

Belfast Co-op News & Commentary

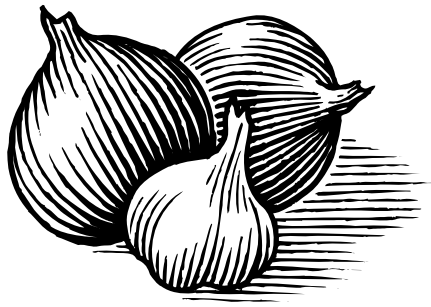
A natural food and products store serving Midcoast Maine since 1976

MARCH/APRIL 2010

Eat Local Challenge: Enjoy local foods through winter's end

The Belfast Co-op—along with our co-sponsors, the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), Belfast Free Library, Green Sanctuary Committee of the Belfast Unitarian Universalist Church and WERU Community Radio—invite you to join our 6th Eat Local Challenge. Taking place throughout March, it will challenge you to take stock of the local foods that are plentiful through late winter. The larder is not empty!

The Co-op holds the Challenge twice a year, collaborating with other



community organizations to promote the importance of locally grown food. Last November's Challenge was a partnership with Maine Farmland Trust, whose mission is to preserve Maine's rapidly decreasing farmland. We joined with MOFGA for the March Challenge in order to highlight the ecological benefits of small, local, organic farms.

MOFGA's mission is to "... help farmers and gardeners: grow organic food, fiber and other crops; protect the environment; recycle natural re-

(Continued on page 5)

Co-op launches lending library

A lending library is the latest addition to the Co-op's community outreach program.

Customers and community members can visit the store to check out books and DVDs about food, healthy living and sustainability at no cost. A \$10 deposit is required to take out DVDs. Books are being checked out on the honor system.

Thank you to the community members who have donated most of the library's offerings. They range from relatively new titles like Eric Schlosser's "Fast Food Nation" to the classic "Putting Food By" by Ruth Hertzberg, Beatrice Vaughan and Janet Greene. DVD's include the 2009 Mosaic Films release "Big River," a follow-up to the Peabody Award-winning documentary "King Corn" that explores the environmental impact of industrial agriculture, and "Radically Simply" from Jan

Cannon Films, which features Belfast author and activist Jim Merkel on how to reduce your carbon footprint.

While our lending library is new, the reasons for it are not. In addition to being a retail outlet for natural and whole foods, the Co-op is a resource for information concerning health, nutrition, community organizing and related issues. That's stated right in our mission

statement. As a cooperative, community education and outreach are central to what we do.

More library donations are welcomed and encouraged. Donations of books and DVDs about food, healthy living and sustainability can be left with any staff member.

The library is located in the Co-op's café. DVDs can be checked out with the assistance of the manager on duty.



"No double discount" policy explained

The Co-op maintains a policy of no double discounts on any merchandise. However, since implementing our new sales flyer program, we've seen an increase in the number of preorder customers who've been surprised to learn that they do not receive both the sale price and preorder discount (10 percent, 20 percent on case orders).

The reason for the "no double discount" policy is simple: fiscal responsibility. Double discounting often drops the retail price below the wholesale price.

At checkout, we'll give you the best preorder price: either the case discount or the sale price multiplied by the number of items ordered. Thank you for your cooperation.

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

Winter Hours:

7:30 a.m.–8 p.m. Mon.–Sat.,
9 a.m.–6 p.m. Sun. (Jan.–March)

*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

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

More gluten-free baked goods

Hootin' Gluten Free Bakery in Damariscotta is now supplying the Co-op with its delicious baked goods and breads. In our deli, look for the firm's gluten-free sandwich bread, teacakes, cookies and English muffins—served as a breakfast sandwich or side. Our bread department carries Hootin' sandwich bread and English muffins. We're delighted to offer more gluten-free choices.

Co-op Events: March–April

Cafe Gallery Art Shows March: Troy Howard Middle School Garden Project. April: "Rooting—2010—Mixed Media 4 ft x 2 ft" by Eric A. Leppanen, who makes art with recycled material.

Belfast Co-op Board of Directors Meetings 6:30–8:30 p.m. Thurs. March 25 and Thurs. April 22, Waterfall Arts Center, 256 High St.

Biannual SuperSale Day Mon. March 1. Members-only get 10 percent off all store purchases except wine, beer, cigarettes and periodicals.

Starting Your Garden 6–8:30 p.m., Tues. March 9, Belfast Free Library, 106 High St. Free, part of the Co-op's Eat Local Challenge (*see article page 7*). There will be advice for both novice and experienced gardeners at this presentation by Jean English, editor of The Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener, the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association's quarterly newspaper. Learn about preparing the ground, creating a garden plan, intercropping, succession planting and container gardening. There will be time for questions and to swap garden stories.

Business After Hours 5–7 p.m., Wed. March 10, Co-op Café. Learn about the Co-op and meet other local business people at this networking get-together. For more information contact Goldy at the Co-op, 338-2532.

Co-op Annual Meeting 2:30–5:30 p.m., Sun. March 21, St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, 95 Court St. Dinner follows the meeting; sandwiches and soup will be provided, and members are invited to bring potluck desserts. In addition to the annual report and introduction of board candidates, there will be a discussion of the Co-op's long-term goals and plans (*see article page 3*).

"Big River Harvest Tour" 6:30 p.m., Tues. March 23, Belfast Free Library, 106 High St. Free, part of the Co-op's Eat Local Challenge (*see article page 7*). Showing of "Big River," a documentary by the makers of "King Corn" that reveals how the environmental impact of growing an acre of commercial Iowa corn extends beyond the state. A short version of "King Corn" will also be shown. Heather Spalding of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association will lead a discussion.

Eat Local Challenge Celebration 5–8 p.m., Wed. March 24, Belfast Unitarian Universalist Church, 37 Miller St. Local foods potluck and "Locavore Variety Show" wraps up the Co-op's Eat Local Challenge (*see article page 7*).

Wine & Food Tastings 7–9 p.m. Fri. April 9 in the Co-op Café. 10% off wine purchases at tastings. You must be 21 or over to attend. *Note:* Tastings will be held on the first Friday of the month through December.

Grow Your Own Organic Garden 6–8:30 p.m., Mon. April 12, Belfast Free Library, 106 High St. Free, part of the Co-op's Eat Local Challenge (*see article page 7*). Gardeners of all levels can learn about growing food without the use of harmful chemicals and pesticides.

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

REMINDER:

The Co-op is closed Sunday, April 4 for Easter. Also, regular Sunday hours (7:30 a.m.–8 p.m.) resume Sunday, April 11.

Board Report: March election, meeting

By Debbi Lasky, board vice president

It's annual meeting time again. Here's your opportunity to exercise your membership, both its responsibilities and its benefits.

This year's meeting will be on Sunday, March 21 from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, 95 Court St. A dinner follows the meeting. The Co-op will provide soups and sandwiches. Members are invited to bring potluck desserts.

Your membership represents ownership in the Co-op. The Board of Directors are your representatives, guiding management as it moves the Co-op forward. The direction we take reflects members' interest and ideas. The annual meeting is a great opportunity to air your views, and to enjoy a gathering of Co-op-minded folk for a Sunday supper.

The meeting is also your chance to meet the new candidates for the board, to get to know who they are and their interests. Running for the board and electing new board members is an important part of Co-op membership. Each year new seats become available, giving all members an opportunity to share ideas and expertise by running for the board, or by voting for those who reflect your opinions.

As mandated by our by-laws (written when the Co-op first started and revised by the membership over the years), we need at least 10 percent of members to take part in the vote for the results to take effect. Your vote is very important: we can't conclude the vote unless we reach that "magic" 10 percent.

Every year at election time the board's Elections Committee puts up a poster of candidates' photos and personal statements to help members get a better sense of those running. Coming to the annual meeting, however, gives you an opportunity to speak directly to the candidates.

As a member, you can vote for as many people as there are openings to fill, but the deciding factor is whom you think best represents you. If only one person fits the bill, just vote for that one. Each candidate needs 25 percent of the total number of votes

cast to be elected. People don't automatically win a seat. Your vote counts. So come to the annual meeting, share your ideas and dreams with the rest of us, and share a meal with friends.

Recently the board had a chance to get together for a day and reflect on ideas for the Co-op's future. With the wonderful assistance of facilitator Deb Burwell, we first re-examined our Mission and Purpose Statements, which are in our bylaws. Then we examined where the Co-op is in relation to these statements.

During the daylong session the board came up with a list of things we feel are going well and areas that need attention as we plan. We generated lots of ideas, which we grouped into various categories. From these we drafted a vision of what we hoped to achieve in each area and worked on strategies to help us reach these goals.

There was also a long discussion about the building in general: what it needs in upgrades, how to make it viable for that future, and so on. The day was a terrific opportunity to brainstorm our individual and collective concerns and ideas about the Co-op's future. Having a facilitator kept us on point and helped us draft plans to move on our ideas.

The board would love to share what we see as the Co-op's potential future. We welcome your reaction to our vision as well as your own ideas and thoughts on where the Co-op is or should be headed. The annual meeting is the perfect chance to do this. We look forward to an open, wide-ranging discussion on where the Co-op is headed. See you then!

Remember, the meeting is from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Sunday, March 21 at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, 95 Court St. Dinner to follow! Information about the meeting will be posted at www.belfast.coop and in the store.

Belfast Co-op Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the cooperative is (A) to 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 organization in the community and groups of similar purpose.

Belfast Co-op Mission Statement

The Belfast Cooperative Store is a membership owned and controlled retail outlet for whole natural foods and other goods and provisions. We strive to offer a wide selection of products organically produced and locally sourced whenever available, at reasonable prices, to support healthy lifestyle choices for both our members and the general public. Our intent is to be a resource for information concerning health, nutrition, and the source of our products, as well as for community topics and other related issues.

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

As the winter months give way to early spring, we are looking forward to the local growing season. Our farmer meetings are complete, and it should be an incredible year.

Seeds are already here from Johnny's Selected Seeds in Winslow, Fedco Seeds in Waterville and Vermont's High Mowing Organic



Seeds. We also have heirloom seeds from Belfast's Troy Howard Middle School Seed Saving Program. We

are estimating arrival of seed potatoes and onion sets in April; seed-

lings should arrive the first of May. We are also introducing cover crops from Johnny's and High Mowing, including oats, vetch, clover, buckwheat and rye.

You can still find local produce during this late winter season. Our offerings include beets, potatoes, rutabagas, turnip, hydroponic basil and tomatoes, and apples. We also carry chard and mesclun from the Troy Howard Middle School Garden Program. Don't miss the school's art exhibit in the Co-op Café in March.

West Coast Report: The market is still volatile on the vegetable side, where we still are seeing the effects of the Florida frosts and the transi-

tion to desert-grown items in California. High prices will persist as these markets gain ground. Quality remains fair but selection and availability remain limited. The citrus season is on the wane, but we should see good pricing, and stock levels remain high. Northwest apples will give way to South American with little disruption in availability or quality. Look for grapes, cherries, and strong pricing on berries in the coming months, with stone fruit soon to follow. Thanks for shopping!



To grow all the veggies you need . . .

All you need is a 20-foot by 20-foot plot

By Jean English, Co-op member and editor of *The Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener*, a quarterly publication of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

The average U.S. citizen ate 428 pounds of vegetables in 2000, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (www.usda.gov/factbook/tables/ch2table24.jpg). Of that amount, 202 pounds were fresh vegetables, and 47 pounds were potatoes.

So, what would it take to grow all the vegetables you might eat in a year? Not much, land-wise.

Raised beds help raise production

A traditional home garden, according to the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, may yield about 0.6 pounds of vegetables per square foot, while three years of data from the Dawes Arboretum near Newark, Ohio, showed an average of 1.24 pounds per square foot when vegetables were grown in raised beds. (The added organic matter, lack of foot traffic—thus lack of soil compac-

tion—and increased planting density in raised beds are responsible for the increased yields.)

Assuming you can get a pound of produce per square foot, you could



grow 400 pounds of vegetables in a 20- by 20-square-foot plot. Not bad!

High-yield vegetables

What you grow will determine, in part, the yield per square foot. Johnny's Selected Seeds catalog has a nice table showing average yield per 100-foot-row and per acre. Among the highest yielding vegetables are pole beans, beets, cabbage,

carrots, cucumbers, onions, rutabagas, pumpkins, summer and winter squash, and tomatoes.

Extending the growing season can extend the yield data as well. Plant that 20 by 20 plot with a fall spinach crop once your summer harvest of, say, pole beans is done, and you'll reap at least another 30 pounds of produce. Add a spring crop of spinach for another 30 pounds; and a winter crop (in a hoophouse) for yet another 30 pounds. Growing fall carrots should yield 60 to 70 pounds or more in that 400 square feet.

So it doesn't take much land to grow your own vegetables; and it takes only twice that much to grow veggies for a household of two.

Grow up, or down, to grow more

Growing up (cucumbers on trellises, for example) or down (watercress in hanging baskets) can add even more poundage.

Add a plot of raspberries, strawberries, rhubarb, grapes and highbush blueberries, and you'll be on your

(Continued on page 6)

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. Chris Grigsby, 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)

sources; increase local food production; support rural communities; and illuminate for consumers the connection between healthful food and environmentally sound farming practices." To find out more about MOFGA visit www.mofga.org.

Three ways to participate

There are three way to participate in the March Challenge: educate yourself about the environmental impact of your food choices; boost the local economy by spending at least \$15 weekly on local food; and celebrate the "locavore" movement at our Eat Local Challenge Celebration, where the Challenge wraps up with a potluck, entertainment and lively discussion.

The Co-op is hosting a couple of events to help Challenge participants explore the connections between what we eat and the environment.

On Tuesday, March 9, Jean English, editor of MOFGA's quarterly newspaper, *The Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener*, will present "Starting Your Garden" at 6:30 p.m. at the Belfast Free Library, 106 High St. (see "Events" page 2). She'll talk about growing food without synthetic and chemical fertilizers and pest controls. Both novice and experienced gardeners are welcome.

The Co-op brings the "Big River Harvest Tour" to Belfast on Tuesday, March 23. Join us at 6:30 p.m. at the Belfast Free Library, 106 High St., to watch the agri-business documentary "Big River" (see "Events" page 2). The movie is a sequel to "King Corn," which will be shown in shortened form. Heather Spalding of MOFGA will lead a discussion about the connections between agriculture and the environment.

For previous Challenges, participants were urged to spend \$10 a month on Maine-grown food. This time we've upped the ante by \$5. During March, customers who spend \$15 per shopping trip on Maine-grown products (or those made with

100 percent Maine-grown ingredients) can enter a raffle for a local foods gift basket valued at \$100.

Look for Challenge sales

The Co-op will put local foods on sale for the Challenge. Look for more about these specials at the registers. If you are stumped about what to cook, check out the recipe board at the end of aisle 2.

Finally, join us from 5 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24 for our Eat Local Challenge Celebration. Like past ones, it will be at the Belfast Unitarian Universalist Church, 37 Miller St. (see *Events* page 2).

Building on a tradition started at the fall Celebration, this one will include a "Locavore Variety Show" as well as a potluck of Maine-grown foods. All are welcome to perform a song or poem or somehow share inspiration about the meaning and importance of local food. Donations will be accepted to benefit MOFGA.

Since our March 2009 Challenge, the Co-op has been working to assess the impact the local foods movement is having on our community. We've tracked our weekly sales of Maine-grown products. With community input, we've studied what a sustainable local foods economy needs. The Celebration will be an opportunity to share this knowledge, reflect on what our Challenges have accomplished, and get fresh ideas for future ones.

For a complete list of Challenge happenings see "Events" on page 2. You'll also find Challenge information at www.belfast.coop. Check the blog there for local food resources, tips and tricks.

Coffee for co-ops

Buy these Dean's Beans organic coffee blends over the next few months: Peruvian, sold in our café, and Timor, which we carry in bulk. For each pound sold the company will give 25 cents to its People Centered Development Fund for village cooperatives.

Solar power is shining anew

Upfront costs have dropped in recent years

By Danny Piper, Co-op member and vice president of Sundog Solar Store, Searsport, part of USA Solar Store Co-op

Scott Giroux and Erica Buswell of Searsport have been using solar energy to power their home and Scott's business, Bog Hill Woodworking, since 2001. Scott's off-grid shop runs on 660 watts of photovoltaics with 16 batteries for storage. He simultaneously runs a table saw, dust collector, lights and radio. Scott's take on solar: "Buy the current technology! Don't be afraid; just do it!"

Although solar energy has been available for over 30 years, it's taken the majority of that time to turn it into a viable energy source. In the past, the technology was considered unreliable due to a shortage of service contractors and equipment quality concerns. High installation costs were too burdensome for many.

But times have changed. These days, as this article explains, solar energy is one of the best investments a home owner or business can make.

Going solar is easier than ever

Any investment must be clear about what it will provide, the cost, and when it will net a return. In recent years solar energy has been increasingly recognized as a cost-effective energy provider with a guaranteed payback. Both solar electricity and solar hot water product prices have dropped significantly since they were introduced years ago. Product reliability has increased considerably. Many solar panel manufacturers offer 20- to 25-year warranties.

Strong government incentives and state rebates on renewable energy systems help make it possible to see a return on your investment. There are upfront costs, but programs such as PACE (property assessed clean energy) and bank loans are making solar and renewable energy more available. PACE provides funding

equal to up to 15 percent of your property's value for weatherization and clean energy. A low interest rate is spread over 20 years. The program is now being introduced in Maine.

Average system cost: \$14,000

An installed 2 kilowatt grid-tied photovoltaic (solar electricity) system investment costs about \$14,000 on average and produces about 2,850 kilowatt hours per year. This initial investment costs less than most vehicles and lasts four times as long.

With government incentive programs covering 30 percent of the cost, plus \$2000 in cash rebates from the state, your final cost would be \$7,800. If your utility bill is \$55 per month, you'll make a return on your investment in less than 12 years. Not too shabby for 25 years or more of free electricity, with the added benefit of reducing your carbon footprint and cleaning up our climate.

Gaining energy independence

What would it be like to own your own power plant? Believe it or not, this is possible with the solar power products now available. Their financial benefits are similar to those of owning a home vs. renting. Folks who go this route are no longer looking at paying electricity and hot water bills of \$60 or \$80 per month.

Moving away from oil dependency and its hidden costs is another great reason to become energy independent. In 2008, when gas prices hit more than \$4 per gallon at the pump, we were given a valuable insight into what the future holds for oil and fossil fuels. I think it's safe to say that oil prices will never be consistently reliable or drop in price.

Sundog Solar Store, Route 1 in downtown Searsport, holds an open house starting at noon on Saturday, March 13 with workshops, food, music, door prizes and kids activities (SundogSolarStore.com, 548-1100).

Co-op shampoo!

The Co-op is now carrying private label shampoo and conditioner, produced for us by Earth Spirit Organics/Organic Trader in Canada. These products clean and condition hair without harmful parabens, sodium laurel sulfates, synthetic ingredients and animal products. They come in 100 percent recyclable containers; choose the therapeutic citrus fragrance or unscented. After trying them out let us know what you think!

(Continued from page 4)

way to producing the 279 pounds of fruit that the average American eats in a year. A fascinating article in the May 2007 issue of Growing magazine highlighted a New Hampshire strawberry grower who uses a high-tech, vertical, hydroponic method of growing strawberries in columns of pots, five-high, with four plants at each level, or 20 plants per column. Each plant can produce from one to four pounds of fruit—that's 20 to 80 pounds of fruit per column.

Creative gardening

These columns are placed 20 inches apart. At a median yield of 50 pounds per column, you'd need only six columns of plants, or less than 10 linear feet, to grow 300 pounds of fruit. These Styrofoam columns are expensive (see hydrostacker.com), but I bet a creative grower could find (probably at the Swap Shop) something to make a column for plants, fill it with an organic soil mix, and get pretty good yields. How about nesting pots of decreasing size inside one another, each sitting on enough soil inside the bigger pot so that the top of the smaller pot is raised a few inches above the bigger pot?

High-yield gardening can go a long way toward growing your own food, and all the good things that come from that.

(c) 2009 Jean English (web.me.com/jeanenglish)