



**ASTORIA**  
co o p e r a t i v e

• A COMMUNITY STORE •

*The mission of the Astoria Co-op is to serve the lower Columbia River community by providing fairly priced, wholesome foods and other goods in an ecologically sustainable, socially responsible, and economically appropriate manner. All shoppers are always welcome.*



**“In effect, we’re washing the whole nation’s salad in one big sink.”—Michael Pollan**

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KNOWING WHERE IT CAME FROM IS THE BEST DEFENSE. *Michael Pollan’s analysis of the 2006 spinach crisis is still timely—p.5*

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# The View from the Loft

## Board Begins Next Strategic Plan

### Tracy Erfling, Board President

The board met for its first in a series of retreats to begin the next strategic plan for our beloved Co-op. Thanks to the Healing Group and annual meeting, many wonderful ideas emerged upon which the board is committed to taking action. There were seven areas identified by the aforementioned meetings, and each had a variety of action plans. It all began with the mission statement which the board is reviewing and potentially revising, none of which will happen without your input. Your comments and questions are always welcome, especially at board meetings held the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6 pm in the loft.

### Product Selection

This topic mainly focuses on the idea of local and how to promote that both at our Co-op and in our community. Tom Hartland will head up a committee whose first meeting is scheduled for June 30th. Contact Tom, 503.325.3221 or [onehartland@gmail.com](mailto:onehartland@gmail.com), if you are interested in attending.

### Discounts

The board approved an increase in staff discounts to 20%. Volunteer discounts, volunteer policy, senior discounts, and special orders had much discussion. This topic will continue as people research other methods, policies, etc.

### Customer Service

Many wonderful solutions have begun in this area, one being a member kiosk (a centrally located information center for board meeting information, suggestions and responses, recipes, vendor information, and so on). Look for this to appear sometime in August. A children's area is in the works once again. There is no definite timeline, but we will

keep you posted on its progress. If you want to assist, contact Ute Swerdloff at [ute@yoganam.com](mailto:ute@yoganam.com). Matthew will continue to make progress on the front door, interior paint job, and outdoor signage. We are also hoping Mick will host a few wine tastings as this was a popular suggestion at the annual meeting.

### Membership

Discussion centered on communication, ways to have more fun and community events among members. We are hoping to put together a harvest potluck in the fall. Stay tuned. Again, if you are interested in being involved, we have many committees. Talk to Matthew or any board member at [board.astoriacoop@gmail.com](mailto:board.astoriacoop@gmail.com) to identify where help is needed.

### Policy Governance

We spent most of this discussion on the question, "Is policy governance right for us?" Although we came to no absolute conclusion, we plan on this as well as bylaw changes being the topics of our next retreat.

### Financial & Member Involvement

For both of these topics, action was directed at access of information. Look for regular postings at the kiosk (mentioned above). Agendas for the board meetings are now being posted at the checkout counter prior to the meeting. Quarterly financials will be in the newsletters. We heard your request for more email communications. Although simple, this just takes a little time and manpower, so look for that in the future as well.

We are very excited about each aspect of what is listed above and what is still to come. As always we welcome you to join the process.

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### Hours of Operation

Mon-Sat 9-7pm  
Sunday 11-5pm

### Board of Directors

**President:** Tracy Erfling  
**Vice President:** Tom Duncan  
**Staff Liaison:** Natalie Paulson  
Mary Blake  
Peggy Bondurant  
Leon Jackson  
Ute Swedloff

### Management & Staff

Matthew Stanley, *General Manager*  
Heather Douglas  
Bee Eirth  
Dale Flowers  
Judith Griffis  
Linda Leone  
Mick Mitchell  
Natalie Paulson  
Gina Pecht  
David Plechl  
Vincent Reynolds  
Marcia Richardson  
Arielle Vestal

### Newsletter Committee

Bobbi Brice  
**Design:** Vincent Reynolds

### The Seven Cooperative Principles

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic governance
3. Economic participation by owners
4. Autonomy and independence
5. Education and training
6. Cooperation among cooperatives
7. Concern for the community

### Want to Help the Co-op?

To help with quarterly inventories, stocking, herbs and cleaning, call 503.325.0027.



*LEFT: Mick Mitchell stocks donated shelving from Food Front. RIGHT: People's Co-op IT Manager Doug Zilm troubleshoots the new register with Manager Matthew Stanley.*

## Co-op's Democratic Business Model Makes Upgrades Work

**Matthew Stanley**  
General Manager

If you have dropped by the Co-op recently, you may have noticed several changes throughout the store. The produce department has a new dry-rack display that is more attractive and easier to shop. We have added four feet of grocery shelving and an end-cap shelf to the floor, thereby facilitating improved product display and the ability to expand product selection. Of course, everyone has seen the new register system up and running. It allows us to see individual items on the screen as they are rung up and improves the maintenance of our membership database. We will also be seeing a new bulk herb display provided by the Frontier Co-op.

These changes would not be possible without a cooperative business model. Our democratically governed organization makes us part of a larger community of co-ops across the country. Installation of

the register system was successful because the People's Co-op of San Diego donated a week's time from their IT manager, Doug Zilm. Grocery shelves and produce racks were donated by Food Front Co-op in Portland. People's Co-op of San Diego most recently sent their head merchandiser, Jon Gire, to offer his expert eye to our store.

These co-ops truly practice their cooperative principles, in this case, cooperation among cooperatives. As our store continues to grow, we will certainly do so with the help of other cooperatives. As a member-owner, know that when you shop at the Co-op you are participating in something that is locally owned and governed, but that at the same time, connects us to a much larger community of like-minded people that is growing across the country.

## LOCALIZED MARKETING

### An Idea Whose Time Has Come

**Tom Hartland, Member**

At our annual membership meeting in April, the roundtable about product selection became a brainstorming on localizing. Ideas kept popping, enthusiasm kept building, and now the discussion is broadening at a pace of its own.

If there is a way to recognize when an idea's time has come, localizing our food sources would seem to qualify. The indicators are all around us—global movements in slow food and community gardening, the rapid growth of farmers markets, the outpacing of demand for organics vs. conventional. Such interest has added momentum to the Coop's leadership in bringing buyers together with sellers for local goods.

Are the benefits obvious to us all? We could mention the favor we are doing the climate by reducing dependence on shipping. We could emphasize the security we are building in having sources of food we can reach when others fail. Best of all, there is the taste to consider. The freshness, the confidence we can have in how our food is grown and processed, the community we strengthen by keeping our dollars local are further benefits. Probably none of us need to be sold on the pleasures and importance of maximizing our commerce in locally produced edibles.

Challenges are numerous, but seeing the sparks in people's eyes when this topic arises seems to suggest growth in localized markets is inevitable. As Victor Hugo observed, "An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come." Please contact me with help exploring how. 503.325.3221 or [onehartland@gmail.com](mailto:onehartland@gmail.com)

## ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

# Members Help Formulate Strategic Plan

Mary Blake, Board Member

The Annual Meeting in April was one of great promise, intended to conduct Co-op membership business and to work on concerns identified by the Let The Healing Begin committee in March. To recap, 30 members shared insights and feelings about the Co-op. This facilitated process set rules and affirmed the outcomes by identifying issues. The other steps of the process included prioritizing, brainstorming, next steps and commitments, and evaluation. The exciting aspect of this kind of process is that it invites participation and inclusion of all members to truly awaken and live the common values and mission of the Co-op.

During the Annual Meeting, we felt it would be a perfect time to brainstorm solutions. The nearly 50 members present were invited to identify solutions to policy governance, finances, member involvement in decision making, discounts, customer service and product selection. Individuals moved on a timed schedule

to the area of their concern. After solutions were identified, each member was given five dots. They were asked to prioritize their first, second, third, fourth and fifth most important concerns. From there, we listed the top prioritized, solution-based steps to take the Co-op to the next level of service for its membership and shopper. The prioritized list was used as the basis of a strategic plan that the board is putting into action. You should be seeing and experiencing your good solutions in practice.

Thank you to all the members for your participation and engagement in this very exciting time for the Co-op. Please get more involved with your Co-op. Fill your basket when you shop, read your newsletter, check the web site, attend a board meeting, get on a committee, volunteer, practice living the mission of the Co-op in your daily life. It will change your life, the life of your neighbors and the lives that your choices touch locally, regionally and worldwide.

## Meet Our Three New Board Members

Three new Co-op board members were voted in at the Annual Meeting:

### Peggy Bondurant

Peggy Bondurant is a long time co-op member (and now owner) who was elected to the board at the last general membership meeting. She was a member of the Healing Committee and hopes to help get the store back on track and in the black. After retiring from teaching 1st Grade this June, she is now employed part-time at the Blue Scorcher Bakery a few days a week for fun and good feelings.

### Leon Jackson

A Retired Certified Public Accountant, Leon Jackson joined the Co-op in 2005, when the hills, river, ocean, coastal weather, architecture and history of Astoria attracted he and his wife Mary to this area from the San Francisco Bay. A few years ago, Mary started a second career as a teacher, and now teaches first grade at Star of Sea School in Astoria.

Leon's interests include photography, travel, walking and automobiles. His immediate goal is to help Astoria Coop become financially healthier.

### Ute Swerdloff

Ute Swerdloff has been a member of the Co-op since the day she and her family moved to Astoria 11 years ago. The people, the products and the atmosphere of the store were so welcoming that she wanted to be part of it right away. As a mother of two young children, she particularly appreciated the children's area. Lucien, her husband, served on the board some years back, and now she feels it is time for her to contribute. A few months ago, she rekindled her commitment to the store when she joined other members in creating the Let The Healing Begin forum.

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**OWNERS: Look for owner specials starting in August! Signs will mark products at a special monthly price just for member-owners.**

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**Effective August, there will be two Owner Recognition Days! All owners receive a 5% discount on the second Saturday and fourth Thursday of the month.**

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**If you gave us your email address to send you future electronic versions of our newsletter, watch for an email from us inviting you to join our email listserv.**

# The Vegetable-Industrial Complex

## Food Safety and Eating Local

Michael Pollan

Michael Pollan is the author most recently of *"The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals."* This article first appeared in the *New York Times* October 15th, 2006

Soon after the news broke last month that nearly 200 Americans in 26 states had been sickened by eating packaged spinach contaminated with *E. coli*, I received a rather coldblooded e-mail message from a friend in the food business. "I have instructed my broker to purchase a million shares of RadSafe," he wrote, explaining that RadSafe is a leading manufacturer of food-irradiation technology. It turned out my friend was joking, but even so, his reasoning was impeccable. If bagged salad greens are vulnerable to bacterial contamination on such a scale, industry and government would very soon come looking for a technological fix; any day now, calls to irradiate the entire food supply will be on a great many official lips.

That's exactly what happened a few years ago when we learned that *E. coli* from cattle feces was winding up in American hamburgers. Rather than clean up the kill floor and the feedlot diet, some meat processors simply started nuking the meat—sterilizing the manure, in other words, rather than removing it from our food. Why? Because it's easier to find a technological fix than to address the root cause of such a problem. This has always been the genius of industrial capitalism—to take its failings and turn them into exciting new business opportunities.

We can also expect to hear calls for more regulation and inspection of the produce industry. Already, watchdogs like the Center for Science in the Public Interest have proposed that the government impose the sort of regulatory regime it imposes on the meat industry—

something along the lines of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system (HACCP, pronounced HASS-ip) developed in response to the *E. coli* contamination of beef. At the moment, vegetable growers and packers are virtually unregulated. "Farmers can do pretty much as they please," Carol Tucker Foreman, director of the Food Policy Institute at the Consumer Federation of America, said recently, "as long as they don't make anyone sick."

This sounds like an alarming lapse in governmental oversight until you realize there has never before been much reason to worry about food safety on farms. But these days, the way we farm and the way we process our food, both of which have been industrialized and centralized over the last few decades, are endangering our health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that our food supply now sickens 76 million Americans every year, putting more than 300,000 of them in the hospital, and killing 5,000.

The lethal strain of *E. coli* known as 0157:H7, responsible for this latest outbreak of food poisoning, was unknown before 1982; it is believed to have evolved in the gut of feedlot cattle. These are animals that stand around in their manure all day long, eating a diet of grain that happens to turn a cow's rumen into an ideal habitat for *E. coli* 0157:H7. (The bug can't survive long in cattle living on grass.) Industrial animal agriculture produces more than a billion tons of manure every year, manure that, besides being full of nasty microbes like *E. coli* 0157:H7 (not to mention high

concentrations of the pharmaceuticals animals must receive so they can tolerate the feedlot lifestyle), often ends up in places it shouldn't be, rather than in pastures, where it would not only be harmless but also actually do some good. To think of animal manure as pollution rather than fertility is a relatively new (and industrial) idea.

Wendell Berry once wrote that when we took animals off farms and put them onto feedlots, we had, in effect, taken an old solution—the one where crops feed animals and animals' waste feeds crops—and neatly divided it into two new problems: a fertility problem on the farm, and a pollution problem on the feedlot. Rather than return to that elegant solution, however, industrial agriculture came up with a technological fix for the first problem—chemical fertilizers on the farm. As yet, there is no good fix for the second problem, unless you count irradiation and Haccp plans and overcooking your burgers and, now, staying away from spinach. All of these solutions treat *E. coli* 0157:H7 as an unavoidable fact of life rather than what it is: a fact of industrial agriculture.

But if industrial farming gave us this bug, it is industrial eating that has spread it far and wide. We don't yet know exactly what happened in the case of the spinach washed and packed by Natural Selection Foods, whether it was contaminated in the field or in the processing plant or if perhaps the sealed bags made a trivial contamination worse. But we do know that a great deal of spinach from a great many fields gets mixed together in the

water at that plant, giving microbes from a single field an opportunity to contaminate a vast amount of food. The plant in question washes 26 million servings of salad every week. In effect, we're washing the whole nation's salad in one big sink.

It's conceivable the same problem could occur in your own kitchen sink or on a single farm. Food poisoning has always been with us, but not until we started processing all our food in such a small number of "kitchens" did the potential for nationwide outbreaks exist.

Surely this points to one of the great advantages of a decentralized food system: when things go wrong, as they sooner or later will, fewer people are affected and, just as important, the problem can be more easily traced to its source and contained. A long and complicated food chain, in which food from all over the countryside is gathered together in one place to be processed and then distributed all over the country to be eaten, can be impressively efficient, but by its very nature it is a food chain devilishly hard to follow and to fix.

Fortunately, this is not the only food chain we have. The week of the *E. coli* outbreak, washed spinach was on sale at my local farmers' market, and at the Blue Heron Farms stand, where I usually buy my greens, the spinach appeared to be moving briskly. I tasted a leaf and wondered why I didn't think twice about it. I guess it's because I've just always trusted these guys; I buy from them every week. The spinach was probably cut and washed that morning or the night before—it hasn't been sitting around in a bag on a truck for a week. And if there ever is any sort of problem, I know exactly who is responsible. Whatever the risk, and I'm sure there is some, it seems manageable.

These days, when people make the case

for buying local food, they often talk about things like keeping farmers in our communities and eating fresh food in season, at the peak of its flavor. We like what's going on at the farmers' market—how country meets city, how children learn that a carrot is not a glossy orange bullet that comes in a bag but is actually a root; how we get to taste unfamiliar flavors and even, in some sense, reconnect through these foods and their growers to the natural world. Stack all this up against the convenience and price of supermarket food, though, and it can sound a little... sentimental.

But there's nothing sentimental about local food—indeed, the reasons to support local food economies could not be any more hardheaded or pragmatic. Our highly centralized food economy is a

### *In effect, we're washing the whole nation's salad in one big sink.*

dangerously precarious system, vulnerable to accidental—and deliberate—contamination. This is something the government understands better than most of us eaters. When Tommy Thompson retired from the Department of Health and Human Services in 2004, he said something chilling at his farewell news conference: "For the life of me, I cannot understand why the terrorists have not attacked our food supply, because it is so easy to do." The reason it is so easy to do was laid out in a 2003 G.A.O. report to Congress on bioterrorism. "The high concentration of our livestock industry and the centralized nature of our food-processing industry" make them "vulnerable to terrorist attack." Today 80 percent of America's beef is slaughtered by four companies, 75 percent of the pre-cut salads are processed by two and 30 percent of the milk by just one company. Keeping local food economies healthy

- and at the moment they are thriving - is a matter not of sentiment but of critical importance to the national security and the public health, as well as to reducing our dependence on foreign sources of energy.

Yet perhaps the gravest threat now to local food economies—to the farmer selling me my spinach, to the rancher who sells me my grass-fed beef—is, of all things, the government's own well-intentioned efforts to clean up the industrial food supply. Already, hundreds of regional meat-processing plants—the ones that local meat producers depend on—are closing because they can't afford to comply with the regulatory requirements the U.S.D.A. rightly imposes on giant slaughterhouses that process 400 head of cattle an hour. The industry insists that all regulations be "scale neutral," so if the U.S.D.A. demands that huge plants have, say, a bathroom, a shower and an office for the exclusive use of its inspectors, then a small processing plant that slaughters local farmers' livestock will have to install these facilities, too.

This is one of the principal reasons that meat at the farmers' market is more expensive than meat at the supermarket: farmers are seldom allowed to process their own meat, and small processing plants have become very expensive to operate, when the U.S.D.A. is willing to let them operate at all. From the U.S.D.A.'s perspective, it is much more efficient to put their inspectors in a plant where they can inspect 400 cows an hour rather than in a local plant where they can inspect maybe one.

So what happens to the spinach grower at my farmers' market when the F.D.A. starts demanding a Haccp plan—daily testing of the irrigation water, say, or some newfangled veggie-irradiation technology? When we start requiring that all farms

be federally inspected? Heavy burdens of regulation always fall heaviest on the smallest operations and invariably wind up benefiting the biggest players in an industry, the ones who can spread the costs over a larger output of goods. A result is that regulating food safety tends to accelerate the sort of industrialization that made food safety a problem in the first place. We end up putting our faith in RadSafe rather than in Blue Heron Farms—in technologies rather than relationships.

It's easy to imagine the F.D.A. announcing a new rule banning animals from farms that produce plant crops. In light of the threat from E. coli, such a rule would make a certain kind of sense. But it is an industrial, not an ecological, sense. For the practice of keeping animals on farms used to be, as Wendell Berry pointed out, a solution; only when cows moved onto feedlots did it become a problem. Local farmers and local food economies represent much the same sort of pre-problem solution—elegant, low-tech and redundant. But the logic of industry, apparently ineluctable, has other ideas, ideas that not only leave our centralized food system undisturbed but also imperil its most promising, and safer, alternatives.

# Co-op Adds New Products, Including Five From The Northwest

by Matthew Stanley, General Manager

## Sea Tangle Kelp Noodles

Sea vegetables in the form of an easy-to-eat raw noodle. These nutritious noodles are made of only kelp, sodium alginate (sodium salt extracted from a brown seaweed), and water. Sea Tangle Kelp Noodles are fat-free, gluten-free, and very low in carbohydrates and calories. Kelp provides a rich source of trace minerals including iodine. Just rinse, add the noodles to any dish and they are ready to eat.

## Bubba's Salsa

Made right here in Astoria. This locally produced salsa is fresh and tastes incredible. Try original, caliente, or mango varieties and support a truly local producer.

## Grandma Candy's Jam

Amazing spreads made with locally grown, unsprayed berries. This delicious spread is sweetened with white grape concentrate, so there is no refined sugar added. This jam is diabetic friendly.

## Solstice Bars

Made in Corvallis, OR, in a mom-

and-pop operation. These bars are a healthy meal for those on the go. A great snack, too, they are made with 70% organic ingredients. Goji berries and chocolate make them antioxidant rich snacks.

## Oregon Rain

A locally bottled water. These guys are sustainably farming Oregon rain water before it touches earth in the Willamette Valley. It has a clean taste that let's you know it is pure.

## Herbal Junction Coolers

In the spirit of kombucha, but not quite the same, these herbal enzyme elixirs are made in Eugene with wild and organic herbs. Try several different flavors for a healthy energy boost.

## Bio-K

A super concentrated proprietary probiotic supplement that is formulated to survive the stomach and get to where it needs to be. This is powerful stuff, and you'll notice the difference from other probiotic supplements. Look for them in the cooler with other probiotic supplements.

## Meet Our Four Newest Staff Members

### David Plechl

David arrived from Sellwood two years ago after working as a news photographer. He soon found part-time work at the Riversea Gallery and as a stringer photographer and writer for the Daily Astorian. His paintings and photos can be viewed at Astoria Visual Arts during July.

### Bee Eirth

Sometimes local songwriter and folk musician Bee has recently arrived from a half-year sojourn in Southern India. A past volunteer, he is happy to be back as

part of the Co-op team. Bee performs internationally and has recorded ten albums of music exploring nature and magical realism. He currently studies French.

### Arielle Vestal

The Co-op has always been a part of life for Arielle, since her family moved first to the Long Beach Peninsula when she and her brother were tots. Her family moved to Alderbrooke four years ago. Her early childhood memories include looking over the balcony railing at the

people shopping below. It's always been her dream to work at the Co-op.

### Gina Pecht

Gina grew up in Southern California and obtained a degree in Earth and Planetary Sciences at UC Berkeley. She worked for The Berkeley Center for Isotope Geochemistry and several bookstores before moving with her boyfriend Ken to Astoria after he graduated Coast Guard Aircraft Mechanics School. She enjoys the community, sustainability, and interaction with local merchants at the Co-op.

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## *Astoria Co-op Calendar of Events*

- Sat., 7/12** *Owner Recognition Day* / Share Owners get 10% off
- Wed., 7/23** *Board of Directors Meeting & Product Sampling* / Sampling at 4:00 p.m., Meeting at 6:00 p.m.
- Sat., 7/26** *Lughnasa Festival 10:00 to 4:00 at the Blue Scorcher*
- Sat., 8/9** *Owner Recognition Day* / Share Owners get 5% off
- Wed., 8/27** *Board of Directors Meeting & Product Sampling* / Sampling at 4:00 p.m., Meeting at 6:00 p.m.
- Thurs., 8/28** *Owner Recognition Day* / Share Owners get 5% off
- Sat., 9/13** *Owner Recognition Day* / Share Owners get 5% off
- Wed., 9/24** *Board of Directors Meeting & Product Sampling* / Sampling at 4:00 p.m., Meeting at 6:00 p.m.
- Thurs., 9/25** *Owner Recognition Day* / Share Owners get 5% off

## **Hear Ye! Here Ye!**

**Matthew Stanley, General Manager**

### **Food Tasting**

Don't miss our food tasting events on the fourth Thursday of each month starting at 4:00 pm. We will be sampling new products and dishes prepared from ingredients available at the Co-op. The board of directors invites you to stick around and attend board meetings starting at 6:00 pm.

### **Owner Recognition Days**

Effective August, there will be two Owner Recognition Days! All owners receive a 5% discount on the second Saturday and the fourth Thursday of the month.

### **Lughnasa Festival**

The Co-op will be participating in this year's Lughnasa Festival on Saturday, July 26th. We are taking on the organization of the farmers' market portion of the event. It allows the Co-op to further develop relationships with local farmers while helping out our local cooperative bakery, The Blue Scorcher. If you are a local grower or just want to participate in the festival planning, please let us know. Stop by the store or give us a call at 503.325.0027.