

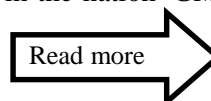


Engineering Our Food?

Emily Millard

On November 10th, 2015, *Monsanto's* Academic Engagement Lead, Philip J Eppard, and Transformation Strategy Lead, Michael Spencer, came to Middlebury College to discuss the role of crop biotechnology in feeding a growing population and creating sustainable communities. They also conceded that their campus tour was an effort to take a more proactive role in cleaning up *Monsanto's* image. They were invited by Professor Molly Anderson, who was hired recently by Middlebury College to develop a new program in Food Studies and to teach about issues ranging from hunger and food security, to the development of sustainable food systems and dynamics. She invited the executives from *Monsanto* as part of a larger lecture series where students will hear from a diverse line up of players in the arena of food studies. Anderson said that she hoped it would offer the students an opportunity to form their own informed, educated opinions on the subject.

January is the month we've designated to celebrate Non-GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms) month here at the Co-op, so the timing of the lecture seemed to be a good primer as I prepared to brush up on the latest issues related to GMOs and the status of our state's first-in-the-nation GMO labeling law.



So, what is a Genetically Engineered Organism (GMO)?

A GMO is the result of a laboratory process where genes from the DNA of one species are extracted and artificially implanted into the genes of an unrelated plant or animal. These genes may come from bacteria, viruses, insects, animals, or even humans.

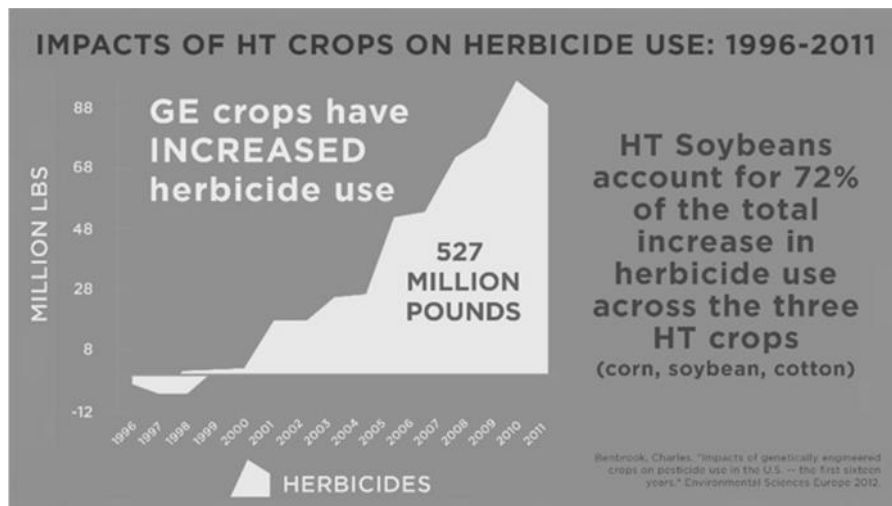
During their lecture at Middlebury College, Eppard & Spencer of *Monsanto* hoped to present a case that GE (genetic engineering) technology does not differ significantly from traditional breeding methods like hybridization or selective breeding, despite the fact that GE technology is used to create plants, animals, and bacteria with biological characteristics that would never occur in the natural world or through traditional breeding methods because they cross a species barrier. Basic laws of nature prevent plants from breeding with fish or bacteria.



Why GMO?

The biotech industry hoped to use GE technology to create agricultural crops that offered features like drought tolerance, resistance to insects and other pests, flood tolerance, increased yield, extra nutritional value, or special cosmetic features. The two main traits for which they have been successful include glyphosate-based herbicide tolerance (HT) and the ability for a plant to produce its own pesticide, a Bt-toxin. Eppard & Spencer claimed in their lecture that biotech crops were the more sustainable option because they increased crop productivity, help conserve biodiversity because of what they referred to as “land-saving technology due to higher crop productivity”, reduced CO2 emissions due to decreased pesticide use, and helped to mitigate climate change due to the decreased herbicide and insecticide applications, requiring less fossil fuels to be used.

Unfortunately, the reality is that herbicide use has increased more than 15-fold since GMOs were introduced, according to USDA data. When a Middlebury College student in the audience asked Eppard & Spencer about this fact, they offered reassurance that herbicides being used are “less noxious” to the environment and are proven to be non-toxic to humans or other animals. The World Health Organization disagrees, recently listing glyphosate (the active ingredient in herbicide) as a probable carcinogen. There is also a growing body of evidence that it destroys healthy gut bacteria, linking it to autism, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, ADHD, depression, obesity and a growing list of other ailments. Aside from these more direct threats to human health, the dramatic increase in herbicide application is responsible for the rise of approximately 15 herbicide-resistant weeds in the US and the use of insecticides on GM crops is



responsible for many toxin-resistant insects. This creates an herbicide/insecticide treadmill of sorts requiring new and larger quantities of chemicals to be used. This presents a significant environmental concern and a threat to beneficial insects like pollinators, which are critical to our food supply.

Monsanto's claim of increased yield and higher crop productivity falls flat as evidenced by The Rodale Institute's 30-year-long study known as *The Farming Systems Trial*, which is America's longest-running, side-by-side comparison of organic and chemical agriculture. After an initial decline in yield during the first few years of transition, the organic system soon rebounded to match or surpass the GM system. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development echoed this in their 2013 report, declaring that small-scale diversified organic farming and the creation of sustainable, natural systems would be the only way to feed the growing world population.

Even in the area of draught-tolerance, the promises of GM crops have failed to deliver. In a recent report from the Institute of Science In Society, traditional breeding methods are far outperforming genetic modification. The authors' highlight The Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa Project, which has developed 153 new drought-tolerant maize varieties that are outperforming GM counterparts, yielding up to 30% more during drought.

How Do GMOs Affect Farmers?

GMOs pose a threat to farmer sovereignty. Because GMOs are novel life forms, biotechnology companies have been able to obtain patents which restrict their use by banning the farmer from saving, replanting, exchanging, and selling seeds as



Interview with Co-op Staff Member

Emily Fleming

Emily works with us at the Co-op in the Prepared Foods department.

Reiner Winkler: Emily, why Middlebury... why the Co-op?

Emily Fleming: I grew up in Bridport close by and went to school at Middlebury High, so after my studies in Maine it seemed natural for me to apply at the Middlebury Co-op.

RW: What did you study?

EF: Applied Exercise Science. During my internship I worked a lot with kids, trying to help them exercise and eat healthy foods. My background in nutrition motivated me to apply at the Co-op. I knew the Co-op during my High School years. I used to buy samosas there during my lunch breaks.

RW: What are some of your responsibilities at the Deli?

EF: Mostly I make sandwiches. Sandwiches and smoothies. I love especially providing customer service, helping customers with what to eat, finding new options. I take care of the coffee and tea area and make juices.

RW: Do you ever receive unusual requests for sandwich or smoothie orders?

EF: The other day a customer asked for a Mango Lassi smoothie and wanted avocado added to it.

RW: Sounds good to me.

EF: Yes! To me too!! I really like trying new crazy smoothie creations.

RW: What is a good work day for you?

EF: Helping customers. We had this customer service workshop with Eric at the Co-op, and he said that customers can tell when you really mean it, when you care. I remember people's names and often remember what they order.

RW: Because some customers order the same each time they come...

EF: Yes. They have a big smile on their faces when they notice someone cares. I also like the kids coming to the counter.

RW: What are some foods you particularly like at our Deli?

EF: I like our smoothies. I often have one during break. And the tarragon chicken... and bacon. The bacon here is so good! Last week two customers stepped into the Co-op and immediately smelled our bacon. We had just brought out three trays of freshly baked bacon. They both bought several pieces each. Customers sometimes smell something good and say they'd like whatever we're just making.

RW: Food needs to smell good...

EF: And it needs to *look* good! I want to make our sandwiches look so good that it makes the cashiers hungry when the food goes through their lines. I know it's kind of not nice, but...

RW: Do you cook at home?

EF: I live with my parents. We all

cook together. My mom loves to bake, so I'm learning a lot. And my dad likes to grill. I'm starting to grill, too. I think it's so good to cook and to eat together.

RW: I agree. For many people these days cooking is becoming a lost art. It's good to hear when people still like preparing food from scratch.

What do you do when you're not at the Co-op, Emily?

EF: I really like the microbreweries in Vermont. I like good beer and cider.

RW: Any favorites?

EF: Definitely *Otter Creek* in Middlebury. And *Citizen Cider* in Burlington. It's a lot of fun to go to a beer tasting. I go with my boyfriend or with my parents. Lincoln Peak is a good place for wine tastings. I also like hiking in Vermont and camping in the Adirondacks. This coming weekend we're planning to hike up Camel's Hump.

RW: You'll find your first snow up there!

EF: Last winter I went ice fishing for the first time. We even caught two perch, at Lake Dunmore. I'm looking forward to doing it again this year.

RW: What do you think about our Co-op expanding?

EF: Good! It's hard in the Deli having to say *no* so often to customers when they suggest new ideas. We will also be able to offer multiple *kinds* of things. And the coffee bar is often crowded. I sometimes feel bad for the customers.

RW: Any specific plans for 2016? Any New Year's resolutions?

EF: I don't really make New Year's resolutions. I want to live healthy, spend more time outside. I want to go for trips to see family in North Carolina and my best friend in DC.

RW: Do you have any future plans or dreams?

EF: I want to make more use of my degree. I definitely want to work with kids teaching them to eat well, how to grow broccoli, where French fries come from, how not to waste food. I like the *Farm to Table* idea. Exercise and nutrition are so important! Kids often spend too much time indoors with their technological devices. I want them to go outside, go hiking. I go running. I run in 5k races and recently ran my first 10k. When hiking, I get an adrenaline rush getting to the top. I want kids to experience the same!

RW: Thank you, Emily!

Avoid food products that make health claims.

This sounds counterintuitive, but consider: For a product to carry a health claim on its package, it must first have a package, so right off the bat it's more likely to be a processed rather than a whole food. Then, only the big food manufacturers have the wherewithal to secure FDA-approved health claims for their products that trumpet them to the world. Generally it's the products of modern food science that make the boldest health claim, and these are often founded on incomplete and often bad science. Don't forget that margarine, one of the first industrial foods to claim it was more healthful than the traditional food it replaced, turned out to contain trans fats that give people heart attacks. The healthiest food in the supermarket — the fresh produce — doesn't boast about its healthfulness, because the growers don't have the budget or the packaging. Don't take the silence of the yams as a sign they have nothing valuable to say about your health!

from Michael Pollan's *Food Rules*



Interview with Co-op Staff Member **Faye Murphy**

Faye works with us as an assistant
in the Cheese, Dairy, and Bulk Foods department.

RW: Faye, you are a true Vermonter. Do you like our Vermont winters?

FM: Yes, I love it when it first snows! I've learned that to last through the season though, you have to get out there and appreciate it, or else it can feel pretty bleak by February.

RW: What brought you to the Co-op, Faye?

FM: Working at the Co-op allows me to give to the community. And I've always loved the atmosphere when shopping. It's so important to me to feel good about the food I eat. The Co-op is a solid place to work, and I especially like the people I work with.

FW: What are some of your main responsibilities at the Co-op?

FM: As an assistant in the Bulk department I make sure that the bins are filled and that the shelves of packaged goods are full. I also assist our member workers.

RW: Member workers?

FM: Co-op members may work with us as member workers. They schedule themselves for two hours per week or so, then work with us packaging Bulk foods.

I also take care of the recipes that we give out to customers. They are on display near the rice Bulk bins. In the Cheese/Dairy department I cut and wrap lots of cheese and make sure the display is full and organized.

RW: In addition, you take care of the Dairy Cooler, check in countless deliveries, help customers pick up their special orders and help them with countless questions they have, right?

When is a day a *good* day?

FM: I like it when it's really busy without people getting stressed too much. Everyone still joking around, even while working hard.

RW: Any cheese you would recommend?

FM: First of all, Vermont Tarentaise. The aged gouda is also one of my favorites.

RW: Ahh... the 5-year old gouda which has an almost caramelized flavor...

FM: Yes, a small piece goes a long way! It's so good! I would also recommend Drunken Goat, a Spanish semi-firm sheep's milk cheese, Vermont's Lake's Edge, and Cambozola.

RW: When I started working at the Co-op, I discovered foods I had never heard of before, such as radicchio or pappadums. I didn't even know Collards then or Kelp. Are there any unusual foods that you are discovering?

FM: I noticed a really strange looking cauliflower the other day. And Pom Molasses is new to me. It might be a new trend: the Pom Molasses rage! [laughs]

One thing I'm learning these days is that not all eggs are alike. My favor-

ite eggs are Bay Hammond organic eggs. Their yolks are firm and orange. And they do taste better!

RW: You like to cook...

FM: Yes, I do. I'm especially fond of Indian meals. I like to prepare curries and dals, using Indian spices and coconut milk.

RW: Do you make your own chapaties or naan?

FM: Not at this point. My husband and I usually have our curries with Basmati rice.

RW: What are your thoughts on Co-op expansion plans?

FM: I'm excited but also nervous. Excited about carrying more product and having a safer work space. I also like being part of something exciting happening.

On the other hand, we might lose the feel of our smaller store, the feel of being connected with everyone.

RW: What do you do when you're not working at the Co-op?

FM: I work four days at the Co-op, the fifth day I work with Project Independence. Besides that I like hiking with my dog Rowan. I practice Yoga. And I like doing crafts. And oh yes... sailing!

RW: Any plans for 2016?

FM: I will start out the year with a yoga workshop in Massachusetts. I want to be more quietly mindful. I want to take time and

opportunity to grow personally, be creative and live healthier.

RW: Any trips to Ireland on the horizon? I know you are very fond of Ireland.

FM: Right, I have been to Ireland several times in my life. It's such a romantic place. I love the dramatic lighting. Ireland is... story worthy.

RW: The world is hurting. How can we help, make things better?

FM: I have the solution... no I don't [laughs]. We must be more mindful. We are all human. A little more compassion for each other would be nice.

RW: Thank you, Faye!

Broccoli Me

Broccoli tops the list of common vegetables for nutrient content. It is high in carotenoids and vitamin C and contains B complex, calcium, phosphorus and potassium as well. Research reveals that broccoli is rich in chromium, a mineral that protects against diabetes. It contains some protein and is a good source of fiber. Like all vegetables of the crucifer family, broccoli is rich in indoles, a potent anticancer substance, as well as such antioxidant and anticancer agents as quecitin and glutathione. Not surprisingly, many studies show that broccoli is the preferred vegetable among those with lower rates of all kinds of cancer. Organic broccoli is superior in taste and nutrient content to broccoli grown with high-nitrate fertilizers.

Broccoli not only ranks number one in nutrient content, it is also the easiest vegetable of all to prepare. Cut into flowerets and steam about 5 minutes or until broccoli has turned bright green and is just tender. Transfer to a heated serving dish, tip with a generous pat of butter and keep warm in the oven.

From *Nourishing Traditions* by, Sally Fallon





Co-op Expansion Update

Glenn Lower, General Manager

We have been working to move the Co-op closer to the goals that emerged from our Co-op Conversations in 2014, which resulted in the Long Range Plan. So far, we have been successful in implementing a patronage dividends system and launching the *Co-op Basic* program (offering key food items at affordable prices). Both programs have been well received by our members. Now we have selected an architect to begin the expansion design and energy upgrade plans. After an extensive selection process, our committee chose *Vermont Integrated Architecture of Middlebury*. The decision is based on the experience of their team, the quality of their past projects and references, their efforts of engaging the community in their work, their expertise in reducing the energy footprint, and the fact that they are a local company with strong connections to our Co-op (they all shop here!). We're very excited to work with them!



Vermont Integrated Architecture

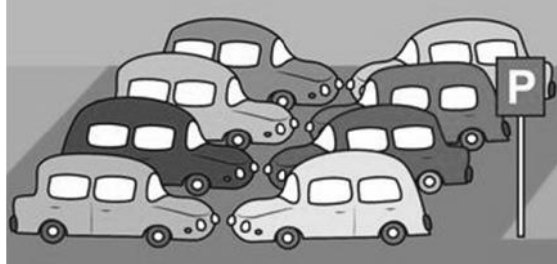
As you may remember from our Co-op Conversation updates, our expansion goals include increased sales; increased aisle space; increased selections of local meats, cheeses, dairy, bulk foods and deli offerings; better café seating and a second customer bathroom. Additionally we would like to create a classroom and meeting space.

Furthermore, an energy-efficient building is important to our members. While it has only been eleven years since we moved in to this space, which still feels new due to the quality of the construction, technologies for heating/cooling, ventilation, renewables and refrigeration have evolved at warp speed. We need to catch up!

As always, contact me or any of our expansion committee members if you have any questions. You can reach me at gm@middleburycoop.com or call me at 388-7276.

Expansion Support Committee: Nadine Canter Barnicle, Lynn Dunton, Ross Conrad, RJ Adler (all members of the Board).

We would like to thank Chris Stackhouse and the Regional Planning Office for allowing us to park our cars next to their building during the



Thanksgiving and Christmas weeks. It helped us to make additional parking spaces available to our customers.

"Every meal you eat, every food item you buy, and every thing you do in your yard can be an essential part of the solution to reversing climate change."

– Maria Rodale

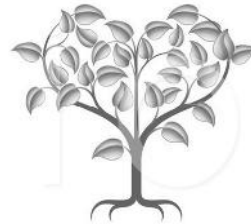
HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF US!

May we be able to contribute to a more peaceful world by building community in a constructive and caring way, with honesty and integrity.

May we welcome some of the new and cherish some of the old. May we choose wisely.

GMO's continued from page 3

they have done for millennia and on which their livelihoods depend. Despite the claims of Eppard and Spencer, farmers can and have been sued for fields contaminated with GMOs, even when it is the result of inevitable pollen drift from neighboring fields. This pollen drift also presents a threat to a farmer's organic certification. As a result, many organic farmers fear for their livelihood and their ability to fill consumer desire for organic products.



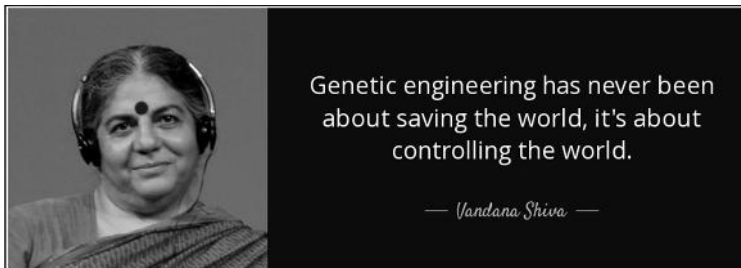
GMOs also pose a significant threat to food security in that GM seeds are identical clones lacking genetic variation. As GM crops become increasingly common, this narrow germplasm leaves the world with very few varieties of each crop. When drought, flooding, blight, or other source of plant disease comes along, this lack of diversity leaves us vulnerable to large scale crop collapse. There are numerous examples throughout history that underscore this point, most notably the Irish Potato Famine, and most recently with the impending collapse of Cavendish bananas. Additionally, this places control of the world's food supply in the hands of a very small number of major seed companies.

How Common are GMOs in the Food Supply?

GMOs are now present in the vast majority of processed foods in the US. Currently commercialized GM crops in the US include soy, cotton, canola, sugar beets, corn, papaya, zucchini, and yellow squash. Products derived from these GM crops include oils, sugar, flour, soy protein, soy lecithin, cornstarch, corn syrup, citric acid, and many others.

How Can I Avoid GMOs?

Despite broad consumer demand for labeling these products, there are currently no mandatory labels required for GMO foods in the U.S. Thankfully, in May of 2014, Vermont became the first state in the country to pass a GMO labeling law, known as Act 120. The law is slated to take effect on July 1, 2016, but it must first defeat the legal challenges to the law filed by a collection of trade associations representing giant food producers known collectively as the Grocery Manufacturer's Association.



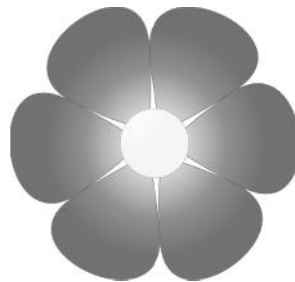
In April of 2015, Judge Christina Reiss rejected a motion from the industrial food companies asking Vermont to stop implementation of our labeling law. Judge Reiss also determined that the labeling law is constitutional under the First Amendment. The court's findings have affirmed the firm legal ground of Act 120 and the next steps may include proceeding to trial, or an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

An additional threat to our labeling law comes in the form of the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act, also known as the DARK (Deny Americans the Right To Know) Act. This legislation has passed in the U.S. House of Representatives and is headed for the Senate. If passed, it would preempt state labeling laws and prevent the USDA from enacting mandatory GMO labeling. Vermont Senators Peter Welch and Bernie Sanders are strong opponents of the bill. According to Colin O'Neil, Director of Government Affairs at the Center For Food Safety, the legislation is lacking democratic support and is, therefore, unlikely to pass in the Senate. Aware of this uphill battle, proponents of this legislation may instead try to slip it in as a policy rider in a piece of unrelated legislation.

To avoid GMOs in the meantime, look for products bearing the certified organic label and products bearing the third-party certification of the Non-GMO project. Look for these labels throughout the Co-op during non-GMO month and beyond. Also look for Member Deals and weekly sales in January that highlight some of our favorite non-GMO brands. Another good practice to keep in mind when shopping non-GMO is to ask questions about where food comes from and how it is made. Perhaps the product has been imported from one of the 60-plus countries around the world that have banned GMOs. Or, perhaps it's a local product from a very small farmer or producer that may not bear an organic or non-GMO label, but can assure you that their products are grown or produced without the use of GMOs.



**Emily Millard
is a member
of our Co-op staff.**



Santa Cruz Organic Chico, California



The label of a Santa Cruz Organic Juice bottle will tell you that Santa Cruz is “committed to being sustainable, responsible and keeping our planet remarkable.” Santa Cruz is a Green-e certified company that recycles more than 95% of its waste and buys enough renewable energy credits each year to cover their production needs.

In addition, Santa Cruz Organic® is an official participant of the Non-GMO Project. For more information about the Non-GMO Project, read our article on this issue in this Newsletter or visit www.nongmoproject.org.

At the Co-op, you’ll find a variety of Santa Cruz products on our shelves, including lemonade, limeade, a variety of juices (reconstituted made from concentrate), pure lime or lemon juice, and nectars (100% juice). You may want to try Santa Cruz Apple Sauce, which comes in different flavors, all of them organic. We also offer Santa Cruz organic Chocolate Syrup.

During the week of **January 2 through January 6**,
Co-op members will receive a **20% discount**
on all *Santa Cruz* products.

Garden of Life West Palm Beach, Florida



There is a direct correlation between nutrition, exercise and health. Raw, whole food nutrition, from organically grown sources, is more beneficial for health than isolated nutrients. When coupled with exercise, a diet that includes the consumption of raw, live foods, particularly those containing probiotics, enzymes, and products of their fermentation, is the foundation for a healthy lifestyle.

Garden of Life's commitment to health goes beyond offering some of the most effective nutritional products in the world. They are interested in building rela-

tionships with people to help them transform their lives to attain extraordinary health. By combining the best of nature and science, the *Garden of Life* brand offers a path to healthy living with premium products that are supported by education and innovation.

Find out more at www.gardenoflife.com

During the week of **January 7 through January 13**,
Co-op members will receive a **30% discount**
on all *Garden of Life* products.

Woodstock Foods

From their own website:

It all started for us over 25 years ago, when we began selling natural and organic foods with belief that good food came from simple ingredients farmed from sources you could trust. Over the years, we've all seen a lot of food trends come and go with plenty of experts telling us what, and what not, to eat. All along, our belief has remained the same. Keep it simple and eat because it's good!

We've grown a lot since we launched our first nut butter. Today, we're 250+ products strong in over ten categories. Over 70% of our products are domestically sourced and 75% are USDA Organic. We have over 145 products Non-GMO Project Verified, and we're not stopping there; over 80 more are enrolled and on their way. Read more about our commitment to providing Non-GMO products.

More info at Www.woodstock-foods.com



During the week of **January 14 through January 20**,
Co-op members will receive a **20% discount**
on all *Woodstock Farms* products.

Nature's Path

Richmond, British Columbia



Nature's Path Manifesto:

At Nature's Path, we live for healthy, great-tasting organic foods. It's why we get up in the morning. But we are also a company that wants to do more than just sell breakfast foods.

We aspire to advance the cause of people and planet, along the path to sustainability. And we like to think we put our money where our mouth is. Or rather, where our heart is. Because growing organic, healthy foods in a sustainable way is our passion — the cornerstone of our family company. It's where, and how, it all began.

But we also know that when it comes down to it — no matter what kind of a difference we want to make as a company, and no matter how much you share those values — if our food isn't delicious and exciting, we're not living up to our fullest potential.

Healthy foods don't need to be boring and tasteless. Which is why we spend our days and nights dreaming up new recipes, tracking down exotic new ingredients, and researching the latest (or most ancient) superfoods. We know you'll be pretty impressed when you read our labels. But we hope you'll be even more impressed when you take your first bite.

If you're familiar with *Nature's Path* at all, you've probably come across the phrase *Leave the earth better than you found it*. It's kind of our mantra. It's a quote from our founder's Dad, and it's something we try to keep front of mind with everything we do. It's part of the reason we source as locally as possible, as much as possible. So far, we've managed to source 78% of our ingredients in North America. But when we can't, that mantra is the reason we try to source them as ethically as possible, and why we partner up with suppliers who share our values for organic agriculture and sustainability. That in mind, we're committed to purchasing all of our organic cocoa fair trade, and we're doing what we can to purchase our organic sugar cane, molasses, and spices from Fairtrade farmers, so they can have a better earth, too.

Find out more at www.us.naturespath.com

During the week of **January 21 through January 27**,
Co-op members will receive a **20% discount**
on all *Woodstock Farms* products.

La Maison Orphée

Quebec City, Canada

Established in 1983, *La Maison Orphée* is the first craft oil mill in eastern Canada. Since 1989, the company went from importer to producer. Since 1992, *La Maison Orphée* is owned and operated by the Belanger Family. It offers the largest selection of cold-pressed unrefined oil on the Canadian market.

The Bélanger sisters are proud artisans who love their work. They've sought out the best terroirs in North America and Europe to bring consumers gourmet oils, mustards and vinegars that blend excellence, flavor and nutritional quality together with the discovery of new culinary horizons.

Cold pressed is a process in which non-preheated oil seeds are pressed only once, with no additional heat and at the lowest temperature possible, in order to extract their oil. This type of pressing preserves the nutritional properties of the oil (vitamins, tocopherols, essential fatty acids, pigments, etc.) as well as their aromas.



The temperature never exceeds 50 degrees Celsius during pressing. This heat is a result of friction created by a rotating screw mechanism that moves the oil seeds through the press, grinds them and tries to expel them. The extracted oil is filtered to get rid of its seed residue and then bottled. The term *virgin* is the equivalent of first cold-pressed and can be used for all varieties of oil.

The term *extra virgin* only applies to olive oil. It means that it is the best quality olive oil with the lowest oleic acidity (< 0.8%). The term *virgin* is the equivalent of first cold-pressed and can be used for all varieties of oil. Used to qualify olive oil, the word *virgin* refers to second quality, i.e. oil with less than 1.5% oleic acidity. The word *pure* is not a standard of quality. It merely indicates that there is only one variety of oil, not a blend, in the bottle. Watch out for the term *mechanically-pressed* as even industrial oil mills use mechanical pressing, but it is followed by chemical refining processes.

More info at www.maisonorphee.com

During the week of **January 29 through February 3,**
Co-op members will receive a **20% discount**
on all *Woodstock Farms* products.



Together We Thrive

Kate Gridley

I have been thinking a lot lately
about all the different “things” a co-op can be.

Last month, Board member Jay Leshinsky wrote about an inspirational piece of co-op history in his Newsletter article *Cooperatives and the Civil Rights Movement*. He described how a small food co-op in South Carolina, *The Progressive Club*, required its members not only to be registered voters, but they had to pledge to get one or more voters to the polls on Election Day. Started by Esau Jenkins and 40 other African American residents of St. John’s Island, an area heavily populated by former slaves, this cooperative not only stocked groceries, seed, feed, and gasoline, it was also a mutual aid organization. The founders taught many of the area residents how to read and write, and how to study for the voter registration exam during a time when voter registration laws prohibited the number of African American residents who were allowed to register.

I am reminded of the food co-op in Polson, Montana, which started a couple years ago with a mission from the get-go to be more than a food co-op, thanks to a community process through the *Orton Family Foundation’s* “Heart and Soul Community Planning.”

The goal for each Montana Co-op Food Hub is to build community and expand its food related services for the local people. Each hub provides a variety of services to benefit community needs and values. In some cases, it is an economic growth starting point.

As Leslie Wright from the Orton Family Foundation writes in an article about the Polson Food Hub, *Putting food from local farm fields onto dinner tables in Polson, Montana, (pop.5000) is about healthy eating and a whole lot more.*

The Hub’s founder and CEO Jason Moore describes it: “*When the Montana Co-op was looking for Food Hub locations in Polson, we were looking for a building that could not just support local food growth... Polson needed a place for the kids to hang out; an activity and event center. Along the way, we met other community partners that had a passion for health, youth outreach, and community connectivity. These people further developed the Montana Co-op’s mission to bring people together to create easy and affordable access to local food and Montana-made products. We’re now fulfilling many other needs of the community with exercise classes, education classes, and getting our youth hooked on good things.*”

These good things include tribal dance classes, learning to mix and record music, boxing lessons, classes on nutrition and food preparation, career and business courses. And a Kids Co-op Business Center where young people come together with a business idea, learn best practices to realize their ideas, and try them out. Above their door they have painted: *Together We Thrive*.

Both the Polson Food Hub and the Progressive Club on St. John's Island had a mission to create positive change, not simply in the local food systems, but beyond. As MNFC prepares for expansion, I wonder if our expansion should be more than literal and physical. What are the possibilities? What do you think?

Kate Gridley is a member of our MNFC Board of Directors

*We should not judge people by their peak of excellence;
but by the distance they have traveled
from the point where they started.*
Henry Ward Beecher

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