

Belfast Co-op News & Commentary

A natural food and products store serving Midcoast Maine since 1976

JULY/AUGUST 2009

Customer Appreciation Day: Aug. 15

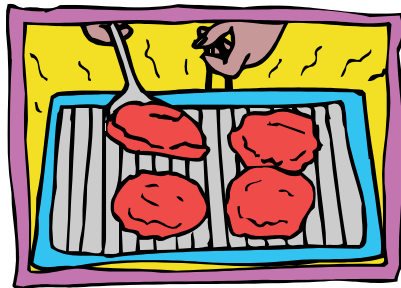
A summertime tradition

The Co-op's annual **Customer Appreciation Day is Saturday, Aug. 15** this year. As in past years, our parking lot will sizzle with live music and an all-day cookout. The event, which runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., also includes product samples, charity book sale and raffles, door prizes, a blood mobile and more.

Customer Appreciation Day is our opportunity to say "thank you" to our valued customers, who have chosen to keep their food dollars local by supporting a business that is community-owned and -operated. We have more than 2,800 members, each with an equal ownership share and a vote in our annual election.

Our cookout, which runs from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., includes a Maine summertime favorite, corn-on-the-cob, local and sweet. Also on the menu this year are Scottish High-

land beef burgers from A Wee Bit Farm in Orland, beef burgers from Caldwell Family Farm in Turner, veggie burgers, natural and veggie hot-dogs, fruit cups and natural beverages.



BURGER BONANZA: Scottish Highland burgers from A Wee Bit Farm, burgers from Caldwell Family Farm, and veggie burgers will be cooked on the grill for Customer Appreciation Day. Natural and veggie hotdogs, too!

In the afternoon join us for music with the Co-op's Wild Rutabagas and other local musical groups. A book sale and gift basket raffles will raise money for local nonprofits. A blood mobile will be on site for those wishing to donate blood.

Many of our vendors will line the parking lot with samples and demonstrations. At our information table, you can learn more about the benefits of having cooperatives in the community. The Co-op's mission is to provide local and organic foods when possible. Presently we have over 100 locally grown products available, from meats and cheeses to fresh produce, grains and honey.

Shopping bag charge? Bring a bag to avoid it

During our recent member survey, respondents came out in favor of our new "bring your own bag" policy. Starting earlier this year, we stopped offering recycled plastic bags but continued providing brown paper bags. Yet members also expressed some reservations. "What if I forget my bags?" "What about visitors to our store?"

Also, to our surprise, nearly 10 percent of survey participants proposed that we offer grocery bags for a fee to those who need them, something municipalities in the Seattle and San Francisco area and the United Kingdom have been exploring.



We think they may be onto something. As of August 1, we'll start charging 25 cents per brown paper bag at checkout for customers needing them.

Why did we settle on a quarter per bag? The idea is to set the fee high enough to give customers pause to

Co-op adds customer service area

The Co-op's new Customer Service Area should be up and running by Aug. 1. The space was designed by local interior designer and Co-op member Linda Mattson and was constructed by Richard Grey with help from board member volunteers Scott Giroux and Wayne Kraeger.

Located at the front of the store near the deli, this area will contain a small office, express lane cash register, customer service desk, member resources

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Belfast Co-op Store

123 High St.

Belfast, ME 04915

Phone: 207-338-2532

Fax: 207-338-5234

Web site: www.belfast.coop

E-mail: info@belfastcoop.com

Hours:

7:30 a.m.-8 p.m. daily

Closed New Year's Day, Easter,

Thanksgiving and Christmas

General Management Team

Erica Buswell

Ronald "Goldy" Goldstein

Board of Directors

Bindy Pendleton, president

Debbi Lasky, vice president

Allen Ginsberg, treasurer

Peri Tobin, secretary

Paul Sheridan, scribe

Phil Prince, staff representative

Zafra Whitcomb, staff representative

Russ Barber

Jeanne Gail

Wayne Kraeger

Kip Penney

Jerry Savitz

Jerome Weiner

Newsletter

Erica Buswell, editor

Mary Ruoff, copy editor and

graphic designer

Notes from our Deli

We serve brunch from
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on
Saturday and Sunday.
Homemade pancakes
and waffles, yum!
Hope to see you for
brunch this summer!

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section, and a children's reading nook. We will be adding storage cabinets for the small office, resources and bulletin boards for customers, and interactive toys related to healthy foods for the children's space.

We'd love help pulling together the children's reading nook. We need: children's books about where food comes from (agriculture and nature) and healthy eating, puzzles and games with a similar focus, and big pillows. Contact Fran (338-2532, education@belfastcoop.com) to donate, or if you have questions or ideas. Thanks!

Co-op Events: July-Aug.

Café Gallery Art Shows July: "My Life Until Now" These paintings by Irene MacCollar are inspired by nearly a decade of living and painting on a Maine Island and her appreciation for the stark, honest beauty of the state's rural architecture. MacCollar works mostly in watercolor, is also a writer, and lives in Belfast. To view more of her art visit her web site, www.whiteheronstudios.com. Aug:

"Photographs by Cricket Lyman" What would our landscape, bay and islands look like without human development? Cricket (Christopher) Lyman's photos of the natural beauty of the area create the illusion that no humans live here.

Belfast Co-op Board of Directors Meetings 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thurs. July 23 and Thurs. Aug. 27, Waterfall Arts, 256 High St.

Wine & Food Tastings 7-9 p.m. Fri. July 17 and Fri. Aug. 21 in the Co-op Café. 10% off wine purchases at tastings. You must be 21 or over to attend.

Herb Walk and Workshop 6:30-8 p.m. Thurs. July 30, East Belfast. Learn about culinary and medicinal herbs with local herbalist Bindy Pendleton. Bindy, owner of East Side Herbals, will give us a tour of her extensive herb gardens. After the tour she will share information about using herbs for cooking while teaching us how to make herb butter. Everyone will have some butter to take home afterwards. Space is limited. Please preregister at the Belfast Co-op, 338-2532. A \$5 materials fee is required at registration. Carpooling from the Co-op is an option.

Raw Foods Talk with Chef Matthew Kenney 6:30-7:30 p.m. Thurs. July 16, Co-op Café. Matthew Kenney, a chef and author known for his special interest in raw and vegetarian cuisine, will speak about how he discovered raw food and how it changed his life, both personally and professionally. He will explain the basic principles behind the cuisine, share his culinary philosophy, and offer tips on how to incorporate this healthy cuisine into your day to day life. To learn more about Matthew visit his website at www.matthewkenneycuisine.com.

Free Chiropractic Screenings 3-4 p.m. Sat. July 18, Co-op Café, by Dr. Eric Betz, a certified applied kinesiology chiropractor in Lincolnville.

Belfast Farmer's Market Festival Fri. July 24, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., upper Main St. Support area farmers, enjoy live music at market's monthly street festival.

Customer Appreciation Day Sat. Aug. 15, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Co-op parking lot. Music, cookout, food samples, charity raffles and book sale, and more.

Tour the Belfast Co-op with Maine Health Coach

Gretchen Heilman Sat. Aug. 15 (Customer Appreciation Day), 9-10:30 a.m. Puzzled over produce? Boggled over bulk grains, beans and herbs? Perplexed by supplements and health food products? Unsure about labels or marketing claims? Whether you are a beginner or a health nut, you will learn something new! Plus, you'll get meal planning tips and shopping secrets. RSVP: gretchenheilman@gmail.com. Meet Gretchen in the produce section!

For more information call Fran Clemetson at the Co-op, 338-2532,
or e-mail her at education@belfastcoop.com

Board Report: *a bimonthly update from the Co-op board*

By Debbi Lasky,
Co-op board vice president

One of the ideas generated by the recent member survey was a board of directors column in the Co-op newsletter. I'm Debbi Lasky, current vice president of the board, and I hope to contribute a few thoughts, update members on what the board is doing, and address questions or concerns that may come my way.

For those unfamiliar with the workings of the board, here is a brief overview. Each member is elected by the Co-op members to serve a three-year term. Board responsibilities include hiring and overseeing the general manager(s) and keeping track of the financial status of the store. The board does not hire any other staff or make decisions about the daily running of the store. Board work is generally done by committees, which then bring recommendations back to the board for discussion and decision making.

One of the bigger issues we are currently working on is the hiring of new general managers. With Pepper Bush having left and Erica Buswell leaving her position as of September, we have been busy working on reconfiguring the general management team, which now consists of Erica and Ronald "Goldy" Goldstein.

The task of interviewing candidates and recommending final candidates to the board belongs to the Management Oversight Committee, a.k.a. the M.O.C. The committee, comprised of Wayne Kraeger, Bindy Pendleton, Kip Penney, Jerry Savitz and myself, started out as the Search Committee about nine years ago when former general manager Gary

Skigen resigned. We now also act as a liaison between the full board and the general management.

We've read through applications, interviewed people, and followed up with second interviews with some. Candidates included both people from other parts of Maine and current employees. We invited some staff members, the current management team, and our human resources "guru" to second interviews to offer questions and impressions from the store worker's perspective. Their ideas and suggestions were very valuable.

Now comes the hardest part, as the M.O.C. decides which combination of people will best serve the Co-op. The process includes making

One of the big issues we are working on is hiring of new general managers. The Management Oversight Committee interviews and recommends candidates.

changes in the general management team and how the responsibilities involved in running the store are divided, as each individual brings their own strengths and abilities. The committee will then present our recommendations to the board for a vote.

The directors realize that members have many questions about what the board has been doing, how the process is proceeding, and when a decision will be made. We are trying to balance making a well thought-out decision with keeping the process moving forward. We will do our best to keep members informed as we finalize our decision.

Co-op goodbye: change can be good

By Pepper Bush,
formerly of the Co-op's
general management team

There are more changes on the horizon concerning the management of our Co-op. As most already know Erica Buswell plans to leave Co-op management this September.

Recent events in my life compelled me to reset my priorities. About a month ago I submitted my resignation as part of the general management team of the Belfast Co-op. By the time this newsletter is published I will be on a leave of absence. I still might return to work at the Co-op in some capacity in the future, as the Co-op's ideals continue to fit well with my way of thinking and living.

The Co-op's board of directors has been planning to reconfigure the general management of the Co-op since Erica submitted her resignation. Applicants from among the staff as well as from outside the store are being interviewed.

I (as well as most of my co-workers) would like to see general management continue as a team selected from among the staff. Regardless of how the Co-op's general management is reconfigured, the new GM will still have a great staff to rely on.

My ten years at the Belfast Co-op have been a great experience, and I'm thankful to have had the opportunity.

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And those principles are at the heart of my proposal to create consumer-owned health care cooperatives.

"My proposal is based on the coop-

erative model that is already so successful across our country. The plan calls for creating private, consumer-owned, non-profit cooperatives that would provide affordable health care

to families, individuals and small businesses." To read the full press release visit <http://conrad.senate.gov/pressroom>, then click on the July 2 release about the proposal.

PRODUCE ROW . . . *BY CHRIS GRIGSBY, PRODUCE BUYER*

Local is where it's at this time of year. Localvores rejoice!

(Just in case you haven't heard, that's the term for people who eat food grown near where they live as much as possible—we hope that's you.)

The soggy start to the summer hasn't slowed our growers down, and our cases are chock full of locally grown items.

Lettuces, greens, mesclun, spinach, sprouts, beet bunches and greens, turnips, Asian cabbages, tomatoes, scallions, parsley, cilantro, mint, oregano, chives, cucumbers, peas and carrots can all be found in our produce department. Broccoli, peppers, eggplants and summer squashes are on the way.

On the fruit front, we already have strawberries, and blueberries are soon to follow along with pie cherries, raspberries and blackberries. As

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celery and celeriac, winter squash and pumpkins.

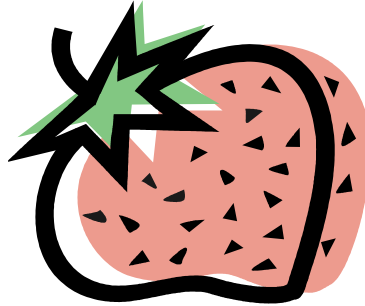
One small field is planted with strawberries, but Jean sees that as a dubious crop, since surprise late frosts, bad weather and varying insect problems can drastically affect the yield in a given year.

No organic sprays are used

Because the farm encourages bird and beneficial insect populations of all sorts, Jean refuses to use even organic sprays on the strawberries—or any of the other crops. “I keep doing strawberries, and in those good years it's great to have that early income, but I've learned not to rely on them as part of the income mix,” Jean said, adding that this year the plants look terrific, at least so far.

A few farm photos, including an aerial shot taken in 2007, can be seen at the farm's web site, www.brightberryfarm.com. The phone number is 234-4225.

in years past you can preorder blueberries and peaches. Stayed tuned for more information on that.



STRAWBERRIES ARE IN and blueberries are soon to follow along with pie cherries, raspberries and blackberries.

West Coast Report: the stone fruit is still shipping well, with good stock and quality. The cherries will slowly wane, but supplies of plums,

pluots, nectarines and peaches should last through most of the summer.

Our apple supply is shifting from South America to New Zealand, and we expect to continue to offer varieties with high quality and lower than normal pricing. The Mexican fruit crop is easing; we should soon start to receive melons and grapes from California. High heat in the West is driving up avocado prices.

Before signing off for this newsletter we would like to thank Teltane Farm in Monroe and Roots-n-Shoots Farm in Montville for another successful year selling seedlings at the Co-op.

As always, thanks for shopping!

Legislative update: food safety, health care co-ops

Thank you to everyone who took part in our letter writing campaign to Maine's Congressional representatives, urging them to vote for responsible food safety legislation. We collected 175 letters and are proud to be sending a clear message to Congress that constituents are keeping tabs on how federal policy can affect our local food supply and food economy.

Latest updates: in early June, the U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee combined elements from the many bills under consideration into one bill, HR 2749, The Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009 “to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to improve the safety of food in the global market, and for other purposes.” At press time it was being recommended for considera-

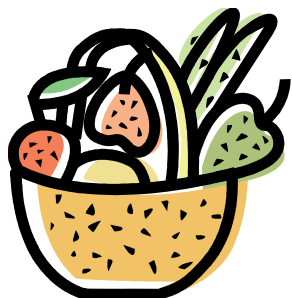
tion by the House. Track its progress by visiting www.thomas.gov or www.govtrack.us.

Senator Kent Conrad (D-North Dakota) has created a proposal to reform health care—reducing costs and improving access and quality—by creating consumer-owned health care cooperatives. Here is an excerpt from his press release about this:

“There is little doubt that America's health care system is in need of serious reform: costs threaten to spiral out of control and swamp not just our federal budget, but also the budgets of everyday families.

“I am committed to helping forge a bipartisan solution to our nation's health care crisis, with reform legislation based on three principles: choice, quality and controlling costs.

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Reach for raw foods this summer

More folks are trying this vegan diet

By Matthew Kenney, Co-op member

Mostly associated with cities such as New York and Los Angeles, raw food refers to a vegan diet with no processed or refined ingredients that have ever been heated above 118 degrees. The term raw food is still new to many but growing in popularity by the day.

U.S. has nearly 300 raw food restaurants

While there were only one or two raw food restaurants in the United States 20 years ago, there are now nearly 300, including one which recently opened in Portland, and many more on the way. It is a lifestyle that is no longer confined to the larger urban areas. In fact, the ingredients required to enjoy a raw lifestyle are often best found in smaller communities, where there is an emphasis on sustainable local farming and sourcing of unique natural products.

When I began preparing raw food—also known as “living food” for its “live” enzymes and nutrients—I found it challenging to source the necessary components while I was in Maine. Today, I find that the state, especially the Belfast area, is a perfect location for eating healthful, delicious, living cuisine.

Co-op has nearly all you need for a raw food diet

The Co-op has nearly all the hard-to-find components I would ever need, including raw cacao powder, goji berries, chia seeds, young coconut butter, and an abundance of local fruits and vegetables. Chase’s Daily of-

fers some of the best summer vegetables I have ever seen, and the local farmer’s market is always full of surprises. In the field behind my house, I find tiny sweet wild strawberries and blackberries. Not only are the ingredients here superior to what I find in New York, where I spend much of my time, they are easier to find and often more affordable.

Many people assume that raw food is hard to prepare and requires a lot of expensive equipment. It does require a very good blender (I recommend a Vita-Mix for anyone interested in creating gourmet raw cuisine), a small dehydrator, and a good set of knives, but the equipment is no more difficult to obtain than any good culinary tools. In fact, since you’ll only need electrical power and a good work space, it can be easier on many levels.

Some raw food dishes are challenging

The more advanced dishes can be very challenging, but that is true of all styles of food. Everyday raw food should be as simple as incorporating more raw greens, fruits and vegetables into your daily diet. It is like exercise and need not be an all or nothing commitment, but simply a step towards consuming a greater quantity of unrefined products. The results will be more energy, less or no illness, the need for fewer hours of sleep, and an overall sense of well being, not to mention great tasting food.

Join Matthew Kenney at the Belfast Co-op on Thursday, July 16 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Co-op Cafe. A chef and author known for his special interest in raw and vegetarian cuisine, he will speak about how he discovered raw food and how it changed his life, both personally and professionally. He will explain the basic principles behind the cuisine, what his culinary philosophy is, and offer tips on how to incorporate this healthy cuisine into your day to day life. To learn more visit www.matthewkenneycuisine.com.

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reflect on the costs of creating and disposing of waste. Though not exorbitant, the charge should help shoppers get into the habit of bringing bags with them whenever they hit the streets to shop. Yet they’ll know they won’t be stuck if they forget.

While our primary motivation for implementing this new program is educational, it will also allow us to offset the costs of purchasing the brown paper and plastic bags (for items like produce) that we make

available throughout the store.

The bag fee is also in line with the prices we are charging for coffee bags and plastic containers. Boxes will continue to remain free for the taking, however.

We would appreciate hearing your comments about this new program. Please direct them to a floor manager or member of the management team.

Thank you, survey respondents

A big “Thank You” to everyone who took the time to reply to this year’s member survey. The results

have been compiled and are available on our web site. Access them directly at <http://www.belfast.coop/Survey2009.pdf>, or, from our homepage, click on the link for Co-op Newsletter, Reports and Policies, then scroll down to the 2009 Member Survey link.

Your thoughts and opinions are very important to us, and we’ve gleaned valuable information from the survey that will help us set priorities and goals for the 2010 fiscal year.

Co-op Vendor Profile: BrightBerry Farm

Dixmont farmers focus on fruit

BrightBerry Farm in Dixmont sits on the last 30 homestead acres of a large farm that was established around 1830 and was an active dairy until about 40 years ago. David Bright and Jean Hay Bright bought the property in 1999, envisioning an organic pick-your-own raspberry and high-bush blueberry operation, with some annual vegetables in the early years.

The couple was not new to farming. After a 10-year stint as a reporter and bureau chief for the Bangor Daily News (BDN), Jean opened and ran Hay's Farm Stand in Blue Hill during the 1980s and early 1990s in partnership with Penobscot farmer Dennis King. Jean's farm was one of the earliest to be certified organic by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA).

Time-consuming off-farm work

At about the same time, David was the agriculture and environmental writer and state editor for the BDN and served on the Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District board for 15 years when he lived in Winterport.

Due to David's time-consuming off-farm jobs, and Jean's equally time-consuming 2006 political campaign against U. S. Senator Olympia Snowe, the farm has not evolved as quickly as they had hoped. But progress has been rapid recently, with both of them now working full time on the farm.

Pick-your-own operation in time

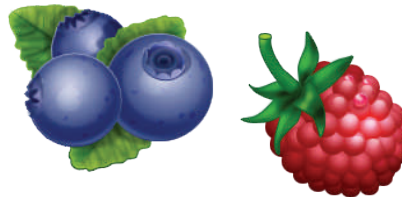
The entire harvest of one active raspberry patch has been supplying frozen fruit to several MOFGA Common Ground Country Fair vendors for many years now. Four more red raspberry and black raspberry patches are in various stages of development, but the "pick-your-own"

part of the plan is still a couple of years away.

A small 60-plant plot of high-bush blueberries finally reached maturity last year, with most of the bountiful harvest being sold fresh at the Co-op. The half-acre blueberry patch planted two years later should start producing this year.

Growing cherry production

The one Montmorency sour (pie) cherry tree on the property has been producing more cherries each year. That's been so encouraging that David and Jean planted 15 new cherry trees last year—along with a few plum and peach trees—to round out their fruit offerings.



BRIGHTBERRY FARM frozen blueberries and raspberries are sold to several Common Ground Country Fair food vendors. Pick-your-own patches are a few years away.

Meanwhile, the farm has developed a reputation for its cherry tomatoes, particularly its Sun Gold and other sweet orange varieties, along with several red types. BrightBerry Farm cherry tomatoes could be found last year at the Co-op, two Hannaford stores in Bangor, and at Whole Foods in Portland.

Two hoop houses for tomatoes

The tomato plants are grown in two hoop houses that cover about 2,000 square feet of ground. Other vegetables grown on various size plots (together totaling about half an acre) include peas, leeks, onions, garlic,

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Jean Hay Bright's favorite pie recipe

By Jean Hay Bright, BrightBerry Farm

This is my favorite pie recipe, using frozen blueberries or sour (pie) cherries, both of which we grow at our BrightBerry Farm in Dixmont. It's modified from a recipe in my "Joy of Cooking" cookbook 1975 edition. You can use fresh fruit, but I'm usually so busy in July (cherries) and August (blueberries) that I don't have time to make pies. This is for the filling only—for the crust you're on your own. (Try Co-op front end manager Mylisa Vowles' "Perfect Pie Crust" recipe in the "Belfast Co-op Cookbook." It's \$10 at our registers and at Fertile Mind Book Shop, 105 Main St.)



Berry/Cherry Pie Using Frozen Fruit

20 oz. of frozen blueberries or pitted (!!) sour cherries
 3 tbs quick-cooking tapioca
 1 ¼ cups organic cane sugar
 1/8 tsp salt
 1 tsp cinnamon
 2 tbs soft butter

Defrost berries only until fruit is separated. Add tapioca, sugar, salt and cinnamon, stir. Add soft (or melted) butter to fruit mixture, stir to distribute chunks throughout. Set aside while making pie dough and while oven heats to 450 degrees. Add fruit mixture to pie shell, cover filling with pie crust top or lattice. Immediately bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes, then reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake for 40-45 minutes more or until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbling.