% of their household's Co-op spending the previous fiscal year.

Membership Advantage Program Member-only sales offered daily. Look for the small yellow signs—with lower member-prices—on select products.

SuperSale Days 10% off members' purchases (except wine, beer and cigarettes) on the first Wednesday in March and September.

Check privileges No ID required. Up to \$30 cash-back on personal checks.

Preorder bulk discounts Members 10%.

Tuesday Senior Discount Members 10%, nonmembers 5%.

Working member program Provides a discount for board members, committee members, and members approved to do tasks or projects for the Co-op.

Newsletters, mailings, e-mailings, web site (www.belfast.coop) Inform members about speakers, events, board actions, member sales, wine tastings, etc.

Homebound Delivery Service

Member Responsibilities

Equity investment \$60 for every adult in the household. Members pay \$20 annually for first three years of membership (\$40 annually for couples and other two-adult households). Equity is refundable if you leave the Co-op.

Annual fee Paid yearly after equity is paid in full (fourth year of membership for new members). The fee is \$15 annually for the first adult in the household and \$10 annually for each additional adult (\$25 annually for couples and other two-adult households).

Board of Directors Members are eligible to run for the board after six months and to serve on Co-op committees.

Board elections and other membership votes All voting, including the annual board election, is held over several weeks. Ballots are cast in the store.

Annual Membership Meeting In March. Meet board, members; learn about the Co-op.

Support our mission statement, policies and staff

See Newsletter & Belfast.coop website for Educational Events

Our Mission

As a member-owned and -controlled retailer of whole and organic foods and other natural products, the Belfast Co-op strives to offer a wide selection at reasonable prices. Our products provide healthy lifestyle choices for Co-op members and the public. Yet we are more than a store. As our bylaws state,

“. . . the purpose of the Belfast Cooperative is to (a) operate an economically viable membership-owned and controlled natural foods and products distribution system, (b) to provide a forum for education and action concerning nutrition, the food distribution system, community organizing and related issues, and (c) to voluntarily aid, support and assist by gifts, contributions or other means, organizations in the community and groups of similar purpose.”

The membership elects Co-op members to serve staggered terms on the board of directors, which has between nine and seventeen members. Ballots are available in the store. The election runs at least three weeks and takes place in conjunction with our annual meeting, held in March. Members are encouraged to attend this fun event, which often includes a speaker and a potluck or refreshments. Directors' regular meetings are on the fourth Thursday of the month. Meeting notices and agendas are posted at the store.

Board oversees general management

The board directs and controls Co-op business, property and affairs on behalf of members. This includes overseeing management and finances and adopting operating and capital budgets. The board is also charged with keeping members informed about policies and decisions and our financial state. General management, hired by the board, oversees day-to-day operations.

Presently, we have a three-person management team that reports to the board's Management Oversight Committee. Functioning through committees allows issues to be addressed in small groups before being brought to the whole board. Other committees include board development, bylaws, charitable giving, community interaction, deli, elections and annual meeting, environment, finance, long-range planning, membership education and outreach, and purchasing.

Joining a committee is just one way members can get more involved in the Co-op. Attend monthly meetings. Approach the managers with a project you would like to do for the Co-op, perhaps as part of our working member program. Encourage family, friends and associates to join the Co-op. Together, we're bettering lives and building community.

Our History

The Belfast Co-op grew out of a pre-order food-buying club. The founders were back-to-the-landers who wanted to make good foods available to the community at a fair price. In 1976, the Belfast Co-op opened in a storefront at 16 Upper Main St. It was a funky place, with brick walls, a worn wood floor, and a cold westerly exposure. Honey was placed next to the sizable parlor stove so it would flow smoothly from 5-gallon metal tanks. There was one register and an oversized bulletin board. A produce section was added after several years.



On a Sunday in August, 1985, wagons and carts in tow, the Co-op literally rolled down Main Street to a larger, sunnier location at 67 Lower Main St. (now the home of another alternative Belfast business, the Green Store). Like its predecessor, the Lower Main Street store had a wood stove, old wood floors, member work requirements, good inexpensive food, Crosby the Cat, and a friendly staff. There was now space for produce coolers, and a play area was created under the stairs. Checkouts had new registers that kept better track of sales. The deli was born when the Co-op added a couple of coffee makers and a daily crock-pot of soup.

Keeping up with growing demand

To keep up with the growing demand for natural foods, we moved to our present location at 123 High St. in 1993. Six years later we bought the building for \$296,500. At 5,000 square feet, it was a “big box” store when it was built in the 1950s. Still big for the Co-op, we opened the Deli Café, enlarged the play area, and added a customer service area and bathroom. Since then we’ve installed scanners, upgraded the deli, and bought new bulk bins. In 1997, we adopted a patronage refund system. A few years later we added benefits like member-only sales items and Quarterly Super Sale Days. This membership program overhaul is still helping us attract many new members.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT



TUCKED IN OUR PRODUCE DEPARTMENT you'll usually find a basket or rack with off-price produce that's past its prime but still good to go. Reducing waste is in step with cooperative values.

MEMBER REMINDER

Our SuperSale Days are on the first Wed. in March and September. Members get 10 percent off purchases (except wine, beer and cigarettes).

Management Team Erica Buswell (erica@belfastcoop.com), Ronald "Goldy" Goldstein (goldy@belfastcoop.com) and Sanford "Pepper" Bush (pepper@belfastcoop.com)

Board of Directors Kip Penney, *president*, Bindy Pendleton, *co-vice president*, Debbi Laski, *co-vice president*, Susan Lauchlan, *secretary*, Allen Ginsberg, *treasurer*, Dagny Currier, *staff representative*, Zafra Whitcomb, *staff representative*, Karen Aveni, Richard Brown, Lorna Crichton, Scott Giroux, Wayne Kraeger, Michael Marino, Jerry Savitz, Paul Sheridan, and Peri Tobin

Hours Belfast Co-op is open 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day and Easter.



BELFAST CO-OP TIPS, TIDBITS AND FUN FACTS

- Co-op Café, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, is a great place to meet and make friends.
- Maine's largest organic produce selection north of Portland.
- Fair Trade items, including Fair Trade Coffee.
- One of the best coffee selections in Maine—or anywhere!
- More than 5,000 natural health and beauty products.
- A bulk department with everything from grains to coconut to local honey. Bring your own containers to reduce packaging waste.
- Fresh bulk herbs and spices at great prices.
- Local organic wines and internationally recognized vintages. Sample them at our monthly Friday night wine tastings.
- Local and imported cheeses.
- Fresh natural breads from local bakeries.
- Handcrafted sausages made on the premises from our own recipes.
- Free range and organic poultry from local farms.
- Organic and naturally raised local beef and pork.
- Seafood from local distributors and our fishing community.
- A wide selection of ethnic foods and cooking ingredients.
- Maine's largest selection of imported and locally brewed beers.
- Fermenting and brewing supplies, including high-end vintners' yeasts.
- Note cards by local artists, bouquets from local growers.
- Books on health, nutrition and personal growth and magazines you won't find at the supermarket.
- Organic and locally made chocolates.
- A stop on Down East magazine's "Hippie Trail."