

# Belfast Co-op News & Commentary

*A natural food and products store serving Midcoast Maine since 1976*

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009

## Fall: Time for our Eat Local Challenge

During the month of November, the Co-op encourages anyone who eats to participate in our third Annual Eat Local Challenge.

As the locavore (eat local) movement continues to gain momentum, we've focused on what the Co-op community can do to improve our local food economy. Our annual Challenge is one of many ways we're stepping up to the plate and trying to fill it with as much local food as possible.

Of course, it also takes each one of us as individuals to make the "eat local" movement grow. The Challenge offers us a tangible way to do so.

All of you who participated in our March challenge are well aware of the economic impact of eating locally grown and produced foods. Russell Libby, executive director of the Maine Organic

Farmers and Gardeners Association, estimates that if every family in Maine spends just \$10 weekly on local products, Maine's econ-



SHARING A MEAL or a food item with someone who isn't familiar with the local foods movement is the goal of our third annual Eat Local Challenge.

omy would gain an additional \$270.4 million annually.

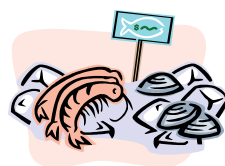
While many Co-op members are already spending \$10 a week or

more on local foods, there are many others in our community to who have never heard the term "locavore." Our goal is to inspire Eat Local Challenge participants to take their love of local food and use it as a tool for activism and building community around the table.

Along with our co-sponsors—Maine Farmland Trust, WERU Community Radio, Belfast Free Library and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast Green Sanctuary Committee—we are challenging locavores to introduce a local food to someone else in our community who hasn't yet discovered the joys of eating locally. Invite a potential locavore to breakfast or dinner; bring a local food treat to work or school to share; donate a bag of local foods to a community supper,

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## Port Clyde Fresh Catch: Co-op's newest local seafood supplier



The Co-op is proud to again partner with Port Clyde Fresh Catch to bring you wild-caught, local seafood, now available in our fish case.

For the past two years, many Co-op customers have been enjoying fresh seafood from Port Clyde Fresh Catch, which is the business arm of the Midcoast Fishermen's Cooperative, based in Port Clyde on the St. George Peninsula. Our customers have purchased fish through the cooperative's innovative Community

Supported Fishery program, which lets consumers buy a weekly share of the catch.

We are now able to offer the cooperative's sustainably harvested seafood to all customers by making it part of our regular seafood selection.

Port Clyde Fresh Catch is currently selling shrimp catch shares. To get more details, or to sign up, visit [www.portclydefreshcatch.com](http://www.portclydefreshcatch.com). Shares will be available for pick-up at the Co-op on Sundays this winter.

## Co-op sign gets facelift

The original Co-op sign, which hung in our Main Street locale back in the 1970s, has been restored.

Featuring our signature apple, it designed and built by Douglas Coffin, a local stone carver. He spotted it on our Pendleton Street facade recently and reminded us of its past.

Like us, Doug is pleased to see it back up and looking good. A big thanks to Phil Prince, maintenance department manager, for restoring the sign. Stop by the side of our building and take a look at this beautiful piece of Co-op history.

*Belfast Co-op Store*

123 High St.

Belfast, ME 04915

Phone: 207-338-2532

Fax: 207-338-5234

Web site: [www.belfast.coop](http://www.belfast.coop)E-mail: [info@belfastcoop.com](mailto:info@belfastcoop.com)*Hours:*

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

Closed New Year's Day, Easter,

Thanksgiving and Christmas

**General Management Team**

Chris Grigsby

Joe Jordan

Mylisa Vowles

**Board of Directors**

Bindy Pendleton, president

Debbi Lasky, vice president

Allen Ginsberg, treasurer

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**Newsletter**

Erica Buswell, editor

Mary Ruoff, copy editor and  
graphic designer

## Belfast Farmers' Market is open through mid-Dec. but moves indoors

The Belfast Farmers' Market has moved to Aubuchon Hardware, 231 Northport Ave (U.S. 1), for its indoor Winter Market.

This seven-week market, which runs from 9 a.m. to noon on Fridays through Dec. 18, is well-stocked with gift items and specialty foods for the holidays. Some gift items are ready to ship.

Vendors will also continue to offer the locally grown and produced foods sold at the organization's outdoor market during the warm weather months: goat and cow cheeses, specialty baked goods, dips, spreads, grass-fed meats and chicken, eggs, honey, seasonal fruits and vegetables, and hand-crafted goods, from baskets to pottery to dried flowers. For more information, or to sign up for the market's newsletter, visit [www.belfastfarmersmarket.org](http://www.belfastfarmersmarket.org).

## Co-op Events: Nov.-Dec.

**Café Gallery Art Shows** Nov.: "Blurring Boundaries" by Lisa Martin.

Dec.: Art by "Clarity." Robert and Su.Sane Hake are visionary artists who collaborate under the name Clarity. They see art making—painting, writing, reaching—as a connection to a higher realm. Their artistic works are visible messages from the sacred.

**Belfast Co-op Board of Directors Meetings** 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Thurs. Nov. 19 and Thurs. Dec. 17, Waterfall Arts, 256 High St. *Note:* because of the holidays, meetings are on the third Thurs. in Nov. and Dec. instead of the fourth.

**Wine & Food Tastings** 7-9 p.m. Fri. Nov. 20 and Fri. Dec. 18 in the Co-op Café. 10% off wine purchases at tastings. You must be 21 or over to attend. *Note:* Dec. tasting is the last one until April.

**"Fresh" Showing and Discussion** 6:30-8 p.m. p.m. Tues. Nov. 3, Belfast Free Library, 106 High St. Following this film about the sustainable foods movement will be a discussion with farmers Polly Shyka and Prentice Grassi, owners of Village Farm in Freedom. To learn more visit [www.freshthemovie.com](http://www.freshthemovie.com). The film and discussion are co-sponsored by the Belfast Co-op and the Belfast Free library as part of the Co-op's November Eat Local Challenge (*see article page 1*).

**Helping Kids Eat Well** 6-7:30 p.m. Thurs. Nov. 5, Co-op Café. Imagine kids begging for broccoli, yelping for yams, or hoarding a stash of kale in their rooms. Sound crazy? At this free seminar we'll be talking about how to get the little ones to eat healthy with lots of creative tips. Parents with toddlers or even teenagers who want the same one or two foods every day will be filled up with ideas. Kids are welcome to participate in this hands-on class, which includes a scavenger hunt and snack-making session. There will be healthy recipes for families to take home.

**Bread Baking with Weeping Duck Farm** 6-7:30 p.m. Thurs. Nov. 12, Co-op Café. Learn about bread baking with our local fermented food expert Roy Antaki of Weeping Duck Farm. He will discuss the ingredients needed (wheat, water, yeast, salt), preparing and fermenting dough, forming and shaping bread, and different types of bread, from French bread to tortillas to brioche.

**The Best Holiday Ever** 6-7:30 p.m. Thurs. Dec. 10, Co-op Café. Learn tools for dealing with holiday stress with holistic health counselor and clinical herbalist Gretchen Heilman.

For more information call Fran Clemetson at the Co-op, 338-2532,  
or e-mail her at [education@belfastcoop.com](mailto:education@belfastcoop.com)

**REMINDER:**  
**The Co-op is**  
**closed on**  
**Thanksgiving,**  
**Christmas and**  
**New Year's Day**

## Board Report: Co-op feels economy's bite

By Allen Ginsberg,  
Co-op board treasurer

As a member of the Co-op Board of Directors and our current treasurer, I have decided to write the members and share some insights on our current financial picture.

As you are well aware, the financial climate of the world, nation, state and county is in a bit of flux, to say the least. We at the Co-op are not immune from the climate of uncertainty that engulfs the clouded financial picture. In the past year, concurrent with natural trends in both the grocery and organic foods industries, we have seen our gross sales decrease by almost 2 percent. In the food store world, that corresponds to a big difference in our profitability.

While we did close our past fiscal year, ending September 30, in the black, our profits did not meet our targeted goals. We have undertaken

a few steps that we hope bring about positive changes in the new fiscal year, but we are still facing many uncertainties.

We are still committed to running a first-rate store that is member and customer friendly. But we have felt a

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need to change some of our approaches to business. Due to a rise in theft, we have decided to install security cameras to try and cut back on our losses. We will try to avoid hiring additional labor during the winter months in order to control payroll expenses. To boost sales, we are

working on lowering prices on some items and fine-tuning our purchasing procedures to allow us to take advantage of great deals. At the same time, we are still committed to giving our employees a living wage and health care benefits and to providing a respectful, cooperative workplace.

In the world of business, we are doing fine, although we would like to see improved profitability in the coming year. We are always looking for ideas and suggestions from you, our members and shoppers.

As a true locally owned store, we are proud to be able to give back to the community in many ways, and to offer quality local, organic and natural products.

Thank you, members and shoppers, for supporting your community-owned store. This holiday season, let's all hope and work together for a better tomorrow.

## Belfast is home to Maine Farmland Trust

Did you know there is only one statewide land trust devoted exclusively to farmland protection? Its office is right here in Belfast at 97 Main St. Its mission is to protect and preserve Maine farmland, keep land in agriculture, and support the future of farming in Maine.

Founded in 1999, Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) works to coordinate efforts to keep farmland in the hands of farmers, ensuring that agriculture will have a vital and viable future in our state. It's estimated that over the last 15 years, Maine has lost more than 800,000 acres of rural land to development, much of it farmland that was growing food for our communities. To date, MFT has been able to preserve 13,000 acres of Maine farmland.

Maine Farmland Trust recognizes

that without protection, many farms will be driven out of business by development pressure. As farmers age and retire, many want to sell their land. As developers buy it, it becomes too expensive for prospec-



tive or existing farmers to purchase.

Maine Farmland Trust works to prevent this through several programs. Generally, farmland is preserved through "agricultural easements," which bars subdivision and

removal of prime soils but allows for a variety of uses that support farming. MFT works with farmland owners who want to donate easements as well as those who are interested in selling easements. This is done through Land for Maine's Future or the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

Once protected, farmland is sold for a price that reflects its value as working land, not as house lots. This allows prospective farmers to begin new enterprises and helps existing farmers to expand or buy land they currently lease.

MFT also purchases at-risk farms, preserves them, and resells them to farmers at "farmland value." Its Maine FarmLink program connects prospective farmers with those who

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# PRODUCE ROW . . . *BY CHRIS GRIGSBY, PRODUCE PURCHASING MANAGER*

As the autumn leaves fall on the local farms, we are enjoying the full bounty of harvest time. Squashes and pie pumpkins are in abundance, as are all the root crops: carrots, potatoes, cabbages, beets, turnips, radish, celeriac, rutabagas.

As this issue goes to print, we are hearing rumors of parsnips soon to come, as they sweeten after hard frosts. We are also continuing to offer local leeks, parsley, cilantro, spinach, kale, collards and chard, as well as lots of local apples and pears. We are especially excited to have all this available for the November Eat Local Challenge (*see article page 1*)!

Even though the growing season is just finishing up, we are beginning to tally the numbers and line up farmer meetings so we can make plans for



next year. The farmers use the winter time to plot their garden plans and buy seeds, so having our information on hand is very helpful.

*West Coast Report*: the focus at this

time of year is gearing up for the holidays. West Coast growers are busy rolling out the new citrus, which should start arriving by the end of November. Washington pears are here and abundant, which translates into high quality and low price.

Greens and lettuces from away are starting to come from different areas, which will create volatility and quality issues. Prices changes haven't occurred yet, but usually accompany such transitions. Look for pomegranates, persimmons, clementines, minneolas, Meyer lemons and Cara Cara oranges very soon. Thanks for shopping!

## Shop Co-op this holiday



The Co-op is a great place to do some holiday gift shopping, both in our gift section and in the aisles, where you'll find Maine-made jams and chutneys, a large selection of wines, and holiday-theme chocolates.

Items with the Fair Trade label make great gifts because they are about more than the goods themselves: this label ensures that workers in developing countries who produced these foods or crafts were paid a fair price for their work.

At the Co-op, you can buy Fair Trade coffee, tea and chocolate for gift baskets as well as Fair Trade crafts and gift items. Browse our gift nook near the store entrance for these products, which include incense, ornaments, music, and knitted hats and scarves. You'll also find calendars, cards, and Maine-made items.

Our annual Employee Craft Fair in December is offers another chance to combine holiday shopping with a trip to the grocery store. Hand-crafted holiday gifts made by our employees are sold right in the store.

Many Co-op gift items make great Christmas stocking stuffers—as do our always-appreciated gift certificates. Buy them right at checkout.

## Brewing supplies make great gifts at the holidays

With fall's arrival, we've stocked up on brewing supplies for the home brewer and wine- and cider-makers. We carry all the ingredients and equipment needed to produce your favorite brew, including 3-, 5- and 6-gallon glass carboys and 6-gallon fermentation buckets.

A brewing equipment kit is the ideal gift for an aspiring home brewer. For the established brewer, consider a Tru-brew beer kit. It includes ingredients for making a variety of beers. For more information or assistance, contact Ron, our beer and wine department manager.

## At the Co-op: Donate gloves, hats and mittens for needy kids



Help the Co-op keep our community's children warm! Through December 14, the Co-op is accepting donations of clean new or used children's hats and mittens. Join us in our effort to assist the Waldo County Head Start Program in meeting their goal to provide a record 162 Head Start students with the needed clothing to keep hands and heads warm throughout the coming winter. Contact Cindy, our cashier coordinator, for more information about this charitable holiday project..

## BELFAST CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMITTEES

*Call the contact person listed below for more information and meeting times. Not all committees meet regularly.*

**Board Development and Election Committee** Oversees board orientation, training, handbook, meeting and election process. Debbi Lasky, 589-4546.

**Building and Grounds Committee** Advises on the store's physical plant and environment. Wayne Kraeger, 567-3261.

**Membership and Community Interaction Committee** Responds to communications, complaints and grievances that are directed to the board. Kip Penney, 722-3112.

**Finance Committee** Serves as financial advisor to management, oversees Co-op's finances. Allen Ginsburg, 338-1757.

**Long-Range Planning Committee** Guides long-range planning process. Erica Buswell, 338-2532.

**Management Oversight Committee** Meets regularly with general management team and evaluates team members. Bindy Pendleton, 338-4256.

**Purchasing Policy Committee** Reviews our purchasing policy and process. Paul Sheridan, 322-3961.

**Recycling Committee** Reviews our recycling policy. Bindy Pendleton, 338-4256.

*(Continued from page 1)*

soup kitchen or food pantry. These are just a few ways locavores can have a greater impact on their community and local food economy.

The second part of Challenge is to take the long view of the benefits of a local diet. A \$10 weekly local foods bill does more than boost our local economy. It helps preserve of Maine's rural landscape and character by keeping the state's working farmland productive and protected.

Maine Farmland Trust (*see article page 3*) has the ambitious goal of preserving 100,000 acres of Maine farmland by 2012. Challenge participants may want to consider joining or donating to Maine Farmland Trust ([www.maineFarmlandtrust.org](http://www.maineFarmlandtrust.org)).

Please visit the blog at our web site, [www.belfast.coop/blog](http://www.belfast.coop/blog), to learn more about the Challenge and how to take part. You'll find recipes and resources and can post your stories and experiences. As in past years, the event concludes with a Harvest Celebration Dinner at the UU Church, 37 Miller St. Look for details on our web site and in the store.

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are selling farmland and want it to remain in agriculture.

As consumers, there are lots of things we can do to help further the mission of Maine Farmland Trust. Visit the group's web site, [www.maineFarmlandtrust.org](http://www.maineFarmlandtrust.org), to see how you can help. Shopping at roadside stands and farmers' markets is just one example.

## Sun. winter hours start in January

The Co-op's Sunday winter hours start Jan. 4. From then through April we will be open 9 a.m.–6 p.m. Sundays. Our regular 7:30 a.m.–8 p.m. hours will remain in place the rest of the week. We return to regular hours on Sunday on May 2.

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rations that own the seed patents than to the animals and the people who eat the food."

The Neals' management practices, while philosophically motivated, are also a selling point for their business. With Thanksgiving just around the corner, many health-conscious consumers are looking for a holiday centerpiece that is all natural and farm fresh—and they turn to The Turkey Farm. The Neals expect to sell some 1,400 turkeys this coming holiday; 800 birds will go directly to customers and the rest will be wholesaled.

However, these numbers don't account for the entire flock. Turkey can be eaten more than once a year, and the Neals encourage this. To that end, The Turkey Farm operates a year-round farm store in New Sharon. It also offers Community Supported Agriculture shares in which participants pay up front for their food and reap the benefits throughout the harvest season.

Another large component of extending their business beyond Thanksgiving is what the Neals term "further-processed items" (including breasts, roasts, thighs, drumsticks, livers, ground meat and sausage). Further-processed items are available to customers at natural food stores throughout the state and can also be ordered online via the farm's web site. The Co-op stocks many of its value-added products and will take preorders for other items.

## Thanksgiving food baskets

*This Thanksgiving, as in past years, the Co-op can help you help others. For less than \$20, buy a Thanksgiving food bag for Northport Food Pantry to distribute to families in need. Each bag is filled with all the fixings for Thanksgiving dinner, save the turkey.*

## Turkey trotters: Couple's turkey farm is nearly a quarter of a century old

By Holli Cederholm,  
Co-op produce department

Now in their 24th year, The Turkey Farm of New Sharon holds claim to the title of “Maine's largest turkey farm,” though this was not always the case. Farm owners and operators Bob and Marilyn Neal started off producing a little of everything in 1980, including mixed vegetables, poultry and pork. After years of working off-the-farm jobs to supplement their farm income (Bob in journalism, Marilyn in record-keeping for the home-health industry), they decided their business should have a more concrete focus: turkeys.

The Co-op is one of a number of stores around the state that sells the farm's turkeys at Thanksgiving (*see sidebar*) and year-round.

In 1986, the Neals raised 100 turkeys. The following year they raised 300, the next 800. Now the flock fluctuates between 3,300 and 4,100 annually. This may seem like a lot, but The Turkey Farm always manages to sell what it produces—and with good reason.

One of the farm's selling points is that their turkeys have a different taste and texture because of how the birds are raised. The turkeys are allowed to roam freely within “range” areas. The farm has 7 acres of fenced range, and the flock den-

sity is managed so that no more than 400 adult turkeys are allotted to each acre.

The Neals do other things differently when it comes to turkeys. As opposed to lots of “conventional” turkey farmers, they only administer antibiotics when necessary (like

when a bird is threatened with a virulent disease), rather than routinely. In fact, they haven't had to use any antibiotics in their flocks since

2004. They don't use chemical flavor enhancers at the time of slaughter either. They don't need to.

“Our turkeys taste great because they walk off some of the fat that accumulates on conventional turkeys,” Bob Neal stated in the Turkey Farm's most recent newsletter (visit [www.theturkeyfarm.org](http://www.theturkeyfarm.org)). He attests that with turkeys, the flavor comes from the meat and not the fat.

The flavor might also have something to do with the birds' high-quality food. On top of having access to perennial grasses and other wild fodder, these birds eat grains that are certified to be free of genetic engineering. “Using genetically clean feed is in keeping with our philosophy of walking lightly on the land. We be-

lieve that genetic engineering works more to the advantage of the corpo-

(Continued on page 5)

***In 1986, the Neals raised 100 turkeys. The following year they raised 300, the next 800. Now the flock fluctuates between 3,300 and 4,100 annually.***



## Preorder a Thanksgiving turkey today

**Shop the Co-op to  
trim price per pound**

The Co-op is presently accepting preorders for Thanksgiving Turkeys. We are offering natural turkeys for \$3.95 per pound from The Turkey Farm in New Sharon and organic turkeys for \$4.95 per pound from Tidemill Farm in Edmunds.

Supplies are limited, and birds will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis, according to available sizes. Customers can preorder at the register or by calling the Co-op at 338-2532. Birds will be available for pick-up on Tues. Nov. 24 and Wed. Nov. 25.

*New this year:* all customers who preorder a turkey can join our Turkey Buying Club, which allows you to make additional payments of \$5 to \$10 weekly toward your bird, up to \$60.

Customers can also reduce the cost of their turkeys by making additional purchases between Nov 11 and Nov 25: buy \$75 in Co-op goods to save 10 cents per pound; \$125 in goods to save 20 cents per pound; and \$175 in good to save 30 cents per pound. Be sure to save your receipts—we'll add them up to determine your discount.

It shouldn't be hard to hit your cost-per-pound goal, since the Co-op has all you need for a bountiful Thanksgiving spread: fresh cranberries, local and organic potatoes and winter squash, local pie pumpkins and apples, baking supplies, stuffing mixes, a great assortment of holiday wines, and more.