

# The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter

*Winter 2016-17*

Wilmer Brandt 1920-2016

**"Co-op to the Core"**



**Living Connected to Land and Community**

**Hours:** *7 days a week 9AM-8PM*

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## About This Newsletter

This newsletter is more than ever focused on food, from Wilmer with his cider apples on the cover to a menu of delectable winter recipes

at the end. It is also about money—about affordable food, about using leftovers, and our Co-op's present need to close a gap between sales and expenses. We also remember Wilmer Brandt, who was so much a part of our Co-op and our community for so long. And if you were ever curious about exactly how the Management Collective works, check out Karen Starr's report, page 8.

The Newsletter welcomes your feedback, letters, and art work. Deadline for

the spring issue is February 15. Contact anyone on the Newsletter Committee:

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Thanks to Eliza Cleary for help with mailing print newsletters. ♦



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# President's Report November 2016

by Gail Falk

## New Board Members

Two wonderful community members – Sarah Phillips and Jean Hamilton – have recently joined the Board. They have brought us great energy and experience, and will smooth the transition next spring when long-time Board member Joseph Gainza and I leave the Board when our terms expire. Sarah Phillips is now Secretary of the Board; you can find her great meeting minutes on the Plainfield Co-op website. Find Jean's photo and bio on page 12.

## Healthy Affordable Food

Elsewhere in the newsletter, you will find an excerpt from the Management Collective's report to the Board on Affordability. The issue of Affordability and Healthy Food are closely linked, and the Board and the Management Collective are in ongoing conversation about this subject.

Many people would like our Co-op to sell nothing but organic food, but organic products are overall more expensive than conventional products. Our surveys and consumer feedback show us that affordability is a core issue for our community. When the Co-op was established back in the 1970's, organic food was hard to find and establishing an outlet for organic food was a key motivator. Now, though, organic products are widely available in Central Vermont, and our core mission has shifted slightly to being a resilient, community-owned grocery store where neighbors of all economic levels can meet and shop for healthy food. Although the Co-op continues to carry a wide range of organic products, we have

broadened our definition of “healthy” food to include “whole foods” – unprocessed foods. Here is our definition of “whole foods”:

*Whole foods are foods that are still as close to their natural state as possible, such as produce and fresh herbs. In this ideal state, they retain their highest nutrient, flavor, and aesthetic values. Taking into consideration that the Plainfield Co-op is located in a temperature zone where fresh food is not available year round, we have also included foods that are minimally processed by drying, freezing, fermenting, or canning, allowing for the use of natural additives, such as salt, spices, or citric acid.”*

In October, the Management Collective reported the following sales totals of Organic, Non-GMO, and Whole foods. Of the \$868,988 in food product sales:

- \$362,468 or 41.7% were Organic foods.
- \$397,906 or 45.7% were Organic and Non-GMO foods combined.
- \$35,439 or 4% were Non-GMO foods only.
- \$506,057 or 58.2% were Whole Foods.

## Strategic Plan Updates

The Board has approved the final version of the Strategic Plan, after hearing and incorporating comments. You will find it on the Plainfield Co-op website (plainfieldcoop.com). To give our members more opportunity to engage with the Strategic Plan, we are circulating an on-line survey. We cannot do everything in

*continued on page 11*

# Treasurer's Report

by Bob Fancher

**2016 Third Quarter.** 2016 is turning out to be somewhat disappointing from a financial standpoint. Thus far, Sales have been a little higher than 2015, with a 1.3% increase. The Gross Margin is still doing well at 35%. The problem is that even though Sales went up, they did not go up as much as expected. Sales year-to-date are 3% lower than budgeted and the Gross Profit (Sales minus Cost of Goods Sold) is 4% below budget.

The Gross Profit is used to pay all the expenses of running the store (wages, utilities, professional fees, credit card fees, insurance, etc.). Those expenses are over budget by 3% year-to-date.

In other words, we have more expenses than expected and less money to pay for them than expected. As a result, our net profit is about \$10,000 in the red at the end of September. The Management Collective (MC) is doing what they can to turn this around. They are taking steps to cut costs and increase Sales. Some of their actions should produce results before the end of the year. They are also looking at longer term measures that will be aimed at increasing Sales in 2017 and beyond.

Why did this happen? Many of us feel that our Sales have been affected by other

food retailers (for example: Price Chopper, Shaws and Costco) offering more organic and healthy foods than they have in the past. The perception is that those retailers have lower prices and are pulling sales away from the Co-op. While that may be true of some products, the Co-op has been proven to be cost competitive on many basic foods. Plus, 40% of the Co-op's products are locally sourced and nobody has fresher produce than our farm direct produce. We will be working to "get the word out" that the Co-op is the best place to buy cost competitive groceries in the area.

**Strategic Plan.** The Co-op Strategic Plan has been released and is available on our website, PlainfieldCoop.com

We have been forming the Committees that will address the various details of implementing the Strategic Plan. If you are interested in helping out, please send an email to [info@PlainfieldCoop.com](mailto:info@PlainfieldCoop.com) and we will get in touch with you. We could really use your help if you have experience in marketing, architecture, fund raising or building construction. Don't have those skills? No problem. We still need you to help us.

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

Make a vegetarian meal for yourself or your family once a week. Growing vegetables or beans uses far less water and land than raising animals, and reduces harmful greenhouse gas emissions, too. Not to mention that meat is usually the most expensive item on the menu.

# Wilmer – Beloved Community Member, Mentor and Elder

by Angella Gibbons

Wilmer was the first to harvest blackberries in our patch every year, except this one. In late August, just a few short months before his last breath, I drove Wilmer to our patch. My ninety-six year old friend and neighbor, with one hand on his cane, the other for picking, placed each berry in a bucket strapped to his belt. I watched Wilmer more closely than ever that day, loving him for his attention to, and care for, what is important in this world.

For almost 20 years, Wilmer has been a big part of my life. For so many of us, he embodied the way we want our world to be. Wilmer lived simply and peacefully, tending the land and growing most of his own food. He mentored others with a kind and gentle heart. Wilmer was neighborly and friendly to everyone, and always ready to share a good laugh. He participated in many meetings and gatherings for positive change and peaceful action. Wilmer was a beloved community member, mentor and Elder.

Each fall, when it was a good apple year, Wilmer and I would harvest our favorite fruit from wild trees, and then head for the cider press. Wilmer's truck would be loaded with harvest baskets, feed bags, tarps and an extended pruning saw used to coax the apples down. Before we would shake, or I would climb each tree, Wilmer would bite into an apple and either spit it out, saying “not yet”, or keep chewing and say “yep”. All these years, this method seemed to work.

Each spring was another tradition Wilmer shared. When the sap was running, EarthWalk children and families would gather around a Maple tree for



our Sweet Melt Fest. We sang songs while our youngest Village School student—age six—would “help” our oldest community member, Wilmer, tap the tree. Holding an

old hand-drill in one hand and placing the other on the tree, Wilmer would explain where to place the tap. He would lean into the tree, holding the drill while this young child would spin the handle around. After the tree was tapped, all the children would line up eagerly awaiting their first taste of spring—mouths wide open, directly under the drips of sweet maple sap!

Wilmer generously shared what he loved, and our community is a better place because of Wilmer. I loved his stories; visiting him any time of day or night and feeling welcome; joining him planting seeds, weeding or harvesting in the garden; helping him stack fire-wood; walking with him in the forest, and sitting with him at Town Meeting. Just having known Wilmer is a tremendous gift. I miss him. I believe the best way to honor and celebrate Wilmer's life, is to care more deeply. Care for this land, care for one another and our community, stand up for what we believe in...and eat more dark chocolate. ♦

## Wilmer and the Co-op

Wilmer had many connections to the Co-op—as a member, Board member, producer—not the least of which was trench-digger, as recalled by Ellen Bresler, Co-op Manager at the time. In those days (1990s), the Co-op's sewer pipe froze every winter. Staff members would lock the store and post a “Back in 10 minutes” sign while they relieved themselves at what is now the Town Clerk's office (then the ISE) or at Alice Merrill's house nearby. The location of the pipe was finally discovered. Fortunately it was NOT the one that led directly to the river, but rather it diagonally under the parking lot to the firehouse. That summer Wilmer was out there every day, along with Steve Lawless, Lawrence Black, Paul Bishop and others, digging a 6' deep trench between the Co-op and the firehouse.

Debra Stoleroff remembers Wilmer's asparagus and his eggs—all the goodness he provided for us. Two or three weeks before his death he was delivering his asparagus. “I know because I ran into him doing just that. I was amazed because I knew the pancreatic cancer must be progressing.”

‘Wilmer, wow! You are delivering asparagus? How are you doing?’

‘Oh, I am feeling pretty good. I get tired sometimes.’ he said. ‘Want some asparagus?’

‘Are you kidding? Yours is the best!’

“He pulled a huge bunch from his bag and handed it to me.”

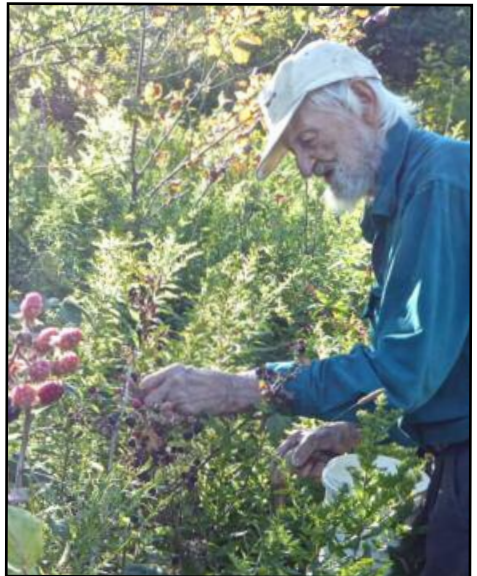
“When I think of Wilmer I think of his steadfastness. His lack of complaint

about anything even when he was protesting. He always had a positive spin.”

Joseph Gainza saw Wilmer as in his natural environment at the Co-op.

“Cooperative living was in his DNA. He would be at his most animated when he was amongst friends, standing around and catching up on the local and global news.”

Wilmer wasn't one to talk at length, says Glenda Bissex, but what he said was worth listening to. “I still remember something wise he said to me while we were talking in the store many years ago. I was sputtering off about whoever was President then. Wilmer's response: ‘I don't want to spend my energy on him.’ That was a new perspective to me, one I have continued to be grateful to Wilmer for.” ♦



# Management Report

by Karen Starr

We've been blessed with a mild fall so far, but many of us are looking forward to some real snow this winter to recharge the rivers, streams, and the springs that feed many of our wells. And then there's all the fun to be had with the white stuff! Skiing, snowshoeing, animal tracking, and welcoming all our winter bird visitors from up north are all winter pleasures! Already Evening and Pine Grosbeaks and Snowy Owls have been spotted in the state; others to look forward to are Crossbills, Purple Finches, Rough Legged Hawks, and Pine Siskins.

Also, for many of us, the recent election was and continues to be unsettling. As a nation and as a community we will have to sort out what it all means as we do our best to come together after a particularly divisive and disturbing campaign season. The Management Collective wants to reaffirm that the Co-op is a safe space for the community where everyone is welcome.

The store is getting ready for the holidays with lots of special offerings for the season from stocking stuffers and other treats for gift giving. We also have everything for your holiday cooking projects and lovely wines and brews to accompany your special gatherings. Gift certificates also make great presents! We're looking forward to helping everyone in the community celebrate the return of the light in whatever way you are accustomed!

We periodically get questions about how the store is operated and particularly

about who and what is the Management Collective. So, we'd like to take up a few paragraphs to here, without boring anyone too much, to explain a little bit about how the store is managed. For some broader context, there are three main bodies that operate and govern Plainfield Co-op. With some natural overlap, these are the membership, the board, and the staff. The membership sets the direction and priorities of the Co-op through the board of directors. The board also has the responsibility for monitoring the financial health of the store and ensures that the management of the store operates to meet the goals and mission set by the membership.

About eight or so years ago, after operating with a general manager for most of its existence, the staff of the Co-op shifted to a collective management team model. This plan was approved by the Board and with consistent monitoring by them continues to serve the business well. Collective management is more common in other parts of the world than the US. We are more familiar with more hierarchical structures where one person is in charge. With a collective management team responsibility is held by a group of workers who then distribute tasks and responsibility for various aspects of the business or projects among themselves.

One of the most striking benefits of this management model is the flexibility to take advantage of special skills and talents people bring to the organization.

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This has been critical to the success of the Co-op as the majority of positions here are part time and the wages we are able to pay are comparably low. Being able to direct our work lives and to work collaboratively to serve the community contributes to job satisfaction, which has been an important factor in retaining staff. To operate efficiently in such a structure, however, it is really essential that managers be deeply committed to the organization; able to work collaboratively; and be personally willing to be held accountable to their co-managers, co-workers, and the organization as a whole.

So, what does the Management Collective do? Basically, they keep the store running in the black, fiscally

healthy, and operate the business to meet the goals of our mission statement through following the bylaws and cooperative principles. Practically, this means managing everything involved with running the store, reporting to the Board on performance and following internal guidelines such as personnel policies, and creating a budget for the business.

Currently, there are 11 members of the Management Collective, including 2 new members, Matt Borg and Cris Carnes. All are part time. Kathleen Hayes is on leave until spring. There are also 6 additional staff who are not part of management and 4 substitute staff. New Management Collective members are selected as the collective feels a need for more members to carry the

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workload from among regularly scheduled staff who both voice an interest and display the necessary level of commitment. Additionally, prospective collective members must have worked at the Co-op for at least six months and be approved through consensus by the existing MC. All MC members must attend at least 50% of Management Collective meetings (most make it to nearly all), take on regular standing committee work, take an additional operational role, and undergo whatever additional training is deemed necessary by the Collective. All staff are evaluated regularly.

To facilitate communication and Board overview of the organization, there are four MC members who rotate in pairs to serve as communication links between the Board and MC. These MC members attend Board meetings, facilitate the writing of required performance reports to the Board, and answer any questions the Board may have about the operations of the store. They also report back to the MC after Board meetings, conveying any concerns or unanswered questions from the Board.

In addition to regular MC meetings, there are three standing committees of the Management Collective: personnel, finance, and buyers. Each of these meets roughly every six weeks, occasionally more often as needed. The finance committee monitors and manages expenses and sales, and is responsible for reporting to both the Board and MC on finances, as well as creating the projected budget for the coming year. Personnel hires staff, manages evaluations, suggests and manages training (especially training for new staff), manages staff mediations and disciplinary actions, makes sure all labor regulations are followed, and responds to any Board or member concerns about customer service. Buyers' committee is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and improving sales by department; evaluating products and vendors; and working with the finance committee to meet sales goals. In addition to these committees, there is an office manager, membership coordinator, advertising & marketing coordinator, and a finance coordinator. With few exceptions, all MC members also

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work floor shifts as well as meeting management requirements.

If your head is spinning by now, it's no surprise! A lot of work goes into making sure the Co-op continues as an organization serving the community! If you're ever wondering who all these people are that keep the store running, you can check the front hall for biographies of the current Board. A listing of all the MC members and their responsibilities is posted on the side of the beer cooler along with a suggestion box for your questions and ideas.

Plan to take a few extra minutes to browse our new treasures and offerings for the holidays next time you stop by. It's been our pleasure selecting them with you in mind. Grab something from the new grab and go food cooler or a cup of coffee on a cold day. Please also take a minute to welcome our new staff members, Stella James, Kayla Pelloni, and Laura Conklin.

Havens that offer a break from all the craziness out there are getting hard to come by. We're really proud as a Co-op to be one of those places the community can count on for a tiny oasis of sanity and neighborliness. See you all soon! ♦

President's Report, *cont. from page 4*

the Plan at once, and the survey is designed to learn our members' priorities among the Plan's goals, and also to learn about skills members can share in implementing the Plan.

The Management Collective has assumed responsibility for managing implementation of the Strategic Plan. We still hope that the majority of the work of the committees will be done by volunteers, while coordination of the overall effort will be done by the MC.

### **Proposed By-law Amendment**

The Board has discussed and approved a draft amendment to the by-laws to permit notice of dividends and meetings to be sent to members by e-mail. In the short run, this will save postage to notify members whose dividend is small and who have only a register credit; we will still mail checks to members whose dividend is greater than \$10.00. This will be

discussed and offered for a vote at our April Annual Meeting.

### **Other concerns**

A member has asked the Board to examine the details of our policy about political posters and signs on the premises. The Co-op is politically non-partisan. However, a member has questioned a decision not to allow signs for a political party to be left and picked up at the Co-op. We will be discussing this at our December Board meeting.

As of this writing, the store's monthly expenses are exceeding our income. The Board has asked the Management Collective to come up with a plan to cut hours and/or increase efficiencies to bring our income and expenses back into line. There is no way to cut hours without affecting some part of operations that we cherish. Please know that, if there have to be reductions, they are for the purpose of preserving the ongoing financial health of our cooperative. ♦

## New Board Member Jean Hamilton

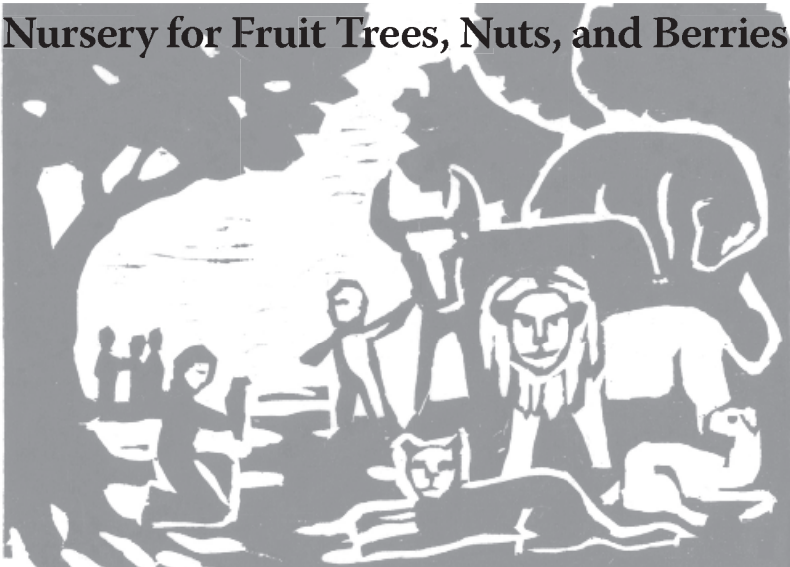
Since first working on a farm when I was 17 years old, I have seen the importance of food co-ops in strengthening community and building market opportunities for local food and agriculture. I moved to Plainfield in 2013 and was immediately impressed with how much the Plainfield Co-op contributes to the high quality of life in our small town. I am honored to join the Board and hope to be helpful in sharing my experience with the local food supply chain, business management, and community organizing.

Jean can be contacted at [jean.myung.hamilton@gmail.com](mailto:jean.myung.hamilton@gmail.com) or 802-777-6546. ♦



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# Affordability - How Are We Doing?

by Gail Falk

Every month, the Management Collective reports to the Board about how well it has carried out the Co-op's Ends and Policies. The MC reports at least once a year on each End and Policy, and the Board gets reports on the store's financial condition four times a year.

We especially look forward to the reports on the Ends. Our Ends describe our ongoing goals and values, such as healthy food, local products, sustaining the environment, building community, and supporting other cooperatives. (The Ends can be found on our website - <http://plainfieldcoop.com/documents/PoliciesMar2016.pdf>)

In October, the monitoring report addressed End One: *The Plainfield Co-op will distribute healthy, affordable food and other goods*. Our Ends have always included a commitment to healthy food, but we added affordability as an end two years ago in response to concerns expressed by many members. This year's monitoring report was the first thorough report from the Management Collective on Affordability.

The Board was very pleased with both the methods that the Management Collective used to assess affordability and also the results. MC Member Jeannine DeWald did a "Market Basket Survey" to see how our prices compared with the prices of other grocery stores where our community shops. The survey showed that our prices for many items compare well with other stores; it also highlighted areas for improvement. Jeannine used USDA and Vermont Joint

Fiscal Office data to estimate whether a Vermont family earning a livable wage could afford to do all its food shopping at the Co-op. We thought our members would like to see the report, which is excerpted below.

Despite limits in purchasing power, Plainfield Co-op is successful in being affordable in comparison with our largest cooperative competitor, Hunger Mountain Coop. This is a goal our Co-op has long strived for and it is encouraging to know that we are meeting that goal. Limits in purchasing power make it difficult for both cooperatives to maintain affordability when compared with Price Chopper. The Management Collective (MC) feels it is succeeding in overall affordability in comparison with other stores to the best of its ability, given the Co-op's purchasing limitations and healthy foods it prioritizes.

The Co-op also offers several different ways to save money on purchases. There are two working member options, offering 3% and 7% discounts depending on number of hours worked. The Co-op also offers its members Special Order pricing on full case items, as well as a more limited selection of single items not available in store. Special orders are marked up only 15% for working members, 30% for non-working members compared with an average 53.8% mark-up for standard shelf pricing. In addition, the Co-op maintains a discount produce area, offering a 50% discount on produce that is not of first quality. Recently, we have begun offering our discount produce for free after 7 pm.

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In 2016, the Board and MC also developed a Strategic Plan. Goal Four of that plan addresses food insecurity in our community. As part of that goal, the Co-op will work toward implementing a needs based discount Food for All program, a Coop Basics program which offers staple items at a lower price, or both, as well as work to expand product lines to offer more affordable options.

Buyers have already begun to introduce a handful of lower priced, conventional items which are still considered healthy, and will continue to do so more in the coming months. ♦

*From MC report prepared by Jeannine DeWald for the Co-op Board on meeting the first end (goal). Sept. 2016. To read the entire report go to [http://plainfield-coop.com/Market\\_Basket\\_Comparison.pdf](http://plainfield-coop.com/Market_Basket_Comparison.pdf)*

## Suggestion Box

(selected Suggestions & Answers from the store)

**S:** Please get more turnips in.

**A:** You got it! Check out our new Scarlet Turnips from River Berry Farm in Fairfax, VT.

**S:** Would you start stocking dried bean soup mixes again for the fall/winter?

**A:** I can try these in a package. Bulk did not sell well. Is there a kind you like?

**S:** Joyva or other brand of halva bars.

**A:** These have been discontinued by our vendor, and I have not been able to find them elsewhere.

**S:** Barb's cheese doodles – not jalapeno. And chips that aren't kettle (kettle are too crunchy). Need regular potato chips. Potato chips make the world go round!

**A:** We are pretty maxed out on chip space. Is there a certain kind you would like for the future?

**S:** Bob's gluten-free flour. Something with no dairy, please.

**A:** I can get Bob's in a package.



# Save Money, Save Food

by Glenda Bissex

This is an especially foody time of year, with holidays and cold weather making us eat more. We buy more food and we can also waste more food. Throwing away food is throwing away money; but there are many ways of using leftovers, whether vegetables, meat, or bread.

## **Skillet chilaquiles** (4 servings)

### **Ingredients:**

1 cup tomato salsa  
2 cups chicken broth or vegetable broth  
½ cup half-and-half or heavy cream  
1 cup cooked leftover vegetables, pinto beans, and/or black beans  
6–8 cups corn tortilla chips (stale is ok)  
1 cup cheese (such as Monterey Jack or Grafton cheddar), shredded  
1 ripe avocado, halved, seeded, peeled, and cut into ½-inch dice  
½ small red onion, finely diced  
1–2 jalapeño chilies, stemmed, seeded if desired, and minced  
½ bunch cilantro, chopped  
1 lime, cut into wedges

### **Instructions:**

In wide skillet, bring salsa, broth, and half-and-half or cream to a boil. Add vegetables and/or beans and tortilla chips, mixing gently to coat each chip while simmering. In 1–2 minutes—when some of the chips have moistened and begun to break up, but others are still holding their shape—add cheese. Continue stirring gently for 1 minute to distribute cheese evenly. Add avocado, onion, chilies, and cilantro and stir well. Cook for 1 minute, remove from heat, and divide among 4 plates. Top with a squeeze of lime.

**Options:** Add 1 cup cooked, shredded, leftover chicken, sausage or hamburger with the vegetables. Serve with ¼-cup dollop of sour cream and/or fried egg.

Some recipes are sacred formulas that need to be followed precisely to succeed. Others, like this one, are starting points for your own inventiveness. Maybe you don't have some of the flavorings, the lime or the chilies, for example. Substitute similar ingredients you do have or cook it without, and it will still taste good. Another virtue of this recipe is that it doesn't take long to make because the ingredients are already cooked. (from *Oxfam America*)

## **Other inexpensive and quick dishes using leftovers**

Use vegetable and/or meat leftovers in soups, stews, tacos, lasagna, and casseroles.

Fry cooked rice or noodles with leftover chopped veggies and meat or tofu. You can add some bottled Asian sauce (such as soy, oyster or fish sauce) for extra flavor and moisture.

Mix chopped leftover veggies and/or meat into canned pasta sauce; serve over spaghetti and top with grated cheese.

There are many uses for stale bread, such as this **cheese, bread and egg dish**:

4 servings

Lightly butter 8 slices of bread and cut into cubes (about 4 cupfuls).

In a buttered baking dish, place layers of diced bread, sprinkling them with about 1 c. grated cheese.

Beat 2 eggs, add 1 c. milk, 1 t salt, a pinch of cayenne, ⅛ t dry mustard. Pour these ingredients over the bread and cheese. Bake at 350° for about 25 minutes. Serve at once with a green veggie or salad.

*(Slightly adapted from my faithful, falling apart Joy of Cooking, which includes many pages of leftover food suggestions.)*

# The Role of Co-ops in Strengthening Vermont's Food System

by Erica Campbell

I fondly remember the Plainfield Co-op growing up in the 70s. At that time it was mainly a buying club, and we'd pack our glass jars and burlap bags with dried beans, oats, and other bulk fare and head back to our small homestead in Walden. While co-ops originally focused on providing communities with natural and organic foods, they've also been huge supporters of the Vermont food system—well before the term 'localvore' was used.

Today, co-operatively owned grocery stores continue to serve as a primary market channel for many small to midsize local producers. Far beyond their buying club days, co-ops in Vermont have expanded to larger storefronts that offer full grocery, deli, meat, cheese, bulk food, and health and beauty products.

In Vermont, Farm to Plate is the name of our ten year (2011-2020) food system plan being implemented statewide by the Farm to Plate Network (350+ nonprofit organizations, farms, specialty food producers, government agencies, educational institutions, and capital providers) to increase economic development in the farm and food sector, and improve access to healthy local food for all

Vermonters. Food co-ops play a major role in helping Vermont reach its Farm to Plate goals to make more local food available and accessible; create livable wage jobs in safe workplaces; and support environmentally and economically sustainable farm and food production:

- Co-ops increase consumer demand for local food. They are committed to raising awareness about our food system, providing information to consumers, and advocating for public policies regarding food, public health, and sustainability issues. Many co-ops have programs that increase access to local and healthy food for low income Vermonters.
- Co-ops support the viability of Vermont's food producers. Buying local is a core principle, so food co-ops develop relationships with local producers and visibly promote local farms to their consumers. Co-ops are often more nimble than larger grocery stores or institutions, and will buy local products both from distributors and directly from producers. Grocery stores and co-ops represent over 50% of all local food sales in the state!
- Co-ops often pay livable wages, and typically provide better wages and benefits than conventional grocery stores.



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- Co-ops can provide a steady market channel for organic, diversified, and sustainable food producers, which helps shift to more environmentally friendly production methods.

Co-ops are, however, up against some challenges. Like all independently-owned grocery stores, they face significant competition with larger chain grocery stores; are challenged by the low margin and limited resource industry of small-scale retailing; are often in regions with low population density; and may also be located within economically depressed communities. But given these

challenges, co-ops remain an opportunity for increasing local food sales. According to a 2014 Farm to Plate Network survey, 95% of independent grocers and co-ops said they'd like to source even more local food across many product categories including produce and meat. This can allow producers to grow their businesses and for new businesses to emerge to meet the demand. It also means greater access to local food by all Vermonters.

*Erica Campbell is the Farm to Plate Network Director. Learn more about the work taking place to strengthen Vermont's food system at [www.VTFarmtoPlate.com](http://www.VTFarmtoPlate.com). ♦*

The reality is that there is no such thing as cheap food. There is food with a relatively low sticker price on the shelf, but we are paying more for it elsewhere: Cash subsidies, tax breaks, below market cost grazing land and water, health costs of pollution, and, of course, the health costs of making the least healthy food cheap. We are also borrowing from the future: soil loss, antibiotic loss, and climate change.

– Hilton Dier on VTDigger

## 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 Chris Carnes at [libertyloungevt@gmail.com](mailto:libertyloungevt@gmail.com)



*Using the Community Center benefits The Plainfield Co-op*

# Winter Menu

by Daniel Marcus and Amba Connors

Yes, it's cold and the beginning of a winter that will last who knows how long. Let's get together with friends and have a nice warming dinner together and talk about great books and poetry and movies and stuff.

Hot Borscht with Sour Cream  
Leek Fritters  
Salad with Bob Fisher's Dressing  
Winter Squash Pie

## Borscht

This soup is really easy and very tasty, and like many soups is better the next day.

5 C. peeled, chopped beets (±5 med. beets)  
10 C. water                    2 T. lemon juice  
salt                              ½ C. maple syrup  
2 chopped onions    ½ C. apple cider  
sour cream

In a soup pot combine beets, water, a dash of salt and the onions and bring to a boil. Reduce to medium low and simmer for 30 minutes. Add 2 T. salt, lemon juice, syrup and cider. Cook another 5 minutes. Taste and adjust as needed.

Serve piping hot with a generous dollop of sour cream on top.



## Leek Fritters

We got this receipt from Yotam Ottolenghi on the recommendation of our very own wine maven Nancy. It's not so easy but oh so good, and an excellent companion dish to the borscht; notice how the ingredients mirror each other.

### Sauce:

1/2 C. yogurt                    3 T. olive oil  
1/2 C. sour cream            ½ t. salt  
1 clove garlic                2 T. lemon juice  
2½ C. chopped parsley

Process all ingredients.

### Fritters:

1 lb. trimmed leeks            1 t. cumin  
5 shallots, chopped        1 t. turmeric  
⅔ C. olive oil                1 t. cinnamon  
chopped chile, to taste    1 t. sugar  
½ C. chopped parsley      ½ t. salt  
¾ t. coriander                1 egg white  
¾ C. plus 1 T. wholewheat pastry flour  
1½ T. baking powder        1 egg  
4½ T. butter, melted        ⅓ C. milk

Cut leeks in half, then to 1" lengths and sauté with shallots in half the oil on medium heat for 15 minutes. Put in bowl and add chile, parsley, spices, sugar and salt. Let cool.

Beat egg white to soft peaks and add to bowl.

In a separate bowl combine flour, baking powder, whole egg, milk and butter. Blend and add to leek mixture.

Put 2 T. oil in large frying pan and using half the mixture make 4 fritters. Keep

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them warm in the oven as you make the other 4. Serve with sauce.

## Salad

Not seasonal, but we enjoy a nice salad with this meal. Many local folks remember Bob Fisher, an abstract expressionist (not as famous as Jackson Pollack) who studied with Hans Hoffman back in the day. At dinner at his abstract expressionist house one autumn evening he served us this amazing and simple dressing made from his own maple trees.

1 part olive oil  
1 part apple cider vinegar  
1 part maple syrup

## Winter Squash Pie

Pumpkin can be used here instead of the delicata squash. The nice thing about this recipe is its lightness. Rather than the often too heavy texture of the traditional pumpkin pie, this is light and souffle-like, yet with all the traditional spices.

**Crust:** whatever suits. I do love to make pie and tart crusts from scratch, but there are fine pre-made ones out there now, both flour and graham cracker.

### Filling:

2 eggs, beaten	½ t. ground ginger
2 C. cooked squash	½ t. ground cloves
¾ C. sugar	1 t. salt
1 t. cinnamon	1 C. milk

Preheat oven to 425

In a large bowl combine eggs, squash, sugar, spices and salt and whisk together. Add milk and whisk that in too.

Pour into pie crust and bake for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 and bake for 40 minutes more or until a knife comes out clean. Let cool and serve with whipped cream. Yum!

## Pairings

by Nancy Ellen

To go with our soup course and main meal, the Backcountry Blanc from local winery Fresh Tracks is quite nice. It's an off-dry white, not too acidic, but not too sweet,

with a touch of body, but simple and easy to drink. The tinge of sweetness is balanced by the more intense sweetness of the borscht. Other good choices would be a well-balanced riesling (such as Clean Slate) or another lighter bodied white that is neither too dry nor too sweet, such as La Fleur Belle Vigne, a lovely white from the Gascony region of France. Alternatively, the Smuttynose Vunderbar pilsner is a great choice for beer lovers to go with this meal.

For the dessert course, the blackberry mead from Artesano here in Vermont is an excellent partner, evoking all the rich flavors of fall and winter without weighing things down. Bon Appetit! ♦



Including veggies of different colors in a meal helps to ensure the nutritional balance of a meal, as different colors reflect the presence of different nutrients.



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