

The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter

Summer 2016

What We Could Be



Hours: 7 days a week 9AM–8PM

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About This Newsletter

What improvements might be made to our Co-op building? How could our Co-op reach out further to our community? These are

some of the questions that the Board, staff, Strategic Planning Task force, and responders to the survey have been thinking about. Most articles in this newsletter explore visions of **WHAT WE COULD BE.**

We thank Courtney Farnham for her help in mailing the printed newsletters. As she graduates from Twinfield this year, we wish her all the best for the years ahead.

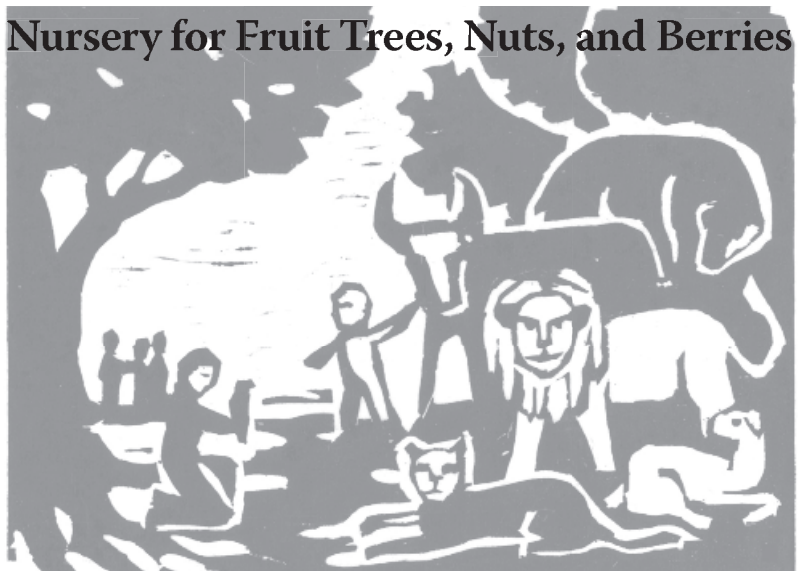
Each issue of the newsletter is the product of a brainstorming session with members of our committee:

- Glenda Bissex, co-ordinator (songboat@vtlink.net)
- Sarah Albert, design and layout (sarah@vtlink.net)
- Joseph Gainza, board liaison (jgainza@vtlink.net)
- Lorraine Checchi, distribution and advertising (lchecchi@myfairpoint.net)
- Debra Stoleroff (debra@vtlink.net)
- Karen Starr, staff liaison (ravenbadger@gmail.com)

We invite **YOUR** ideas, artwork, and articles. ♦

EAST HILL TREE FARM

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3499 East Hill Rd. Plainfield, VT
Check: www.easthilltreefarm.com

President's Report April 2016

by Gail Falk

At this year's annual meeting, the Strategic Planning Task Force gave an overview of its work and findings to date. The Task Force was established by the Board, and the Management Collective concluded last summer that it was time to identify and focus on some long-term goals, including, but not only, the future of the building. Its members are Michael Billingsley, Gail Falk, Bob Fancher, Petra Gates, Ryan Gillard, and Karla Haas Moskowitz.

The four areas of focus for the Task Force are:

1. Develop a master plan for the building
2. Become more welcoming to non-members and community members with less money
3. Address food insecurity
4. Involve members as more than customers

Over the winter the Task Force developed and distributed two surveys: one for members and one for non-members. We collected 99 responses from non-members and nearly 80 responses from members. Here are some of the most important results.

Master Plan for the Building

Members and nonmembers alike were overwhelmingly in favor of a modest increase in shopping space to offer more product shelf space, easier navigation, more light, and a more efficient check-out area. The Task Force also found that the staff needs more office space (at present there is only one cramped office) and more back-storage

space.

Several accessibility concerns were expressed, but the most prominent was the steep stairs and lack of elevator access to the second floor Community Center. More than half of non-members know about the Community Center and have used it; Members offered consistent supportive comments in favor of preserving the Community Center.

Members and non-members alike were quite interested in having take-out prepared food (which would require a kitchen); there was mixed interest in a cafe.

A majority of members who responded were in support of raising money for building expansion and upgrading through a combination of loans and fund-raising.

Based on the survey results, we are proceeding with a process to explore the financial viability of a modest building expansion and redesign of existing space that would address cramped shopping, storage space, check-out space and office space; accessibility in the shopping aisles and the second floor; and a kitchen for preparing food. The Task Force is looking for members who have interest or expertise to offer to this process.

Become more welcoming to non-members and also shoppers with less money

To further this goal, we designed a separate non-member survey and were pleased to receive 98 responses from non-members. Nearly all who answered

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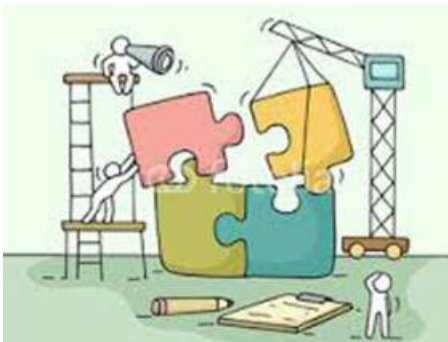
the survey had a positive impression of the Co-op. Some of the words non-members used to describe the Co-op were helpful, positive, enjoyable, small, love it, welcoming, friendly, cute, funky, expensive, quaint, quirky, cozy, dark, cramped, crowded.

Things we learned from the survey:

- We are perceived as a welcoming place.
- We can do better outreach about membership and that we are here.
- There is room to reach out to people who have never shopped at the Co-op.
- There is still misunderstanding of the membership dividends, and we need a better way to sell membership other than just financial. We plan an active membership campaign.

Address food insecurity

Most members that filled out the survey don't know or don't think they know individuals or families who lack enough food, but most members recognize food insecurity is present in our community and are overwhelmingly in support of offering some type of discounts for people with disabilities and people who qualify for fuel assistance or have EBT.



The survey inspires conversation and thinking, and generated a lot of great ideas about addressing food insecurity. Michael Billingsley has volunteered to head up a committee that will translate the best ideas into reality.

Involve members as more than customers

Quite a few members said they were interested in being a working member in a different way (such as work crew, clearing out the path to the boat dock, building maintenance, taking pictures). Chloe Budnick, our membership coordinator, will be following up with them. Just under half the members who answered didn't know that you can earn a 7% discount by serving on the Board and on some of our committees. When asked the best ways to get input from members, members most often mentioned short surveys, in-person interviews in the store, an easy-to-see suggestion box, events.

Many members said that they already read the monthly e-mail flyer with sales and specials, and others said they would like to get it. Sixty-five of the 80 members said they read the quarterly newsletter regularly (53 read it, and 12 read it sometimes). Only 6 said they do not read it.

Next steps

The Strategic Planning Task Force will be publishing the complete results of the surveys with a link on our website. After that, the Task Force will write up the findings and make recommendations for the next steps to take us forward.

The winner of the \$100 Co-op Gift Certificate was Ehren Miller-Nogueira. ♦

Treasurer's Report

by Bob Fancher

Equity Dividends. In 2014, we changed to an equity based model which replaced the previous membership model. Equity means that every member is a part owner in the Co-op. As a result, every member is eligible for an equity dividend.

In 2015, we had strong Sales, but our Net Income (profit) was lower than expected. Despite that low number, we made sufficient profit to be able to give equity dividends to our members. We retained some of the profit to improve the Co-op facility. The rest is being distributed as equity dividends. The Board of Directors voted to distribute \$2000 as dividends to the members. Your dividend is based on how much you purchased at the Co-op in 2015. The more you bought, the larger your dividend. For dividends over \$10, members will

receive checks in the mail. For dividends less than \$10, the dividend will be given as store credit and you will receive a letter telling you how much.

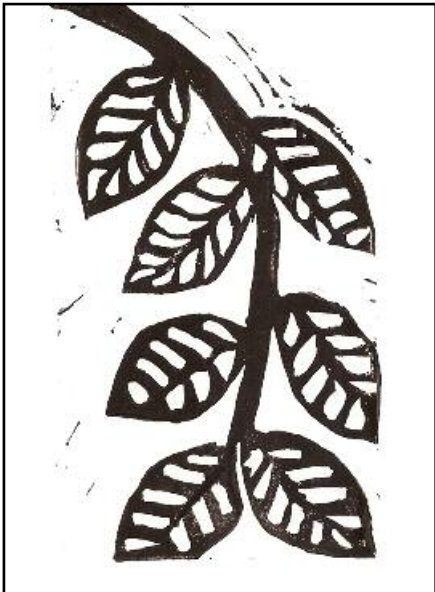
If you are a member, enjoy your dividend. If you want to become a member, stop in to the Co-op and we will sign you up.

2016 First Quarter. The first quarter Sales for 2016 were up 0.6% over 2015's first quarter but due to rising Cost of Goods our Gross Profit fell 1.4% over last year. These numbers were 3% less than our budget predicted. The Net Income fell 55% from last year but, at the same time, is about \$8000 over our budget for the first quarter.

What do the numbers mean? Sales are still increasing but we are making less on each dollar we sell. The Management Collective (MC) is actively looking at our margins to get the Gross Profit back on track. The MC is also keeping other costs (wages, utilities, services, etc.) down, which is why the Net Income is so much higher than expected.

The first quarter of any year is traditionally not great for the Co-op. This year's first quarter is sending us mixed messages. It is difficult to predict how the year will proceed at this point. There are some very encouraging signs and some things that will need close scrutiny. Overall, I feel we will end the year with a strong finish.

As always, thanks to all our members for their continuing support. ♦



Credit: Scottie Harrison

Annual Meeting Report

by Gail Falk

When the membership gathered for “annual” meeting this year on April 16, it had actually been a year and a half since our previous annual meeting. Because of the shift to equity membership, the Board decided to switch the annual meeting from our traditional gathering in the fall to spring so that final year-end financial figures would be available and the members could learn the amount of the annual dividend. (See the Treasurer’s report elsewhere in the newsletter for the details).

The highlight of the meeting was a presentation from the Strategic Planning Task Force, describing results from the survey of members and non-members. (See President’s Report for details.) The results of the survey showed broad support for an expansion of the building to provide shelf space for more products, better accessibility, and more space for staff and storage. The survey also revealed strong membership support for the Co-op’s taking steps to address food insecurity. Strategic Planning Team member Michael Billingsley shared a poster with information about food insecurity in our area. (See his article in this newsletter.)

Giordano Checchi introduced himself and described his long history of interest in co-operatives as well as his international business experience. (See bio elsewhere in the newsletter). Giordano was elected unanimously to a three-year term. The Board continues to have vacant seats. Outgoing Board members

Art Chickering and Scott Harris were recognized and applauded for their contributions to the Co-op.

A Board-sponsored amendment to the by-laws prompted a lively discussion. The proposed amendment, which would allow another cooperative to be a member of the Co-op under terms defined by the Board, was approved. The reason for the amendment is to achieve a tax advantage from our reciprocity agreements with neighboring food co-ops. For years, Hunger Mountain Co-op has been paying the Plainfield Co-op an annual dividend earned when our co-op members shop at Hunger Mountain with their Plainfield Co-op card. Now, when members of the neighboring co-ops shop at our store and show their co-op card, their co-op earns the same dividend that an individual member of our co-op would earn. The co-ops with which we have reciprocity agreements are Hunger Mountain, Adamant, and Buffalo Mountain (Hardwick).

This year’s annual meeting took place at Twin Valley Senior Center (TVSC), reflecting the growing partnership between TVSC and the Co-op. TVSC donated the use of their facility and beautiful well-equipped kitchen for the day. People who attended the meeting expressed appreciation for the roomy, accessible space. Plans are to continue meeting there until our own Community Center has an elevator and is accessible. ♦



**Giordano Checchi,
new Co-op Board Member**

I was born in Northern Italy, some 20 miles from the Swiss border. The sense of community has always been very high in Europe, and still is. The person, the individual, the human being, still today, comes first. It is not accidental that post-WWII Europe witnessed some of the most powerful socialist movements in history. It was a way to regroup and return to life. It was a way to give every human being those fundamental rights that make life dignified: freedom is a great concept, but it is not enough. A person is not free unless he or she has a home, a job, an income, access to education, access to health care. However, post-war Europe was poor. The answer was to revitalize a century-old movement with its roots in England, in France, and in the Alpine region: people grouping into nonprofit initiatives that provided housing, health care, food, and other essential supplies. This started the co-op movement, and I grew up in it. My parents received health care through a co-op, they purchased an apartment in a building built

by a co-op, we were purchasing our essential supplies from a co-op, and our bank was a co-op. Every village, township, or small city had and still have a co-op. The years after WWII were a highly fertile soil for the co-op movement, with small co-ops becoming members of larger co-ops that would function as powerful purchasing entities of all sorts of goods and services.

Five years ago, when my wife and I started looking to a place where life had more meaning [than in Baltimore], where people would count more than money, we looked at Vermont. We started traveling to Vermont, and the more we saw it the more we liked it. We could share our ideas and our political views with those of the people of Vermont. We could share our lifestyle with the lifestyle of the people of Vermont. And yes, indeed, we moved to Vermont. What a great surprise it was to find that our little village next to our house had a small co-op. Suddenly I felt immersed in the best memories of my young life in Northern Italy. Here, in the United States, the country of unlimited unrestricted unbridled capitalism, a co-op! I could not believe it, I felt I was dreaming. One day we stepped in, took a look around, bought a few things. The following day we became, both of us, members of our wonderful Plainfield Co-op. And happy members we are! When our friends and relatives come visit and spend a few days with us, we take them around to show the beautiful nature and the interesting places where we live, and our Plainfield Co-op is always part of the tour. We have taken all of them for a visit, we explain to them how it works, and then we treat them to some of the delicious foods we buy at our co-op. ♦

I'm not always sure where my next meal will come from...

by Michael Cerulli Billingsley

Food Insecurity doesn't just mean "going hungry." Nor is it a fancy way to say eating badly. It affects a lot of people.

There are many reasons - relating to income, health or disability, transportation, lack of childcare providers, aging, or simply the lack of basic resources - why any of us might find ourselves uncertain about getting enough to eat every day.

Food insecurity includes anxiety about the cost of food, and the fear that basic needs such as shelter and heat will be unaffordable unless one scrimps on food or good ingredients.

It also includes having no transportation to go food shopping; or being ill or in pain for so long that finding nutritious food and cooking it is out of the question. It affects adults and children of different income levels from struggling single parents to people trying to get by on modest monthly Social Security checks.

Who is insecure about food? For starters, one in five children (20%) in Washington County, VT are food insecure. This is despite programs in schools to provide healthy midday meals, and support programs for younger children such as WIC, HeadStart and daycare food. More than 7000 households in central Vermont participate in 3SquaresVT (formerly food stamps). Based on family income, 60% of the students at Twinfield are eligible for free or reduced price meals—such a high

percentage that all students are now receiving free breakfast and lunch.

Meals on Wheels and the Senior Center midday meals help older and disabled residents receive at least some of the important nutrition they enjoy and prefer, including people living on remote roads.

We would like to find more strategies to make this work for everyone who wants affordable and better nutrition, and especially for people who find it very hard to do this.

Many food co-ops in Vermont are designing and implementing programs to make food more affordable, to provide a wide selection of simple basic foods and ingredients, and to help consumers get more nutrition for their food dollar.

Besides assisting the Senior Center with their meals, the Plainfield Co-op is choosing ways to help improve the range of food and ingredients available to food insecure families and individuals, and to make basic nutritious foods and ingredients both more affordable and easier to find and choose. The Co-op accepts 3SquaresVT cards, and most foods in the store can be purchased with them.

Look in the future to see what discounts, specially-priced basic foods, and help with preparing nutritious meals the Co-op will offer. We are particularly interested in providing some kind of discount pricing for persons who already qualify for 3SquaresVT, WIC and federal disability benefits. ♦

Management Report

by Karen Starr

Today's snow showers in the middle of May were a clear reminder that we live in Vermont. It's been an unusually cool, erratic Spring so far, but the leaves are slowly emerging and the poor birds have arrived despite the craziness. Though we've had a rainy Spring, it's been welcome since there was no snow melt to start the growing season.

Speaking of gardens, Laura Ziegler has straightened out the village's garden beds, including the Co-op's. Things are slowly starting to pop up. Thanks, Laura! The produce department has plant starts for sale. They are all local and organic and gorgeous. What we don't have you can find at Littlewood Farm which has a more extensive offering.

By the way, did you know 40% of products for sale at the store are locally grown, produced, or processed? Have a local product you want us to carry?

Leave us a note with as much info as you have and we'll look into it!

Be sure to check out the list of store sales and specials posted over the register. Lots of good bargains to be had. You can sign up at our website to receive a monthly email with specials and news.

Jessi Lee is leaving the Co-op to spend more time with her family. She will be working with Karen to transition her into buying for Health and Beauty Aids. Matt Borg will be taking over buying for the coffee department. We will miss Jessi, but hope to see her around perhaps as a member worker in the future.

The Management Collective is continuing to work with the Strategic Planning Committee to see where we want to go in the future. We'll keep you posted. Wishing everyone a happy Spring!! ♦

LittleWood Farm

Plainfield, Vt.

802-454-8466

*Providing organic produce
to the community
since 1987*



Herbs of the Summer Solstice

Elderflower (flowers of the elderberry bush, *Sambucus nigra*)

Make elderflower cordial for a wonderful Summer Solstice drink which is quick and easy to make. Put 10 large flowerheads in a large (non-metallic) bowl with 1 ½ lbs. of sugar, two chopped lemons, and 1 oz. tartaric acid. Pour on 4 pints of boiling water and stir well. Cover with a clean tea towel and leave for 24 hours, stirring occasionally. Strain through muslin or a tea towel, and bottle. It will keep for a week. Or freeze for later use. To serve, dilute with water or carbonated water.

— from Glennie Kindred, *Sacred Celebrations*

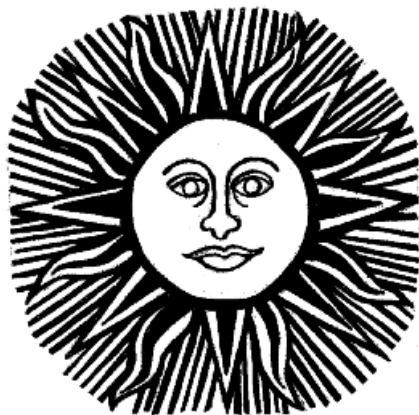
Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

This fragrant perennial grows happily in most parts of the world: Europe, Asia, North and South America, and landfalls in between. Its botanic name, *Melissa*, came from the Greek word for bee, a reminder of the fondness bees have for the honey produced by the plant. Pliny, addressing himself to bee-keepers said, "When they are strayed away, they do find their way home by it."



Its popular name, balm, was an abbreviation of balsam, which refers to a plant or tree yielding a balsam, or "any agency that heals, soothes or restores."

Melissa grows up to two feet high, its



Credit: *Scottie Harrison*

opposite leaves are heart-shaped, the edges finely toothed. Bruise a leaf and you will notice a sweet, lemony fragrance. It is not fussy about soil and will grow well in any garden.

Lemon balm is a delicious addition to a claret cup. Combine a handful of balm, a few borage leaves, a thin-sliced lemon and orange, a shot glass of cognac, a half cup of honey, a bottle of claret and a pint of seltzer water. Let stand with enough ice to cool, strain, and decorate with the blue, star-shaped blossoms of borage.

— from Adele Dawson, *Health, Happiness and the Pursuit of Herbs*

Gather leaves as you need them for use in fruit salads, beverages, or tossed with steamed vegetables. Pair lemon balm with tarragon to spice up marinades for fish or lamb. Steep leaves in hot water for a tummy-taming tea. Freeze lemon balm leaves in ice cubes for cooling lemonade. Preserve lemon balm by drying or stashing in vinegar.

- www.bhg.com/gardening/plant-dictionary/herb/lemon-balm/ ♦

PESTICIDES IN COMMERCIAL PRODUCE

From the Environmental Working Group

Dirty Dozen:

the most pesticide residues:

Buy organic if you can.

- Strawberries (the most)
- Apples
- Nectarines
- Peaches
- Celery
- Grapes
- Cherries
- Spinach
- Tomatoes
- Sweet bell peppers
- Cherry tomatoes
- Cucumbers

Clean Fifteen:

least pesticide residues.

- Avocados (the least)
- Sweet corn
- Pineapple
- Cabbage
- Frozen peas
- Onions
- Asparagus
- Mangos
- Papayas
- Kiwi
- Eggplant
- Honeydew melon
- Grapefruit
- Cantaloupe
- Cauliflower

Clip & save



Suggestion Box (selected Q & A's)

Q: Could you stock pre-diced garlic?

A: Yes. It has been ordered.

Q: I love Strafford Organic Creamery Coconut Almond Ice Cream

A: We will get this on our next order

Q: Fresh dill, please.

A: Yes. it has been ordered.

Q: GT Lavender Kombucha is wildly delish. It is PURPLE, fragrant, sweet, refreshing, not overly flowery.

A: We will try it!

Q: Please stock ginger paste.

A: Sadly, this is not available from any of our vendors.



PLAINFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER



Space available for your:

Classes

Meetings

Parties

Workshops

Art Gallery Exhibitions & Special Events

\$9/hr. for Co-op Members, \$15/hr. for Non-Members

Events: \$35 for Members, \$50 for Non-Members

Scheduling Book at Co-op Register

More Information?

Contact Jonna Wissert at jonnawissert@gmail.com



Using the Community Center benefits The Plainfield Co-op

Summer Menu

by Daniel Marcus and Amba Connors

Cream of Asparagus Soup
Spaghetti and Spinach Frittata
Salad with Asian Greens and
Maple Mustard Dressing
Strawberry Dumplings

As I write this it's May and the height of the planting season, so we think of meals that are easy to prepare and make use of the best produce that's available.

Cream of Asparagus Soup

This is a classic soup, easy to prepare and delicious.

Makes about 8 cups.

1 pound fresh asparagus cooked until tender and put through the food processor

1 fat shallot, chopped

3 celery stalks, chopped fine

1/4 C whole wheat flour

4 C stock (making your own is best of course, but Better Than Bouillon is good)

2 C whole milk or (gasp!) cream (really tasty)

Melt butter in soup pot. Sauté shallots and celery till tender.

Stir in flour and cook till fragrant.

Slowly add stock, stirring to make a gravy.

Add the asparagus and milk or cream, heat till hot, but don't allow to boil.

Serve with paprika and fresh grated nutmeg.

If you have the soup as a main dish (with hot buttered toast, yum) grated cheese on top is a nice addition.

Spinach and Spaghetti Frittata

Serves two hungry gardeners who are too busy to cook anything more time-consuming and complex but also nice when cut into quarters and served with a full meal of soup, salad and dessert.

4 large eggs

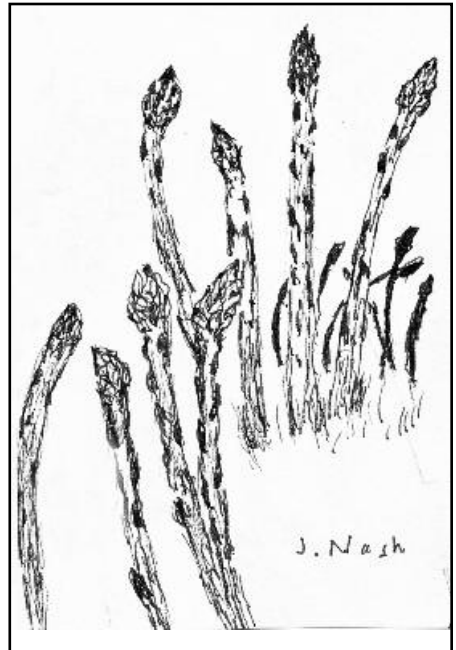
1/4 C milk

1 t salt

1/4 t fresh ground pepper

3 C cooked spaghetti (we like the whole wheat Bionaturae spagettini)

1 C shredded cheese (a sharp cheddar is nice)



Credit: Jerrie Nash

1 C cooked, fresh spinach (fresh peas are also very nice!)

1 T olive oil

Heat broiler. Whisk together eggs, milk, salt and pepper. Mix in spaghetti, cheese and spinach.

In a 10 inch skillet, heat oil over medium low. Pour in mix and heat till top is almost set, 5 to 10 minutes.

Place in broiler till nice and brown on top, about 1 minute.

Salad with Asian Greens

The idea here is to combine your usual favorite lettuce or lettuce mix with sharper, more bitter greens. Some nice ones are mizuna, tatsoi, cress, mustards and pac choy. Look for them in the produce section, sometimes labeled braising greens. Throw in some small and tender dandelion greens from the lawn and perhaps some violets for extra flavor and color.

Maple Mustard Dressing

Goes very nicely with the above salad, the sweet balancing the tart.

6 T olive oil

2 T cider vinegar

1 T stone ground mustard

1 T lemon juice

1 T maple syrup

pinch salt

Whisk all ingredients together, vigorously.

Strawberry Dumplings

Serves 6

4 C strawberries, sliced

1/3 C plus one T sugar



1/4 t ground cinnamon

1 C whole wheat pastry flour

2 t baking powder

1/4 t salt

3/4 C whole milk

Combine strawberries and 1/3 C sugar in a large skillet and heat, stirring, until syrupy.

In a small bowl combine cinnamon and T of sugar.

In another bowl stir together flour, baking powder and salt. Stir in milk till just blended.

Reduce heat to medium low. Spoon tablespoons of dough over simmering fruit, sprinkle with cinnamon sugar mix.

Cover skillet and simmer till dumplings are set, about 10 to 12 minutes. Serve warm. Very lovely with Stafford Creamery vanilla ice cream.

Wine pairings by Nancy Ellen

To go with the main meal, I would suggest either the Casa Ferreirinha Planalto Douro white, or the Shelburne Vineyard Lake View white. Both are delicious and crisp, but with just enough acidity and body to complement these light spring flavors. For dessert, the Broadbent rose's lovely richer berry notes would pair very well with the strawberry dumplings. ♦