



# Middlebury Co-op Newsletter

Open 7 Days A Week, 8 to 7  
Nine Washington Street  
Middlebury, VT

February  
2017

## Chocolate

*Making chocolate is a fine art.*

*The following notes — found on the Lake Champlain Chocolate website — will give you an idea what kind of work, skill, and care are required to make good chocolate.*

### **Cacao Cultivation**

Chocolate begins with the cacao tree (*Theobroma cacao*), which grows within 20° north and south of the Equator and thrives on a mix of hot temperatures, rain, and shade.

Each tree bears oval fruits, or pods, which are 5–12 inches long. Each pod contains 30–50 seeds, and it's these seeds the world knows as cacao (or cocoa) beans.

The tree, pod, and bean/seed are typically referred to as “cacao,” while the word “cocoa” is reserved for the bean after it has been fermented, dried, and roasted.

### **Harvesting**

Cacao pods are ripe when they turn a vibrant yellow/orange color. Hanging from the trunk and largest branches on small stems, the ripening pods are typically harvested twice per year, though they can be harvested continually.



continued on page 8



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## **Middlebury Co-op Ends Statement**

*MNFC member owners, customers,*  
*and the community benefit from:*

- ◆ **Healthy Foods**
- ◆ **Vibrant Local Economy**
- ◆ **Environmentally Sustainable  
and Energy-Efficient Practices**
- ◆ **Cooperative Democratic Ownership**
- ◆ **Learning About These Values**



## **We Are (and always have been) Stronger Together**

**Tam Stewart**

Last year, as the Clinton campaign struggled to devise a motto that could match the audacity of Make America Great Again, it is said that seasoned political adviser, David Axelrod, proposed Stronger Together. (Clinton campaign press secretary Brian Fallon later described the phrase as a sort of shorter, 21st century version of the idea behind Clinton's 1996 book: *It Takes A Village.*)

Whether Axelrod knew that Stronger Together was the motto of co-op trade organization NCG (National Co-op Grocers), or that it accurately described the core ethic of cooperatives around the world for centuries is not important. What's important is what we make of it now.



Which is one reason why we should be proud that, immediately following November's election, our co-op completed an ambitious Member Loan Drive in which we raised a million dollars faster than anyone thought possible. It was an unambiguous statement of intent; an expression of strength, hope and will; and an act of paying it forward in support of our immanent physical expansion project and the important capacities it will create.

In a recent piece in *The Atlantic*, Julie Beck suggested that these intense, high-stakes times may call for less self-care and more other-care: looking after our families, friends, and communities with a new sense of purpose. As this co-op's member-owners, we know a good bit about that already, because for forty years we've been there for each other, cooperatively, and that has always made us stronger together.

Tam Stewart is President of MNFC's Board of Directors

***As your Board's president, nothing  
helps me more than knowing what you think.  
Please write directly any time:  
stewart.tam@gmail.com***

## *Dear Members and Friends of Middlebury Co-op,*

February is heart health month. You can find countless reminders on the web or in magazines and newspapers about heart-healthy foods. For most of us these lists are exactly that — reminders. We know what a healthy diet comprises. The trick is to actually follow what we know to be beneficial.

Heart-healthy foods include some fish, nuts, fruits, and lots of veggies. Of course, other poor food consumption or life style habits can easily negate the benefits of a heart-healthy diet. You may find the list on page 6 helpful.

Our article on making chocolate, found on Lake Champlain Chocolate's website, gives an idea of how much effort, skill, and time it takes to make good chocolate.

Board member Louise Vojtisek shares some of her thoughts about shopping wisely. It's well worth reading her write-up starting on page 12.

Do you know where food come from? If you feel up for it, try out our quiz on pages 11-12. Some answers may surprise you!

Please note that we are changing the format of our Co-op Newsletter. Starting with the April issue, we will print a quarterly Newsletter in color. They will no longer be mailed to you; instead copies will be available in the store. As before you may read Newsletter on the Co-op website.

In addition, the Co-op will electronically send you a short monthly informational newsletter, which will be posted on our website as well. The MNFC Marketing & Education team will be responsible for all Newsletter layout and content. More about this in our March Newsletter edition.

Happy Winter,  
*Reiner*



## **Eat Mostly Plants, Especially Leaves.**

**Michael Pollan**

Scientists may disagree on what's so good about plants — the antioxidants... the fiber... the omega-3 fatty acids... but they do agree that they are probably really good for you and certainly can't hurt. There are scores of studies demonstrating that a diet rich in vegetables and fruits reduces the risk of dying from all the Western diseases; in countries where people eat a pound or more of vegetables and fruits a day, the rate of cancer is half what it is in the United States. Also, by eating a diet that is primarily plant based, you'll be consuming far fewer calories, since plant foods — with the exception of seeds, including grains and nuts — are typically less “energy dense” than the other things you eat. (And consuming fewer calories protects against many chronic diseases.) Vegetarians are notably healthier than carnivores, and they live longer.

from Michael Pollan's *Food Rules*



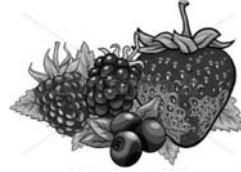
**During the month of  
February**

***Wild Branch* locally made  
Elderberry Syrup  
will be on Sale.  
Receive a 20% discount !**



## Heart-Healthy Foods

- ◇ Eat **fish** high in omega-3, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel and trout.
- ◇ A handful of healthy **nuts** such as almonds or walnuts will satisfy your hunger and help your heart.
- ◇ **Berries** are filled with heart-healthy phytonutrients and soluble fiber. Try blueberries, strawberries, cranberries or raspberries in cereal or yogurt.
- ◇ **Flaxseeds** contain omega-3 fatty acids, fiber and phytoestrogens to boost heart health. Take them in ground form to reap the greatest benefit.



- ◇ **Oatmeal**: the comfort food nutrient powerhouse.
- ◇ **Dark beans**, such as kidney and black beans, are high in fiber, B-vitamins, minerals and other good stuff.
- ◇ A 4-ounce glass of **red wine** can help improve good (HDL) cholesterol levels.



- ◇ Try marinated **tofu** in a stir-fry with fresh veggies for a heart-healthy lunch or dinner.
- ◇ Red, yellow and orange **veggies** such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers and acorn squash are packed with carotenoids, fiber and vitamins to help your heart.
- ◇ Add **spinach** to your sandwiches and salads instead of lettuce.



- ◇ **Fruits** such as oranges, cantaloupes and papaya are rich in beta-carotene, potassium, magnesium and fiber.
- ◇ Tender, sweet **asparagus** is filled with mighty nutrients such as beta-carotene, folate and fiber.
- ◇ **Tomatoes** – even sun-dried varieties in winter months – provide lycopene, vitamin C and alpha- and beta-carotene.
- ◇ **Dark chocolate** is good for your heart health. Choose 70% or higher cocoa content or better.
- ◇ Crisp, fresh **broccoli** florets dipped in hummus are a terrific heart-healthy snack with a whopping list of nutrients, including vitamins C and E, potassium, folate, calcium and fiber.



Source: [health.clevelandclinic.org](http://health.clevelandclinic.org)

## February Member Deals

Check out our Member Deals for the month of February!  
For further information about the companies and their products,  
go to our website at [www.middleburycoop.com](http://www.middleburycoop.com).

Middlebury Co-op members receive a **20% discount** on  
all of the company's products during the week they are featured.



### February 2 — 8

#### *Aura Cacia Pure Essential Oils*

*Organic Valley* is an independent cooperative of organic farmers based in La Farge, Wisconsin. It has been in existence since 1988 and, with over 1,800 farmer owners, is the largest organic farmer-owned cooperative in the world.



### February 9 — 15

#### *Aura Cacia Pure Essential Oils*

**(30% off)** "Learning to love our bodies is an important part of mindfulness and self care."



### February 16 — 22

#### *Annie's*

"When you eat organic food, you are caring not only for your family's health and wellness, but that of the planet and everybody on it. We each play a role. Together, we're making an impact."



### February 23 — March 1

#### *Westbrae Natural*

Westbrae Natural's array of vegetarian foods includes beans, soups, pastas and vegetables. In addition, customers can find condiments, Japanese ramens, rice cakes and wafers, and yummy cookies, all made with integrity and the high Westbrae Natural standards.

**Chocolate continued from page 1**

After being chopped off, the pods are opened and their seeds are removed. Each seed is about the size of an olive. The seeds (or “beans”) grow in five columns surrounded by a white pulp or pith. In Latin America this pulp, called baba, was used to make a fermented cacao wine as early as 3,000 years ago.



### **Fermentation**

Beans are cleaned by hand, with the baba left on to help develop flavor. Exposed to light, the cream-colored beans turn a purplish color. Then they’re ready for fermentation via one of two ways: the *heap method* is popular in Africa, where beans are heaped in piles on the ground; and in Latin America, a system of cascading boxes is favored. In both methods, beans are covered with banana leaves. During the 2 to 9 days of fermentation, beans begin to take on color and some of the flavors you would recognize as “chocolate.”

### **Drying and Shipping**

Fermented beans must be carefully dried. They are placed either on wooden boards or bamboo mats for anywhere from 7 to 14 days under the hot sun, and are continually raked and turned over for consistent drying.

Once dried, the beans are graded, packed into sacks, bundled, and checked for quality. They are then shipped and traded on the international market. Or, in the case of direct trade, the beans are exported directly to the chocolate maker.

### **Preparing Cocoa Mass**

Once received by the processor, beans may be blended with other origins and estates for desired characteristics (or kept separate as “single-origin chocolate”).

Beans are cleaned, then roasted at low temperatures to develop flavor. Shells are separated from the nibs (the “meat” of the bean) by a process called *winning*.

Nibs are finely ground into cocoa mass — also called cocoa liquor, — which is solid at room temperature. Placed under extremely high pressure, this paste yields two products: cocoa powder and cocoa butter.



### **Producing Chocolate**

Cocoa mass can be combined with more cocoa butter and sweetener to make chocolate. The first steps are to mix, grind, and knead the various raw ingredients into a paste. The ingredients used are dependent on the type of chocolate



being made. Dark chocolate requires only cocoa mass, cocoa butter, and sugar. Adding milk powder makes milk chocolate. White chocolate is made with cocoa butter, sugar, and milk powder (but no cocoa mass/liquor). Because it contains no cocoa mass, some do not consider it a true chocolate.

### **Conching**

Conching is a careful process of rolling, kneading, heating, and aeration. A conche is a large agitator that stirs and smooths the mixture under heat. This is an important step in the process of producing consistent, pure, and delicious chocolate — and it is here that the final aroma and flavor are defined. At this point, soy lecithin and cocoa butter may be added for required fluidity. Chocolate is then refined until smooth (and the longer a chocolate is conched, the smoother it will be).

### **Tempering and Moulding**

The chocolate is now finished and ready for final processing. To be delivered to a chocolatier, it must first be put into blocks or drops (also called *pistoles*). This method requires *tempering*, whereby chocolate is slowly brought to a certain temperature. Tempering chocolate is something any aspiring baker or chocolate maker can try at home. During the tempering process, the cocoa butter reaches its most stable form; this gives well-tempered chocolate its “snap,” shiny surface, and smoothness.

### **Chocolate Confections and Sauces**

Of course, “finished” chocolate doesn’t always stay in this form. Around the world, chocolatiers, bakers, chefs, and pastry experts use this highly versatile, delicious food in countless applications and preparations, from simple to elaborate.



**For more information and inspiration,  
go to [www.lakechamplainchocolates.com](http://www.lakechamplainchocolates.com)**



*I was like a chocolate in a box, looking well behaved and perfect in place, all the while harboring a secret center.*

— Deb Caletti, *Honey, Baby, Sweetheart*



## Where From?

If we were to ask where are you from, where did you grow up, we would find that while some of us are more “locally grown,” others come from further or even far away. This mix of culture, background, and personality provides lots of flavor and makes things interesting! In a similar way, some foods sold at the Co-op, were produced and grown in a variety of places. Can you guess, where some of the following Co-op products are grown, produced or imported from?

**1. Demerara Sugar**

- A) Malawi
- B) Philippines
- C) Dominican Republic

**2. Vanilla Extract**

- A) South Africa
- B) Madagascar
- C) Tahiti

**3. Organic Dried Mango**

- A) Mexico
- B) Indonesia
- C) Costa Rica

**4. Hazelnuts**

- A) Austria
- B) Bulgaria
- C) Oregon

**5. Organic Raw Almonds**

- A) Argentina
- B) China
- C) Spain

**6. French Lentils**

- A) France
- B) Canada
- C) French Guyana

**7. Belgian Allagash Tripel Ale**

- A) Maine
- B) Vermont
- C) Belgium

**8. White Organic Quinoa**

- A) Peru
- B) Bolivia
- C) New York

**9. Organic Goji Berries**

- A) Mexico
- B) China
- C) India

**10. Organic Goldenberries**

- A) Australia
- B) Colombia
- C) Germany

**11. Mulberries**

- A) Turkey
- B) China
- C) Brazil

**12. Hemp Seed Kashmir Superfood**

- A) Pakistan
- B) India
- C) Canada

**13. Organic Cloves**

- A) Sri Lanka
- B) Western Samoa
- C) Fiji

**14. Organic Korintje Cinnamon**

- A) India
- B) Indiana
- C) Indonesia

**15. Organic Nettle Leaf**

- A) Bulgaria
- B) Brazil
- C) Bangladesh

**16. Basil**

- A) Egypt
- B) New York
- C) Canada

**17. Lavender Flowers**

- A) Vermont
- B) France
- C) Italy

**18. Sushi Nori**

- A) Maine
- B) Greenland
- C) Japan

**19. Dulce Flakes**

- A) Maine
- B) Greenland
- C) Japan

**20. Wild Sardines**

- A) Alaska
- B) Greenland
- C) Vietnam

**21. Tongol Tuna**

- A) Russia
- B) Thailand
- C) Cuba

**22. Gjetost Cheese**

- A) Sweden
- B) Norway
- C) Finland

**23. Wasa Crispbread**

- A) Sweden
- B) Norway
- C) Finland

**24. Leksands Knäckebröd**

- A) Sweden
- B) Norway
- C) Finland

**25. Ryvita Crispbread**

- A) Sweden
- B) Norway
- C) Australia

**26. Mestermacher Fitnessbread**

- A) California
- B) Germany
- C) Italy

**27. Quadratini Wafer Cookies**

- A) Italy
- B) Vietnam
- C) Austria

**28. Dolcetto Rolled Wafers**

- A) Indonesia
- B) Mexico
- C) Italy

**29. Happy Bear Super Puffs**

- A) California
- B) Denmark
- C) China

**Solutions:**



20C	10B
19A	9B
28A	8A
27C	7A
26B	6B
25C	5C
24A	4C
23A	3A
22B	2B
21B	1A



## Things you may not know about your Co-op

Louise Vojtisek

A highlight of the November Co-op Board meeting of is the General Manager's annual "Ends Report". The Co-op is operated via a system of governing called Policy Governance, whereby the Board creates policies that allow the General Manager and Staff the greatest possible operational freedom, while still guiding the fundamental direction of MNFC. At our Co-op, everything we do is based on our "Ends Statement," also known as the *Reasons Why The Co-op Exists*. The "Ends" state that MNFC member owners, customers, and the community benefit from:

- ◆ Healthy Foods
- ◆ Vibrant Local Economy
- ◆ Environmentally Sustainable and Energy-Efficient Practices
- ◆ Cooperative, Democratic Ownership
- ◆ Learning about these values

The "Ends Report" always provides interesting, often surprising information, some of which is shared below:

During the past year, MNFC paid over \$100,000 in **credit card fees**! This startling amount is funds that leave the community and enrich out-of-state banks. Think about what could be done locally with this money, either through increased community supports or improvements in customer services. While I certainly do not want to "guilt" anyone for using a credit card, there are some options to consider if you would like to diminish this \$100,000 flowing out of the local economy. The use of checks or cash is one possibility to avoid credit card fees, but this is not always convenient. At the end of this article, I have reprised my "MNFC Gift Card" option from a previous newsletter. This is a very quick and convenient way to pay for purchases and is how I have paid for all of my MNFC shopping over the past two years. Try it, I think you'll like it!



**The Co-op gives back to the community!** During the fiscal year of 2016, the Co-op gave over \$20,000 in food donations to food shelves and community suppers, and thousands of dollars in \$50 gift certificates to local non-profits. In addition, the Coop donated the \$2,500 earned from the 25th Empty Bowl Dinner, divided equally between CVOEO and HOPE. In 2016, the *Rally for Change* was the shining star of our already very generous donation program. Through this program, customers can round up their transactions at the register, and the Co-op matches the total customer donation. As of November 2016, the *Rally for Change* has raised and donated \$2,297 to *Addison County Parent Child Center*, \$3,355 to *Open Door Clinic*, and \$2,252 to *Homeward Bound*.

Co-op shoppers are very interested in products that are **GMO free**. One way to accomplish this is to buy only organic products.

Sales of **locally produced products** comprise 34% of total store sales, a 12% increase over 2015. Supporting “local” requires more resources and has lower margins than other products, which consequently puts pressure on the whole-store margin. However, “local” is important to customers, differentiates MNFC from other food stores, and helps keep the community vibrant. During the past year, MNFC bought products from about 299 local Vermont producers, up from 290 last year and a new record.

2016 saw the implementation of the **patronage dividend system**, a highlight of the year. In June 2016, 4,900 checks worth \$152,820 were mailed to our member-owners, with a letter that explained patronage refunds.



**“Co-op Basics”**, our every-day-low-price program, is the newest of our promotional programs. Look for the purple signs around the Co-op to find these

products. This program was designed to make healthy foods and products more accessible to a greater part of our population. Since its inception in July 2015, Co-op Basics has grown both in overall sales and in product line and currently shows a 49% increase this year over last.

This past year, over \$40,000 in discounts was given to member-owners through sales of our weekly **“Member-Only Deals”**. These products originate from different Vermont producers and/or businesses that reflect our ENDS in some way. Producers are given a special display space in the store, are featured in our newsletter, website, on store register screens, in our social media, and in the local newspaper. Representatives from each business usually appear in person for a demonstration.

A wide variety of **educational opportunities** were available during 2016 including various cooking/meal planning classes, along with presentations on gardening, beekeeping, and overall healthy living. Educational materials are displayed each week with the Weekly Sale display at the store entrance, and these often explain the origin of the products, how to cook with them, or provide an easy recipe. Informative brochures on topics such as Food Preservation, Shopping the Co-op on a Budget, Food Issues & Labeling, Food Allergy Solutions, etc. are located between the rows of bins in the bulk department. Bulk-themed recipes that promote healthy and economical cooking are also offered in this area.

New in 2016, a **membership information center** is located near the fifth check-out register. This area offers membership brochures, information about our Food For All program, the Co-op Connection Program, fliers for upcoming classes and workshops, information about upcoming Board elections, and whatever we happen to have going on at the time.

MNFC offers an average of six **food demonstrations** per week. These are mostly staffed by local farmers and producers, and provide an opportunity for shoppers to establish a personal connection with the people who make or grow their food. Occasionally, there are demonstrations by Co-op staff sharing favorite recipes and simple meal ideas, or demonstrations from community partners like HOPE, CVOEO, Homeward Bound, and other local non-profits to raise awareness for their services.



All new member-owners receive a **store tour** invitation as part of their new member packet. Store tours are also offered to groups or individuals interested in learning more about how to shop the Co-op efficiently and economically. The new MNFC webpage, <http://middlebury.coop>, is a great platform for customer education! The “Under the Sun” blog offers farmer and producer biographies each week, allowing customers to learn about the people who produce their food.

**Educational materials** and recipes offered with weekly sales are available in digital format on the webpage. During special events like our Member Loan Drive and Board Elections, the webpage and blog provide excellent tools for sharing up to date information, architectural renderings of our expansion project, Board candidate biographies, etc. Postings are linked with our monthly electronic newsletter, and MNFC also has a presence on Facebook and Instagram.

Saving the best for last — here's how to use a **MNFC Gift Card** for all of your Co-op purchases. It can be obtained from any cashier, and you decide how much value you want to put on the card. You write a check for that amount, then use the gift card every time you shop. It is like cash and thus should be kept in a secure place. There is number associated with the card, found on the back of the card or on the receipt when you put money on it. Note this number somewhere secure so if the card is lost, payment from it can be stopped. Any usual Co-op discount you get stays the same, and the amount left on the card shows up at the bottom of your receipt every time you make a purchase. When the balance runs out, writing another check will load the same card for another span of time. There are several advantages of this process:

- ⇒ You can budget what you believe is reasonable for you to spend at the Co-op, say for a month's time, and keep track of your spending.
- ⇒ Going through the check out line is very quick and efficient. The cashier scans your card, you get a receipt, and you're done! Nothing to sign, no check to write, no waiting for change. The cashiers really like the ease of this process, and you're apt to get some unsolicited positive regard from them.
- ⇒ Use of the MNFC gift card eliminates the fees the Co-op has to pay to banks and financial institutions when you use a credit or debit card. These fees are very substantial and were over \$100,000 in 2016. Keeping this money local allows the Co-op to use it for support projects in the larger community and improved store services.
- ⇒ Finally, remember that a MNFC gift card is a wonderful way to give anyone a present, for any occasion. The gift card can encourage someone new to the Co-op to make their first visit, and will introduce long time customers to this very efficient way of paying for purchases.

Thanks to all MNFC patrons. If you are already one of the 4,900 MNFC member-owners, we appreciate you and you can look forward to your 2017 patronage check. If you are not a member-owner, consider becoming one, perhaps raising membership in MNFC over 5,000 in 2017... then you can look forward to getting a patronage check in the mail too!

**Louise Vojtisek is a member of our MNFC Board of Directors**

