

The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter

Winter 2022

Shop at the Plainfield Co-op

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& COMMUNITY CENTER

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 Deb Barnwell, *Floor Staff/Cashier*
 Debra Bothfeld, *Floor Staff/Cashier*
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 Jezebel Crow, *Produce, Cheese, Coffee, Tea,
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 Anji Domino, *Household Goods, Body Care,
 Supplements Buyer, Floor Staff/Cashier;
 Produce Staff*
 Ken Folta, *Lead Receiver*
 Eben Markova-Gold, *Floor Staff/Cashier,
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 Jamie Lewis, *General Manager*
 Tim Llewelyn, *Produce, Beer and Wine Buyer*
 Shaelynn Matthew, *Bulk, Dairy, Frozen, Grocery,
 Meat, and Refrigerated Buyer*
 Sara Putnam, *Produce Staff; Floor Staff/Cashier*
 Stanzi Scribner, *Administrative Assistant*
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Deadline for the Spring issue is March 15. The newsletter is published quarterly in a black & white paper version and in color online. To place an ad, contact Elizabeth Mathai, ad co-ordinator, elizabethmathai@yahoo.com.

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About This Newsletter

Let's face it—challenges for the Co-op abound. Not an entirely new situation but as Manager Jamie Lewis makes clear in his report,

Covid has created a unique complex of problems. And the question of our location—also not a new one—seems more urgent than ever. (See Cat Klarich's report from the Board, and Annie Coughlin's article on considering our options.) Through all the challenges, and the continuing vulnerability of small businesses to failure or take-over by large corporations, our little independent Co-op is still here, serving our community! Since at least some of our advertisers are doing so to support the Co-op, we are returning the favor by profiling one of them each issue, starting with Vermont Yarn Shop (p.8).

We are blessed with an experienced and dedicated new General Manager, a staff committed to the Co-op, a hard working Board, and loyal, helpful members. Covid has been with us for so long now that we may have lost perspective on how difficult it has made every aspect of

the Co-op's operations, the extra efforts required just to stay afloat. We can thank everyone by shopping as much as possible at our Co-op and by participating in some way in the Gratitude Drive for Co-op staff (see p. 4).

As our new layout editor, Elizabeth Mathai, remains in India helping her mother recover from a stroke, former layout editor Sarah Albert has once again generously given her time and expertise to put this newsletter together.

We welcome your contributions of letters, photos, cartoons, poems, whatever. Deadline for the spring issue is March 15.

Editor: Glenda Bissex (songboat@vtlink.net)

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Staff writer: Gail Falk (gail.falk@gmail.com)

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On Board!

by Board President Cat Klarich

When I was a little girl, my mom would ask, “Have I told you lately that I love you?” My entire childhood, I thought she made that up, and only recently learned she was quoting Van Morrison! Having lost my mom, I hold those words close to my heart and now say them to my own children. In this winter issue, we are sharing the love with you, the Co-op Community, inviting you to share the love with our staff, and honoring the love and dedication of two community members that have gone too soon—local farmer Tom Morse and the Plainfield Co-op’s very first President, Larry Gordon. My heart is heavy with the loss to the

community and for those that are grieving their own personal losses.

As I look back and reflect on the year 2021, it is a year of loss, grief, and financial struggles for local families and businesses. The pandemic continues to put the Co-op in a crisis mode that takes a toll on the staff. From parents quarantining with their school aged kids to supply chain issues, the staff have been super troopers. There are many ways, monetary and non-monetary, that you can thank them.

This year has also marked significant change for the Co-op. This fall, we said farewell to General Manager Peter Youngbaer, who has been enjoying his retirement, and we welcomed Jamie Lewis, who deftly stepped into the role. Jamie brings decades of Co-op experience and we’re lucky to have him.

Jamie and Treasurer Rose Paul share the underwhelming financial picture as our fiscal year ends. Much of the government assistance the Co-op was eligible for, that helped buoy our finances in 2020, has dried up. We plan to apply for grant funding to obtain adequate ventilation and additional hazard pay for the staff through the American Rescue Plan. This year, the Central VT Regional Planning Commission, on behalf of the Co-op, applied for a USDA Rural Development grant. The goal was to fund a feasibility study by the cooperative consultants at Columinate, to dial in on feasibility of the “should we stay or should we move to RT 2” question. We weren’t awarded the grant, but we just learned that our

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Thank You from the Co-op Board

Thanks to everyone who has participated so far in the “Gratitude Drive” for Co-op staff that began in mid-December and will continue through January. It is a way for members and non-members who feel so inclined to express appreciation to the staff for their ongoing service. No obligation! Whether you put cash in the jar, donate via the staff gift card at the register, fill out a thank-you card, or just throw a kiss, it’s the spirit that counts. Note: this is a good will donation that will be divided equitably among staff, not an obligation at all. Thanks so much for joining us in thanking our dear essential workers for all their hard work and dedication during these unprecedented times. ♥

application was next in line, and we have been encouraged to re-apply! This is exciting news because whatever path we take, the Co-op needs to expand to better serve the community.

If we're going to expand, we need to plan! We are referring to this planning process as a "dual track" and we're gaining momentum. A group of member-owners have gotten involved in helping the Co-op uncover every resource available from tax credits for eligible downtown village centers to architecture grants, and exploring community-supported enterprises. Last month, a few Board and community members took a field trip to visit a community-supported enterprise, the East Warren Village Store. I'd like to thank member-owner, Alice Merrill, for taking the lead on the path that expands the Co-op in its current location. As Alice explained, "a non-profit community-supported enterprise would open the gates to public funding to repair our building and make it ADA compliant." We still recognize the challenges of our current location and continue to explore the possibility of expanding to RT 2.

You don't need to be a real estate expert to know that the market is extremely tight right now and there just isn't a lot available in the Plainfield RT 2 corridor. We've found parking and accommodating large delivery trucks to be a challenge, especially on the river side of RT 2. We have a local agent with her ear to the ground, but we just aren't getting many leads. Please let us know if you have any! Having seen property after property get scooped up on RT 2 we decided to take action. Resolutions were adopted at the Annual Meeting to explore RT 2 opportunities for the Co-op, but it's important to understand that no move or expansion is possible without member-

owner approval! I just want to remind everyone of that fact to quell any misinformation. We're still very much on a fact-finding mission.

It is inspiring to have such community engagement right now and we welcome you to join our Board meetings, held via Zoom, on the last Tuesday of each month. We know we have a long way to go, but want to assure, you, the member-owners, that we are listening and we're 100% committed to the Co-op! Thank you everyone for your support, feedback, and passion for the Plainfield Co-op! And if I haven't told you lately, I love you! ♦

In Memoriam

Thomas Parker Morse, 1980-2021

It is with a heavy heart that we say farewell to Tom Morse, of Morse Farm and Sugarworks in East Montpelier. An 8th generation Vermont farmer and local musician, Tom was well loved by those who knew him. Whether the connection was through the countless local bands he played with or his work at Morse Farm, his friends and neighbors in Plainfield feel his untimely loss. To a good man, gone too soon, Rest in Peace, Tommy.



Photo: Aaron Launderville

General Manager's Report

by Jamie Lewis

Hello to everyone reading this!

This is my first contribution to the quarterly newsletter and at this point I have been working at the Co-op for about two months. I spent the first week and a half onboarding with Peter and have since hit the ground running. Although officially retired, Peter has graciously been available for questions on the occasions that I and office staff have had them. Much appreciated, Peter!

I have learned a lot in my short time here and still have a lot to learn. I have felt truly welcomed and accepted by this tight-knit community of members, shoppers, staff, and the board of directors. I am truly impressed with the amount of passion and institutional knowledge many folks bring to the table. We have a mix of newer and longer-term employees that I feel are working hard to make the store a success, especially in these still challenging times. I would like to recognize and thank them all! They are the life blood and engine of this operation.

Speaking of challenges, there are many that are ongoing.

It is a difficult time for many, including us, in the retail world. The supply chain continues to be affected by the issues and influence of the pandemic and other big picture market fluctuations in our economy. The cost of goods has increased and is projected to increase this year with inflation. Demand for goods is up nationally. We continue to see out of stock items and unfulfilled shipments from our largest supplier, UNFI. And this is not exclusively direct-

ed at smaller stores such as ours. I have reached out to friends and former colleagues at Onion River Co-op, and they too are having this experience. Our buyers have been doing their best to adapt and overcome these bumps in the road by being flexible and nimble with adjusting on the fly. Yes, this means we have seen favorite products temporarily missing from the shelves and yes, we have seen some never seen at the Co-op substitutions. I assure you that we are still highly dedicated to buying and supporting local, as well as non-local healthful food options. We are also aware of the need for and sensitivity to price points and having products available that meet the diverse needs of all in the community.

Sounds like a tall order, eh? Well, it most certainly is, especially given the fact that we are working within the confines of a relatively small retail space. These are the realities we face. I will be working with our buyers, and we will collectively work towards creative solutions as we move forward into the new year and beyond.

The Marketing Committee is working diligently on some initiatives for advertising and outreach. We have some updated local ads that have been going out to local print media, and continued efforts with social media. By the time you read this, you will have seen some direct messaging via email and standard mail. We are also making plans for improved signage and have exciting ideas to celebrate the Co-op's 50th birthday! Stay tuned. The Co-op needs now,

continued on next page

more than ever, the support of our membership and community at large to continue to survive and thrive! One more thing, a small benefit: we are offering FREE coffee in the mornings to our shoppers!

I don't want to beat the drum that is endlessly beating from the media, but briefly, the ongoing threat of Covid is still very much alive. We continue to adjust as best we can and strive to make our corner of the world as safe and comfortable as possible for employees and those shopping. I have taken the modest step of increasing the number of shoppers to 6 at a time, while still asking people to wear a mask, and having masks and sanitizer available for use. As of this moment the community center is still closed to the public. I will continue to monitor the situation and make reasonable, well-intentioned adjustments in good conscience. I appreciate people's understanding and patience on the matter.

The building is another ongoing challenge. As you read this a new building assessment will have been completed and we will have new data to support any decisions about future possibilities of structural improvements and the viability of remaining in the current loca-

tion or further exploring the idea of potential relocation. Again, please stay tuned and stay involved.

The last challenge is, as I write this, we are not on track to meet our budgeted sales targets for 2021. There is a confluence of factors at work. I've discussed issues like supply chain and shopper limitations during the pandemic. There is also a relatively new store up the road from us in East Montpelier, Fox Market, as a shopping option on the way into Plainfield and Marshfield. We have had to spend money not included in the original 2021 budget a year ago on a new furnace and retail freezer. These factor into my current work casting the final budget for 2022. In my years working at the Co-op in Burlington I have seen all of these struggles many times. I can confidently say that with some effort and thoughtful planning, and again your much needed support, there is a way forward.

I have overused the term challenge in this article to paint a picture. Upon reflection, I would rather choose to consider all this an opportunity.

Happy New Year! ♦

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Treasurer's Report

by Rose Paul

I will report on the third quarter (July through September) of our fiscal year, compare this with our budget projections, and look at where we are in the year-to-date.

For the third quarter our sales were lower than we budgeted by \$25,000 and also lower than the same quarter of the prior year. This is troubling because typically our summer season has our highest sales of the year.

We have a target of a 35% gross profit margin, and we slipped slightly, making only a 34% profit margin in the third quarter. Gross margin is defined as the revenue from sales of goods minus the cost to purchase those goods and minus any spoilage of those goods, making them unsellable. We had almost \$7,000 worth of spoilage in this quarter, due in large part to repeated freezer failures, which was the major contributor to missing our gross profit margin by one percent.

We had a net loss of just over \$8,000 for the third quarter, compared to a budget projection of a \$13,000 profit. Our expenses were \$9,000 higher than budgeted (and higher than the prior year) for a variety of reasons: the cost of advertising to hire new staff; double staff shifts to train new people as some staff returned to college; replacing a label printer; and repair bills for freezer units.

Now, if we look at the year-to-date, as of November 30, we have a net loss of \$15,510. Sales were down in October and November compared to budget and compared to the prior year.

It is disappointing that during the month of November when a lot of groceries are bought for holidays, the Co-op had total sales that were somewhat down. I urge Co-op members to shop more and shop often at your local, community-based grocery store. A little bit more from each of us will shore up the bottom line for our net profits.

Have you checked out the awesome wine sales that have been going on for several weeks? Have you thought of a gift of food for someone on your special list, or perhaps adding to their gift card at the Co-op? Please do what you can to help keep our Co-op afloat! ♦



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858 East Hill Road
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Hours: Fridays and Saturdays
9 A.M. to Noon, or by appt.

Vermont Yarn Shop at Plainview Farm, located at 858 East Hill Road in Plainfield, is a home-based business, owned by Laura Zeisel, which sells yarns made in Vermont and/or made with Vermont-raised fleece.

Commercial brands at the shop include Green Mountain Spinnery (milled in Putney) and Bartlett Yarns (which, although milled in Maine, use a significant amount of Vermont-raised fleece). Non-commercial (small farm) brands change frequently, as the production rate varies and dye lots are small. Currently, Laura's inventory includes yarns from sheep, goat, and llama farms located in Irasburg, Richmond, Royalton, Waitsfield, and Windham. The shop also carries a small selection of knitting accessories.

In 2009, Laura designed a "Knit Local" Euro-style sticker to encourage the use of locally produced yarns, and to encourage knitters to shop at local yarn shops. The product, which was originally used in a five-store "shop hop" in central Vermont, soon caught on with other yarn shops (and other knitters!) throughout New England. Knit Local® products now have trademark protection, and are sold at yarn shops throughout the country, as well as via direct mail. The Knit Local® product line has expanded to include the original Euro-style sticker, canvas bags, magnets, mini-stickers, and notepads. The canvas bags are manufactured for Laura by Vermont Canvas Products in Rutland, another woman-owned Vermont business.

For more information, to order Knit Local® products, and/or to arrange a visit to the shop, contact Laura at (802) 454-1114. The shop's regular hours are Fridays and Saturdays, 9:00 AM to Noon.

(Advertiser profile)

RECIPES collected by Debra Stoleroff

Stuffed Mushrooms

(appetizer)

From Melissa Gosselin

Melissa always brings good food to potlucks. She recently brought this yummy, warm, winter appetizer to an event. I liked them so much I asked if I could share the recipe with Co-op members. I was surprised how simple the recipe was.

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon olive oil
20 white or crimini mushrooms
8 oz package of cream cheese at room temperature
1 or more cloves of garlic
¼ c. parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper

Preparation:

1. Wash and dry the mushrooms.
2. Destem the mushrooms, cutting off any imperfections from the stems.
3. Mince the stems very fine.
4. Heat 1 Tbsp. of oil in pan.
5. Mince 1 clove of garlic (or more if you're a garlic lover).
6. Add minced stems and garlic to pan and cook until water is released. Don't overcook.
7. Let cool for a few minutes and then add the cream cheese, ¼ cup parmesan cheese, some salt and pepper. Mix well.
8. Top each mushroom with mixture.
9. Bake at 400° for 20 minutes.

Meet the Co-op's New General Manager

by Gail Falk

Jamie Lewis is new on the job as the Co-op General Manager, but he already seems comfortable and confident in his role.

Jamie knows Central Vermont, as he grew up in East Montpelier, but, more important, he brings 19 years' experience of working in Vermont food cooperatives. He worked at Hunger Mountain for three years, and then moved on to City Market in Burlington, where he was meat and seafood manager and served on the management team that opened City Market's second store in the South End.

Moving from a large downtown store to Plainfield Co-op is quite a change of scale and pace. For example, Jamie says City Market sold 1,100 Thanksgiving turkeys in the last year he worked there, whereas Plainfield Co-op sold a dozen this fall. He supervised 13 staff in Burlington in meat and seafood alone,

whereas the total number of our co-op's staff is 21, all part time.

Jamie left his job during the pandemic to stay home with his eight-year-old daughter so his wife could focus on a new business, Huggable Mug Cafe in Randolph. This fall, with his daughter back in school, Jamie started exploring options. He learned about the Plainfield vacancy from his old friend Co-op staffer Eban Markova-Gold, who spoke highly to him about the store and the staff. He doesn't recall having been at the Co-op since the mid-2000's, when he played in the Community Center with his band.

Jamie speaks with genuine enthusiasm about the Co-op's staff, whom he describes as being vested in the organization and having a lot of great ideas. He describes himself as fostering open communication between workers and management. Because of his deep retail experience, he is able to be "in the trenches," understanding both what staff have to accomplish and the challenges they face.

From his years at City Market Jamie is familiar with the Cooperative Principles and the way that a co-op's Ends define the store's goals. He describes City Market's emphasis on training workers in both skills and values, and a big mural there that depicts the store's Ends and hopes to see something like that in Plainfield.

In Plainfield, the General Manager juggles many roles, such as staff recruit-



Photo: Gail Falk

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ment, training and supervision; developing and overseeing the budget; planning and policy development; and communications with the Board, members and public. Sales have been slow since Jamie started in October, not unusual for the winter months. The Co-op started offering free coffee to draw in customers.

Jamie is aware of the “big picture challenges” that the Co-op is facing. He hasn’t made up his mind about where he stands on the “move or stay question.” He notes that the store’s 900 square feet of retail space are very small in terms of allowing innovations, not to mention growth, and there are serious problems with the building. “I know something has to happen,” he says, but he is still listening, studying and learning about what that should be.

Meanwhile, there is a store to run. Looking forward to the coming year, Jamie lists a combination of practical and lofty goals:

- Keeping staff and customers safe and healthy through the pandemic
- Eliminating slow-selling products and making space for products that sell faster
- Paying vendors on time
- Training staff to be informed about retail practices, the role of members and the Board, and Cooperative principles
- Serving the community and drawing more people into the store.

Above all, he says, “I hope to be able to steer the ship in the right direction.” ♦

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Larry Gordon: A Talent for Actualizing Ideas

by Jim Higgins

Founding Co-op member Larry Gordon passed away November 9 following a bicycle accident near his Marshfield home.

The tributes flowed. His nearly five decades as a renowned Vermont—and later global—maestro earned him the eloquently expressed sadness from hundreds of his adoring fellow singers, musicians, friends, and fellow travelers.

However, before he embarked on that sacred career path, he was a highly regarded community activist, which included a remarkable stint as one of the founding coordinators of the Plainfield Co-op. And that's what I'd like to talk about.

He joined the initial organizing team of six that launched the Co-op and quickly revealed his talent for actualizing his ideas, the first of which was the monthly Community Suppers in the under-used upstairs. When he first pitched the idea we were instantly on-board—sort of—but not without our customary reservations about time, cost, etc. His response was essentially, “Don't worry, I got this.”

What flowed from his organizing talents was our first institutional glue, if you will. These Suppers typically drew a hundred or more of our early Co-op members into a social event, elevating the Co-op from a couple-times-a-month connection through neighborhood buying groups into something else entirely.

While Larry and his volunteers cooked (mostly spaghetti, salads, and freshly-made bread) and served upstairs, my job

was downstairs as a “traffic cop” of sorts. The lines typically wound deep into the parking lot, and the eager high-spirited newbies (and their cars) needed “flow control.” (Ask me about my many calming conversations with the chief of the fire department.) Larry performed this magic act month after month for over a year and achieved the five-town community cohesion that was the goal. We were officially launched.

Larry's next visionary idea was to convert the back storage rooms of the Co-op into a community canning facility. He “got this one” too. Dozens of members would bring their veggies to large cooking/canning equipment and happily leave with filled Ball jars. It was a small step in the direction of sustainability that was one of the Co-op's founding goals. It soon evolved into a much larger step as he founded the famed Cherry Hill Cannery out on the Barre-Montpelier road (in the building that later became Rubber Bubbles).

He pulled all this off while participating almost daily in the general operations of the fast-growing Co-op. I remember him as the calmest and wisest of our founding team, which often used the new home he built at New Hamburger commune for intense meetings to resolve, er, interpersonal conflicts.

In sum, as evidenced by his subsequent roaring success in the musical sphere, Larry was the embodiment of praxis, or the merging of theory and practice. He “got” it all.

RIP old buddy. ♦



Our Farmers Thank You

Since 1919, the farm families of Cabot Co-op have been passionate about making the world's best cheese. We use only the purest ingredients to craft our creamy, delicious classics. Just maybe, that's why we've won every major award for taste. Learn more at cabotcheese.coop



Marketing Committee Report

by Leah Tedesco, Membership and Marketing Coordinator

The Marketing Committee has been putting extra effort into advertising as of late. In an attempt to attract new customers and members—as well as encourage existing ones to shop more—spots have been placed in various area newspapers, and social media efforts have ramped up. The public has been asked to help in spreading the word. We are currently providing small flyers for them to distribute. These can be found at the registers.

November and December saw the return of raffles. Each month, customers were able to enter to win a gift basket of items sold by the Co-op.

As expressed in past communications from the Co-op, we are nearly 50, and will continue to use this theme in various marketing materials, and hopefully events. We have been in contact with The WORLD about possible celebratory collaborations, as they are also turning 50.

While the Community Center is still closed to the public, the finishing touches are being put on Jerome Lipani's art installation "Abstract Paintings." We hope to have the media package available for that soon for people to view virtually. We look forward to our community space eventually being open again. ♦

Considering Our Options

by Annie Coughlin, Co-op Member

At the 2021 Annual Meeting, there was discussion about relocating our Co-op. Thirty-one members voted in favor of giving the Co-op Board authority to spend up to \$10,000 as a deposit to reserve a potential property. Purchasing and moving to a new location would be a huge undertaking with massive implications for the future of our Co-op.

Sometime in the future, the membership will have the final vote on whether the store should stay in the lower village or move to a new location. Before that vote, there are serious financial questions to be answered:

- What would it cost to purchase and retrofit a new building?
- What would it cost to move?
- What would it cost to make the recommended improvement to the current location?
- What realistic boost in profit margins can we hope to see in a new location?
- What is a realistic profit margin we can achieve at the current location, once improvements have been made?
- Where would the money come from?
- What kind of debt can our Co-op afford?

I have joined a group of members who are looking into the opportunities available for staying at our current location, in the hopes of providing the membership with the information needed to make an informed decision. We are working with the Board to resolve some of the deficiencies at our current loca-

tion, as well as acknowledging the assets.

Perhaps the biggest plus of our present location is that we own the building--a debt free asset in an inflated real estate market! Any improvements made in design and energy efficiency will contribute to our Co-op's future financial sustainability, lowering monthly bills as the cost of goods continues to rise. A compact, well-designed space with limited overhead could help provide the financial stability our co-op will need during this new era of unpredictable climate change and supply chain interruptions. It's important to note that currently, the Co-op is easy to reach by foot and bike, and that the proposed changes to the Route 2 intersection will open up the village to easier and safer vehicle and pedestrian access.

Another big advantage of the current location is the Historic Designation of both the Village and the building (once the Plainfield Grange). This Designation makes the Co-op eligible for a variety of programs administered by the Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV)—programs that can help finance repairs and building upgrades that will allow the Co-op to grow sales. Many grocery stores in small towns struggle to stay afloat, and grant funding can provide them the support they need to efficiently serve their community. One such program is the Community Supported Enterprise model. Please take the time to learn more about it at: <https://ptvermont.org/our-work/cse/>

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Our group is in conversation with our Co-op Board about applying to PTV for funds from the Robert Sincerbeaux Fund and has started fundraising to that end. The RSF provides \$500 toward the cost of an architectural assessment of the building and use of space—in our case, compatibility with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will most likely be a priority, but other suggestions include:

- a more attractive entry way to welcome shoppers into the store
- adding a small kitchen to allow the Co-op to offer grab-and-go prepared food
- replacing the old exterior siding and inefficient windows
- a more space-efficient store layout

The RSF can also provide money for technical assistance to move a project along its timeline (i.e., organizational development, project planning, fundraising consultation, feasibility assessment, and project development activities). If you are interested in pledging a donation to these pursuits, please contact Alice Merrill at: alicejanemerrill@gmail.com

The Plainfield Co-op is a cherished institution in our community and certainly all members want to pursue what they believe is best for its continued existence. It is critical that the membership has the information we need to choose wisely. There's a lot to consider. In the meantime, please continue to support our local economy and shop at our Co-op. ♦

Simplify Your Cooking

from The Cornucopia Institute (cornucopia.org)

The incomparable flavors of fresh, organic food lend themselves to simple cooking. And it's the quality of the food that the people seated around your table will remember the most, not how many hours you spent prepping in the kitchen.

Follow these tips for stress-free meal prep with the best organic ingredients:

Prepare your building blocks Carve out time to simmer beans in the crockpot or lentils on the stove. Roast a chicken or bake tofu. Stocking your fridge with foundational ingredients saves time. And when you're hungry and need a quick fix, it'll motivate you to cook instead of calling for a pizza. (Or, order that pie and top it with sautéed greens.)

No recipes required Organic foods turn basic dishes into remarkable meals. Pair cooked beans with sweet roasted squash for tacos or burritos. Top the chicken or tofu with roasted apples. Simmer the lentils with broth and roasted rainbow carrots for a beautiful, delicious soup.

What's on hand? Trust your creativity and build confidence in the kitchen by using every scrap, leaf, and leftover. (Turn it into a challenge, and delegate dinner to the kids.) A little ingenuity keeps your food out of the compost bin and landfill and cultivates deep appreciation for what the farmer contributed to your meal. ♦

Kaddu (Sweet and Sour Butternut Squash)

NY Times recipe from Priya Krishna and Ritu Krishna, adapted by Debra Stoleroff

I love winter squash and am always looking for ways to cook it. I found this recipe in the *NY Times*. As always, I use the recipe as a guide. I play around with amounts to serve my taste preferences.

Kaddu is an Indian dish which is traditionally made with stronger tasting pumpkin. I prefer to use butternut, buttercup or acorn squash, which is why I like this recipe.

Ingredients

olive oil

1 teaspoon fenugreek seeds

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

1 medium to large yellow onion, finely diced

2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger

½ teaspoon red chile powder, such as cayenne

¼ teaspoon asafetida (optional)

1 medium butternut squash (about 2 pounds), peeled, seeded and cut into ½-inch cubes

kosher salt to taste

4 medium Roma tomatoes, cut into ½-inch cubes OR a 14 oz can of diced tomatoes

2 tablespoons lime juice (from about 1 lime), plus more as needed

2 tablespoons light brown sugar

chopped fresh cilantro (stems and leaves), for garnish

Preparation

1. In a pan, over medium heat, warm the oil. Once the oil begins to shimmer, add the fenugreek seeds and cook until they start to make noise (happens quickly). Reduce the heat to medium-low and swirl in the turmeric. Add the onion and sauté until the onion starts to soften. Add the ginger, chile powder and asafetida (if using), and cook for a minute. Add the butternut squash and salt, cover and cook until the squash is tender, 10-15 minutes.
2. Stir in the tomatoes, lime juice and brown sugar. Reduce the heat to low, cover and cook until the tomatoes are soft but still retain their shape. Remove from the heat. Add more lime juice and salt according to taste. Garnish with the cilantro and serve warm.

I serve the Kaddu over quinoa but it is traditionally scooped onto a piece of naan.