



THE CAMBRIDGE FOOD CO-OP

Wholesome, affordable foods in a spirit of respect for each other and our world

JUNE 2014 NEWSLETTER

NEWS FROM THE CO-OP MANAGER

Personnel

The Shift Supervisors continue to do a great job with the store. We have been moving things around to create a more logical flow. We will also be moving forward with training for both the Shift Supers and the Working Members. These will be focused sessions to help address areas of specific need.

New Items

We now offer **Organic Spices** from Frontier Co-op alongside our conventional selection. Pricing is really great and all are in glass. We have also started doing business with **The Gluten Free Bakery** out of **Chatham, New York**. They offer really great **gluten free breads and baked goods** which have been well-received.

Aprons

The old ones were well-worn and well-loved. We hope the new ones with **our sunflower logo** will last as long.

Labeling Cooler and Freezer Shelves

We will also start **labeling our coolers and freezers with shelf labels** to create consistency in our displays and to help shoppers locate what they seek more easily.

Membership

Our membership is **still growing at a steady pace**, working members in particular. Training sessions have been in big demand, so we are seeking another trainer.

The success of our Co-op, both co-operatively and financially, depends on all of us working together. We have been doing a great job, but of course we can always do even better. In the future, we will be looking to tap some of the special talents and expertise of our members to help us move forward. We will keep refining our systems to make our Co-op perform the best that it possibly can.



Submitted by Cory McMillan, Manager

Please send questions or comments to villcoop@gmail.com, or call Cory at 677-5731

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Kimball Brook Farm Organic Milk

Kimball Brook Farm in North Ferrisburgh, Vermont is a Certified Organic farm producing grass-grazed dairy products. Their herd of 200 Jerseys and Holsteins grazes on 955 acres of land that is tended with respect, affection, and a careful eye toward conservation. The DeVos family believes that stewardship of the land and care for the environment produce a product that's good for the planet, good for the herd and simply good for you. The co-op currently sells ½ gallons of whole and 1% milk from Kimball Brook Farm.

<http://www.kimballbrookfarm.com>



PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Certified Organic Spices from Frontier Co-op

SPICE! Thousands of plants from around the world contain those special flavors, aromas, and health or preservative properties. It's what we long for in our food, and in our lives. Ah, wondrous spice! Wars have been fought and continents have been explored in the name of spices. In some cultures, spices have been used as currency, they are that valuable.

In more recent years, **nutrition studies** have begun substantiating some traditional claims made about the health benefits of herbs and spices. Whether your favorite spices come in leaf form (mint, parsley, oregano), or as seeds (mustard, cumin, sesame), or as roots (ginger, turmeric), or bark (cinnamon)—it turns out that many herbs and spices are powerhouses of nutrition. They provide vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, digestive stimulants, and/or antibacterial qualities.



Many organizations are working today to make the production and harvesting of spices more sustainable. For more information, you can check out the websites for Sustainable Spice Initiative (sustainablespicesinitiative.com), Sustainable Harvest International (sustainableharvest.org), and Rainforest Alliance (rainforest-alliance.org).

Sources: *Nat. Geo Food for Health*, by Seaver and Newby; and Tufts University Health and Nutrition Newsletter Special Report, August 2013

The Co-op's Bulk Spices

Cambridge Food Co-op has always offered a wide range of quality herbs, spices, and teas in bulk. You could bring your own jar or get a bag from us and buy the exact quantity of dill or tarragon that you wished. And you would not have to pay exorbitant chain store prices for a jar that would likely go stale before you finished it all.

Frontier Co-op (frontiercoop.com), in Norway, Iowa, has been our long-time spice provider. We value them for their commitment to sustainability and fair trade, as well as for their co-operative business model founded on “triple bottom line values: people, planet, and then profit.” Our manager, **Cory, has now added a full line of Frontier's certified organic spices.** Those of us who try to choose organic for health or environmental reasons now have a wide range of bulk organic spices to choose from, right here in Cambridge.

A couple more updates about spices

A few months back, Cory expanded our vendors to include **Atlantic Spice Company (atlanticspice.com)**, a small company which is a little more local, hailing from North Truro on Cape Cod. Atlantic offers similar values to Frontier's and competitive prices.

You may have noticed **our bulk spices are all stored in glass containers again.** This was done with an eye to more earth-friendly and spice-friendly packaging. It turns out that the oils and other ingredients in spices can stain and degrade plastic, which can then degrade the spices. Glass is more stable, and reusable. **Small glass jars are now for sale at the spice display**, for those who forget to bring their own.



Tips about Spices from the Frontier Co-op Website

Fresh herbs and spices should be treated as you would fruits and vegetables. Refrigerate or freeze them. Dried spices often concentrate flavors and nutrients associated with their oil content, but lose water soluble vitamins in the drying process. Spices stay freshest, and therefore best maintain their flavor and nutritional properties, when stored in airtight glass or metal containers in a cool place with low light (below 70 degrees F—so not on the shelf over the stove, no matter how convenient, and not on that fancy display rack near the sunny window.)

Here is a rough guide to shelf life:

Whole Spices & Herbs:	Leaves and flowers	1 to 2 years
	Seeds and barks	2 to 3 years
	Roots	3 years
Ground Spices & Herbs	Leaves	1 year
	Seeds and barks	1 year
	Roots	2 years

Spices That Complement Each Other

Want to branch out beyond recipes in your use of spices? You can make your own spice blends to add something special to your dishes. To start out, you may appreciate guidance from the experts at Frontier. Below are some common flavor families:

- **Bouquet Garnis:** basil, bay, oregano, parsley
- **Herbal:** basil, marjoram, rosemary, thyme
- **Hot:** chili peppers, cilantro, cumin, garlic
- **Pungent:** celery, chili peppers, cumin, curry, ginger, black pepper
- **Spicy:** cinnamon, ginger, black pepper, star anise
- **Sweet:** allspice, anise, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg

The Frontier website suggests an interesting way to test your own spice combinations for palatability: “Mix them with a mild cheese, such as cream cheese, and allow them to rest for an hour. Sample and make note of which combinations you enjoy.”

To read more go to: frontiercoop.com and click on the Information Tab.

Contributed by Susan Sullivan

From the Rind: New Regional Cheeses at the Co-op

Our Co-op Manager has begun participating in two new programs promoting cheeses from our own region, which is becoming known internationally for excellent cheese production. These initiatives will allow our Co-op shoppers more exposure to excellent, often award-winning products. So come on in and try them!

Consider Bardwell Farm

West Pawlet, Vermont

considerbardwellfarm.com

Consider Bardwell is now making its cheeses available in smaller amounts, pre-cut and wrapped at the farm. Availability is seasonal—which is one reason its cheeses are so good! At the moment, we are carrying three Jersey cow milk cheeses from this farm:

“**Dorset**” is an award-winning washed-rind cheese, soft-ripening with a rich, buttery texture

“**Pawlet**” is an Italian-style “toma” (“tomme” in French), a creamy cheese with real versatility

“**Rupert**” is an aged cheese, inspired by the famous European alpine cheeses Gruyère and Comté.

All of the Consider Bardwell’s cheeses are aged on premises. The milk comes from herds of Oberhastis goats on the farm and neighborhood Jersey cows, all raised with rotational grazing on pesticide-and-fertilizer-free pasture. The cheese is made with only non-animal rennet.



Provision International Ltd.
White River Junction, Vermont
provisionsintl.com

This long-standing Co-op supplier launched its new “Farm Focus” program in April, 2014, to promote regional cheeses. Every month a cheese is featured from a particular farm. Perhaps some of you tried the delicious Swiss-style “Gisele” from Boston Post Dairy in Enosburg Falls, Vermont, in May.

In June, look for “Ascutney Mountain” from Cobb Hill, an intentional co-housing community in Hartland 4-Corners, Vermont. This cheese, also made from raw Jersey cow milk, is a prize-winning Alpine style, aged 7-8 months, with a sweet, nutty flavor.

Contributed by Louisa Matthew, with thanks to the web sites of Consider Bardwell (considerbardwellfarm.com) and Provisions International Ltd. (provisionsintl.com).

AFRICAN MARKET BASKETS

Weaving Hope, Healthcare, and Education

Note: There’s an inspiring story behind the beautiful African market baskets we sell at the Cambridge Food Co-op. This article gives the very short version of that story, excerpted from the product website. If you find a few spare minutes at your computer sometime, you will probably enjoy exploring the website more fully. The captioned photo galleries provide an effective tour of the entire process of basket-making, from natural elephant grass to finished basket on its way to market. And browsing the images of the artisan weavers creates a feeling of personal connection with the women who weave grass into art to help support their families.

“Bolga” Baskets

“Bolga” baskets are strong, durable, colorful, and entirely hand-crafted. Each unique basket is made from river grass, known as “elephant grass” by local weavers in Bolgatanga, Ghana. Baskets with leather handles are wrapped in goat skin for comfort and durability. The leather is naturally tanned using local seeds and red millet. They are a beautiful, practical, and sustainable alternative to plastics. You can use them to collect, carry, contain, or display any number of items—groceries, garden produce, toys, magazines, knitting, and endless other “stuff.”



The supplier of our striking inventory of “Bolga” baskets is African Market Baskets, whose founder and CEO, Steve Karowe, has been importing from Africa for 25 years. For the past 12 years he has worked directly with artisans in Bolgatanga, Ghana, and helps support over 1,000 weavers and their families.

Bolgatanga is the largest town in the Upper East region of Ghana, about 20 miles South of the Burkina Faso border and very close to the edge of the Sahara Desert. The sun roasts the villages of northern Ghana year round, except during the two-to-three months of rainy season. The people living there are traditionally farmers and herdsman, but with its variable climate, farming is very difficult. Local women supplement the family income by using locally-grown straw to weave “Bolga” baskets by hand.

Steve travels to Africa to meet with the weavers regularly and to oversee the work of **Every Basket Helps™**, a non-profit organization created to help manage humanitarian projects in the villages of Ghana. African Market Baskets donates 10% of its profits to these projects, which include:

- **providing basic school supplies** for the weavers’ children annually
- **organizing and funding health care** for the weavers and their families annually
- **funding and building a community weaving center** serving four villages and over 400 weavers.



African Market Baskets is a member of the Fair Trade Federation (fairtradefederation.org) and Green America (greenamerica.org), whose mission is to harness economic power—the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society.

*Excerpted from the website of African Market Baskets (africanmarketbaskets.com)
Compiled by Margaret Waterson.*

NOTES FROM THE CO-OP BOARD

Bon Voyage to Tony Van Gessel and Lisa Jennings: The Board of Advisers extends its gratitude and good wishes to Tony and Lisa as they leave Cambridge this month to make New Mexico their full-time home. Both have been extremely generous with their time and talents, serving on the Board, on special projects, and as in-store workers. On behalf of our Co-op, we thank them sincerely and wish them all the best in their life in the Southwest.

The Building Task Force has deepened its evaluation of options for the future home of the Co-op. We are getting closer, with a few estimates for repair and renovation still pending. We hope to be able to present a set of recommendations soon. In the meantime, the partial repair of the roof by Bo Andersson appears to be holding, and we have had no further leaks in the store.

Outreach for Fourth of July Weekend

Will you be in Cambridge Fourth of July weekend to join the revelry for Hubbard Hall's Community Celebration? Please let Cory know if you might be able to help cover a sidewalk concession for the Co-op, even for a little while. Shift credit will be given and it will be fun to sell Co-op wares out in the sunshine!

Outreach Committee Survey: This month the Outreach Committee will initiate a two-phase survey. Your Co-op needs to keep current with what our customers and members need and want. First, you will see a brief paper survey presented to all willing shoppers, to be quickly completed at check-out. Later, members will find in their email boxes a link to Survey Monkey website to take a questionnaire specifically **designed to explore the needs of our members**. This will be your chance to "go deep" and help us paint a rich picture of who you are, what you value, and what you hope we can accomplish together in this great cooperative enterprise. Please take the time to complete the survey when you receive it. Cory will use the results to inform his ordering. The Board will incorporate the results in our planning. And we promise to share the results with you as soon as they are tabulated.

Co-op Finance: Hannah Stevens is working nonstop with bookkeeper, Jessica Jones, and with Cory to update, organize, and streamline our bookkeeping and accounting. We look forward to hearing about the results of their efforts in the second half of the year.

May 28 Board of Advisers Meeting: Minutes, as well as financial reports, will be posted on the bulletin board soon.

The Board Chair wishes to thank all the Committee members on Outreach, Finance, and the Building Task Force for the extreme amount of time and thoughtful effort they spend helping to keep our Co-op on course and striving to improve. You know who you are. We are greatly in your debt.

Contributed by Susan Sullivan, Board Chair.

Please contact Susan with feedback and questions at 677-5064 or asusansullivan@gmail.com