



THE CAMBRIDGE FOOD CO-OP

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

MARCH 2014 NEWSLETTER

Message from the Board

ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - MARCH 1, 2014

On March 1, we gathered in Hubbard Hall's Freight Depot Building to review the 2014 Budget Proposal and to plan for the coming year. Attendance was a bit light—22 people, including seven Board members. However, discussion was lively, and there were many questions and suggestions. There were three main topics for discussion:

Finances. Hannah Stevens and Cory McMillan spoke about the financial health of the Co-op and the 2014 projections. 2013 was a year of major transition, yet sales surpassed \$555,000--yielding a profit margin of 27%. The 2014 Budget projects sales of \$580,000 and a gross profit of \$162,592. (The gross profit should equal our expenses after the Cost of Goods Sold is subtracted.) The Finance Committee reviews the store's performance in comparison with the budget projections as sales figures become available each month. The 2014 Budget proposal was voted on and passed unanimously. We hope to make financial reports available for viewing on the Co-op website very soon.

Outreach. Margaret Waterson explained the process of producing the Co-op Newsletter each month, and asked for ongoing feedback. Members can submit their comments, suggestions, and questions about the newsletter to the Co-op email address (Cambridge Food Coop (GoodFood@CambridgeFoodCoop.com)), to any Board member, or to the suggestion box in the store.

Peg Winship described how she and Sarah McMillan organized the standing-room-only screening of "A Place at the Table." The event brought together people and organizations from all over Cambridge, with the following groups joining to sponsor the screening: Hubbard Hall, the Community Garden, Battenkill Books, Roundhouse Bakery Cafe, The Hill Country Observer, The United Presbyterian Church, and Over the Moon Graphics. The event raised enough to donate over \$800 to Loaves and Fishes, the Cambridge Food Pantry. The Co-op now owns the film and would like to loan it out to other groups for showings.

Our Building. Marcia Reiss presented us with a lot to consider about our current location. It has been five years since the Co-op moved from Hubbard Hall to our store at One West Main Street. Since our lease for the store is up this August, a building task force of Co-op members has been exploring options for our continued operation. These include the possibility of purchasing the current building or finding another suitable location.

While the store has increased our visibility and customer access, the condition of the building presents financial and operational challenges for the immediate and long-term future. It requires substantial repairs, including a new roof and foundation work, and does not provide space within the present confines of the building for future growth. Over the past five years, sales have increased significantly. Our goal is to find a home that will meet the Co-op's future needs and capabilities.

The task force is looking at the architectural and financial feasibility of an addition to the current building. At the same time, they are looking seriously at other potential locations in the Village so that comparisons can be made for the best possible choice. To give us time to gather all the facts, we have begun discussions with our current landlords for a one-year lease renewal with the option to purchase the building. In the meantime, all members are invited to share their thoughts and ideas about the Co-op's present location and possible alternatives.

After the Annual Meeting adjourned. We were joined by members of the public for a webcast of *Changing the Way We Eat*, a conference presented by TEDx Manhattan. We relaxed with delicious snacks provided by Sarah McMillan, who organized the showing. We watched dynamic speakers talk about how to develop a healthy, sustainable food system which is accessible to all. Then we listened as two of our own local organic producers spoke about their operations. We were honored to host Crandalls Corners Farm and Long Days Farm, whose delicious offerings you can find on the Co-op shelves.

Susan Sullivan, Board Chair

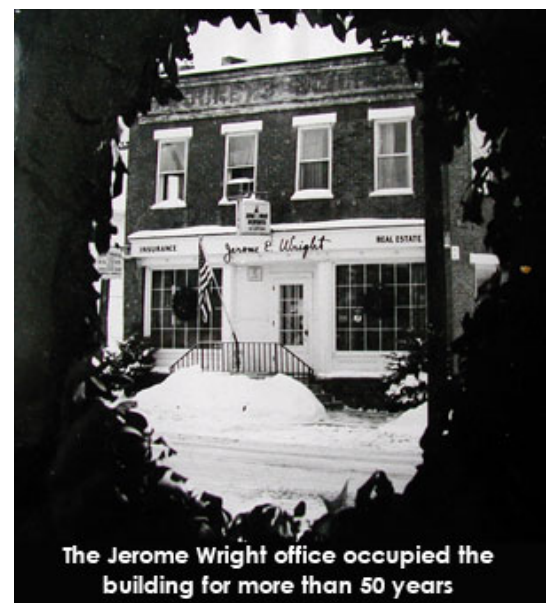
(Send your questions/feedback to asusansullivan@gmail.com)



THE CO-OP BUILDING HAS MANY STORIES TO TELL

Have you ever wondered about those faint letters at the top of the Co-op building? They spell the name of an early occupant of the building, the *Washington County Post*, published there from 1865 to 1875. The *Post* was the county's longest operating weekly newspaper, from 1837 to 1988, but the building has an even longer history, and has had a diverse array of uses.

For the past 165 years, a roster of very different business people also have plied their trades inside the store—a railroad shipper, a grocer, several attorneys, a dentist, a beautician, a shoemaker, a printer, two massage therapists, a spiritual counselor, a computer technician, and even a manufacturer of ping pong paddles.



B.P. Crocker built the handsome red brick structure at One West Main Street in 1849. An enterprising businessman, he seized the opportunity presented by plans to include Cambridge in the railroad line between Troy and Rutland. The new tracks, which reached Cambridge in 1851-52, were laid right alongside the building site, making it a convenient spot to receive and store goods shipped by rail. The *Post* was published there by B.P.'s brother, R.K. Crocker. After ten years of operation in the building, R.K. moved the paper nearby to 13 West Main Street, which currently houses the offices of another weekly newspaper, *The Eagle*.

By the 1880s, B.P. Crocker was offering a variety of retail goods on the first floor of One West Main, including basic foods like rice, flour, and vegetables, similar to those that would be sold in the same space more than a century later at the Co-op.

The 20th century saw a changing cast of building owners and tenants, including the shoemaker, Myron Nash, and his two daughters, who all lived behind the first floor shoe shop in the 1940s. In 1946, the increasingly popular game of table tennis provided an opportunity for a small manufacturer to move in and begin producing ping pong paddles. Jerome E. Wright purchased the building in 1952, and used the front portion for his real estate and insurance office, a business that would become a familiar presence there into the 21st century.

The rear portion and second floor were used over the years by several other businesses: B.T. Woodward's commercial printing and mail order operation; a beauty parlor; and the dental office of Albert Greminger, who had previously practiced in Rockefeller Center. One of the patients who climbed the steps to Dr. Greminger's second-floor Cambridge office was Dorothy Canfield Fisher (1879-1958), who had achieved national fame as a best-selling author and social activist and spent the last years of her life in Arlington, Vermont.

By the 1990s, Jerome Wright's real estate and insurance company was occupying the entire building, but in 2003, another newspaper, *Main Street*, rented part of the second floor. The Wright company changed owners a few times and in 2004, the remaining stockholders, Robert Wright and Robert Warren, sold the property to Marallen Real Estate, the company owned by Cambridge residents Bo and Deborah Andersson. They rented the second floor for a time to massage therapists Ashley Bridge and Mandy Hill and spiritual counselor Mary Muncil. It is now home to WeSolvit, a firm offering computer tech and web design services.

In 2009, the first floor was leased to the Co-op, which made the big move from Hubbard Hall, completing a circle started in the building by B.P. Crocker's grocery store in the 1880s. Like many historic buildings, One West Main Street has many stories to tell about the people and activities that have taken place within its walls. The history of this little building mirrors the surrounding community as it has changed, struggled, and rebounded over the centuries. The Cambridge Food Co-op is the latest chapter in the continuing tale of our community, and we are proud to be an active part of it.

(Many thanks to Bob Wright and Ken Gottry for providing the history of the building that provided the basis for this article.)

Submitted by Marcia Reiss



FROM THE RIND

Parmigiano-Reggiano and Parmesan—is there a difference? In the USA, there most certainly is!

In Europe, both terms are used to refer to real Parmigiano-Reggiano, that is, a hard, cow's milk cheese produced only in the Italian provinces of Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy. This product, and its names, are regulated as a "pdo" or "protected designation of origin".

In the USA, the name "Parmigiano-Reggiano" has to refer to this cheese, but "Parmesan" does not, and you may be buying anything at all, some of it decidedly inferior. The double name "Parmigiano-Reggiano," though often shortened to just "Parmigiano" in everyday parlance, refers to one of the centers of production, the city of Parma, while "Reggiano" refers to the province of Emilia-Romagna, where much of the cheese is produced.

Some of you travelers to Italy may have heard of the reputation of the city of Bologna as the culinary capital of Italy. Bologna is in the province of Emilia Romagna, and the presence of Parmigiano in particular, and the dairy industry in general, are significant contributors to that reputation. Once you cross the Apennine mountain chain south of Bologna, you enter the more arid climate of Tuscany, where the cultivation of olives and olive oil begins and the cows disappear.

The Parmigiano sold at the Co-op is the real thing, though not aged extensively. These days, most Parmigiano is aged for 24 months, although traditionally the minimum was 12 months. The milk comes from cows fed only on grass and hay. After the curds are produced using a natural whey starter, they are formed into very large rounds weighing about 100 pounds each. The cheese is then brined and set aside to age. After the minimum aging length of 12 months, the rounds weigh about 84 pounds.

Some Parmigiano is aged considerably longer, which improves the flavor and adds to the distinctive texture. Parmigiano is grainy, and as it ages, it becomes more so. The little cheese "crystals" in a well-aged sample have a very distinctive feel in the mouth. All Parmigiano has a nutty flavor that heightens with age. The more aged varieties (look for "Stravecchio" and be ready to pay a lot more), are definitely not for grating! A truly sublime "dessert" is a slice of this cheese with glass of full-bodied red wine.

A few words about "Grana" and "il grana Padano". We have offered this cheese at the Co-op, but it did not sell particularly well. It should, though, for the following reasons: Originally, all Parmigiano from anywhere in northern Italy was referred to as "grana" ("il grana," not "la grana," which means "grain"). These days "grana padano" refers to Parmesan made in the provinces of the Veneto, the Piedmont, and a wider swath of Lombardy, in addition to Emilia-Romagna. (The "pianura padana" is the flat plain around the city of Padua, not far from the island of Venice). "Grana" has a slightly lower fat content, the cows are fed some corn along with the hay, and the minimum aging is eight months, rather than 12. The flavor has been described as milder and less complex than Parmigiano, and the cheese is usually less expensive. It is an excellent grating cheese, and can be used as a satisfactory substitute for the more expensive Parmigiano. Some grana is aged considerably longer, and the entire production has its own "pdo".

Shavings of Parmigiano-Reggiano are delicious on a green salad, especially one made with arugula. Marcella Hazan recommends serving shaved Parmigiano with walnuts as an aperitivo. Here is a favorite recipe from a favorite cookbook for you to try:

Risotto all'Alloro (Risotto with Bay Leaves and Parmesan)

About 5 c. vegetable broth or chicken stock, preferably homemade

- 4 Tbl unsalted butter
- 2 cup Italian Arborio rice
- 2 Tbl extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup flowery white wine
- 1 shallot, minced
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 4 bay leaves, preferably fresh
- Sea salt to taste, plus more for the table



In a large saucepan, heat the broth or stock and keep it simmering while risotto is being prepared.

In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine 2 T of the butter, oil, shallot, bay leaves, and salt over moderate heat. Cook, stirring, until the shallot is soft and translucent, but not browned. Add the rice, and stir until rice is well coated with the fats --1 to 2 minutes – this is important for achieving a creamy consistency later.

When the rice becomes shiny and partly translucent, add the wine. Cook, stirring constantly, until the rice has absorbed most of the wine, 1 to 2 minutes. Add a ladleful of the stock and stir regularly until all the liquid has absorbed.* Adjust the heat as necessary to maintain a gentle simmer. The rice should cook slowly and should always be covered with a veil of stock. Continue adding ladlefuls of warm stock, stirring frequently and tasting regularly, until the rice is almost tender, but firm to the bite, about 17 minutes total.** The risotto should have a creamy, porridge-like consistency.

Remove the saucepan from the heat and stir in the remaining 2 T butter and the Parmesan. Cover and let stand off the heat for 2 minutes, to allow flavors to blend. Taste for seasoning. Remove and discard the bay leaves. Transfer to warmed shallow soup bowls, and serve immediately, passing additional cheese.

Cookbook Author's notes: A Vernaccia di San Gimignano (a fruity, flowery white wine) goes very well with this. She adds fresh bay leaves to a package of rice and seals the package until she is ready to use. She uses a new bunch of leaves for the risotto. [Patricia Wells, *Trattoria*, Wm. Morrow, NY, 1993]

Column Author's note: My favorite Vernaccia di San Gimignano is bottled by Terlizzi and Puthoud.

*A trick for telling when the liquid is absorbed sufficiently is to drag the spoon along the bottom of the pan. If you can see the pan, it is time to add more stock.

**Mine takes longer. I think it may be the supermarket Arborio rice I used. I now order a higher quality Arborio rice through the Co-op.

A NEW LOCAL PRODUCT TO COMPLEMENT A FINE CHEESE:

Whitney's Vermont Artisan Castleton Crackers, in a variety of flavors

The three kinds we are currently carrying are all GREAT with cheese. Try Windham Wheat, Rutland Multi-seed Rye, or Grafton Graham with toasted sesame seeds, which is not a sweet cookie, but rather a savory cracker with just a hint of sweetness.



BUSY MONTH AT THE SHUSHAN SITY SAP SHACK

Tim and Kendal Dwyer of Shushan have been supplying the Co-op with, as Tim describes it, “a boatload of maple syrup” for the last 17 years. They are also a Co-op working member household. Kendal, who works as an accountant for New York State, currently serves on the Co-op Board of Directors as Treasurer.

Things have changed quite a bit since Tim Dwyer moved back to this area from Colorado in the 1980s and began sugaring with a friend. They started with a single pan up on cement blocks, and produced a few gallons for their own consumption. He now puts in 2,200 taps, and production of the Shushan Sity Sap Shack has increased to 200-400 gallons of pure maple syrup per year, depending on the weather. (The best weather for tapping trees provides coldish nights, with 20-25 degree temperatures, and warmish days, which do not go above 45 degrees.)

New technology has moved overall maple syrup production forward immensely in the last 20 years. Tim pointed out that the former catheter plant in Argyle, New York, was one of the leaders in the introduction of the plastic lines, taps, and plugs which have made sugaring much less labor-intensive. This change has made large-scale commercial syrup production a more attractive option for venture capitalists. Tim worries that a \$3 million sugar house which is being proposed for the lower Hudson Valley could put small operations like the Shushan Sity Sap Shack out of business.



Tim Dwyer and the wood-fired evaporator

Tim, who is a self-employed carpenter, built his Sap Shack in 1990. On the back of a door and on the bare wood of one wall, he is keeping a rough history-in-magic-marker record of syrup production and sugaring highlights during the past 24 years. The back wall of the evaporator room is a great-looking stone wall, the kind you wish you had on your own homestead. The attached woodshed is bigger than the two-room workspace, housing the wood-fired evaporator where the sap is boiled. An ingenious overhead crane, one of Tim's inventions, helps move wood, with a little less back strain, from any area of the woodshed right up to the evaporator door.



Tim has no trouble selling all his syrup to a few local outlets and, by word of mouth, to various neighbors, skiers, and tourists who happen to be passing by. The Sap Shack is just a few hundred feet from a shortcut road to Vermont, and Tim has lots of stories of the people who have stopped in and ended up as long-term customers.

During the month of March, when the evaporator is going full speed, there is a constant stream of visitors at the Sap Shack. Snacks, dip, and good conversation are always available—plus a first-hand look at what's involved in making maple syrup. Tim and Kendal love this social aspect of producing maple syrup, and would welcome a visit from their Co-op customers. "If you're passing the sugar house anytime this month, and the lights are on," says Tim, "come in to visit and see what's going on. A sugar house in the Spring is a sweet thing."

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT MAPLE SYRUP?

1. The flavor.
2. Most maple syrup is a sustainably-produced alternative to corn syrup and other highly processed sweeteners.
3. According to the Cornell Sugar Maple Research Center, there is no direct scientific evidence that maple syrup is healthier than white sugar. However, they go on to say: "Because it is a less refined sugar, maple products contain minerals, antioxidants, and other compounds that have been shown to have health advantages in other foods."
4. Most maple syrup is produced from forests where no herbicides or pesticides are used, so it would be considered an organic food.
5. Many people have access to locally produced maple syrup.

SUBSTITUTING MAPLE SYRUP IN COOKING

(Tips from the Southern Maine Maple Sugarmakers Association)

Sweetness and Moisture

Basically, you have to account for two things when substituting maple syrup for sugar in a recipe:

1. That syrup is sweeter than sugar.
2. It adds extra moisture to the recipe.

General Cooking

Use only three-fourths the amount of maple syrup as sugar in a recipe. For example, if a recipe says to use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar (four tablespoons), use three tablespoons of maple syrup instead.

Baking

For every cup of sugar, substitute $\frac{3}{4}$ cup to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups maple syrup, and reduce the dominant liquid in the recipe by two -to- four tablespoons. Do NOT cut back on a liquid that is likely to alter the flavor or texture of a recipe. For example, don't reduce the amount of liqueur, oil, or egg, if you have two cups of milk to play with.

Acidity

You may also need to add $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda to reduce maple syrup's slight acidity. (This will not be necessary in recipes with buttermilk, sour milk, or sour cream.)

Honey

If you are substituting maple syrup for honey, you can almost always succeed with an equivalent substitution.

Oven Temperature

Maple syrup not only adds a brownish tinge to whatever it is that you're cooking. It also tends to make baked goods brown more quickly than sugar does. (Reducing the oven temperature by 25 degrees sometimes compensates for that.)

KEEP THE MAPLE SYRUP HANDY TO DRESS UP EVERYDAY FOODS

It's simple and delicious to add maple flavor to the following foods:

- Drizzle a tiny bit of maple syrup over cooked carrots that have developed a bitter aftertaste.
- Prepare grapefruit halves for serving. Pour one tablespoon of maple syrup over each half and serve.
- Pour warm maple syrup over a scoop of vanilla ice cream and enjoy a unique sundae.



- When making baked beans, substitute maple syrup for molasses—1/2 cup for each pound of beans.
- Spread a thin layer of maple syrup on one slice of whole grain bread; spread peanut butter on the other slice. Combine to make an off-beat, delicious sandwich.
- Prepare apples for baking. Pour a little maple syrup into each cored-out center, and bake until soft. Baste with syrup while cooking.
- Here’s a trick invented by the Shushan Sity Sap Shack crew: Pour a 50/50 mix of cold Crown Royal whiskey (stored in a snowbank) and warm maple syrup (190 degrees, fresh from the evaporator) to make a delicious “Crown Maple.”

A SIMPLE AND DELICIOUS MAPLE DESSERT: MAPLE MOUSSE!

6 Tbl maple syrup
 3 egg yolks
 Pinch salt
 1-2 tsp grated orange peel
 1 cup heavy cream

Combine the syrup, yolks, and salt in a double boiler set over medium heat. Beat with a whisk until the mixture has thickened and the color has lightened from dark brown to tan, about 7 minutes. Take care not to let the mixture overcook, or it will curdle. When it has thickened, remove from heat, stir in the orange peel, and set it aside to cool. To do this quickly, place the custard over a bowl of ice and stir frequently.

Whip the cream until it holds its shape; then fold it into the cooled custard. Refrigerate or freeze the mousse in dessert dishes or ramekins. If the mousse is frozen longer than 3 hours, let it soften for 20 minutes in the refrigerator before serving.

Serves 4-6. Dust with praline, or serve with poached pears. The darker the grade of syrup, the stronger the flavor will be.

[Deborah Madison, *The Greens Cook Book*, Bantam, 1987]

IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MAPLE SYRUP

Tim Dwyer suggests: *The Sugar Maker’s Companion: An Integrated Approach to Producing Syrup from Maple, Birch, and Walnut Trees*, by Michael Farrell (Chelsea Green Publishing, October 16, 2013) This comprehensive book combines the wisdom of traditional sugarmakers with the value of modern technology. It includes a focus on maple sugar as a healthy, local, and sustainably-produced alternative sweetener.