

SEA & SOIL, A WORKER-OWNED SANDWICH SHOP, TAKES ROOT ON ATLANTIC AVENUE

July 28, 2026



Sea & Soil is located at 388 Atlantic Avenue between Bond and Hoyt Streets. Photograph courtesy of Sea & Soil.

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By Liz Yap

Every customer who steps into Sea & Soil, a cheery worker-owned cooperative on a busy stretch of Atlantic Avenue, has two choices to make: what sandwich they'd like to order and how much they'd like to pay for it.

The sandwiches, with inspired combinations like cumin-paprika roasted chicken and aji verde ("The Wren") or roast turkey with cheddar, peach habanero jam and creamy cilantro slaw ("The Lulu") are made with ingredients cooked from scratch and bread baked in-house.

"WE LEAVE THE CHOICE UP TO YOU FOR WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD AT THIS TIME AND WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS MAY SHIFT FROM DAY TO DAY," THE MENU READS.

They're also priced on a sliding scale. The range is from \$13 to \$24, with suggested prices of \$16 to \$18. A note on the menu gives a brief explanation on what the model makes possible: high-quality ingredients, accessibility for as many as possible and just compensation for each hour of labor worked.



Sandwiches are cooked from scratch and made with bread baked in-house. Photo courtesy of Sea & Soil

The lower end of the range enables Sea & Soil to sustainably offer well-made food to a wider range of customers; the higher end helps them move closer to their goals of providing health care benefits and pensions for all their workers.

“We leave the choice up to you for what you can afford at this time, *and* we recognize that this may shift from day to day,” the menu reads. “Every option is a good option. No matter what, you are supporting our worker-owned co-op.”



Gabby Gignoux-Wolfsohn and Noah Wolf started their worker-owned coop during the pandemic. Photo by Rod Morrison.

As a worker-owned cooperative, Sea & Soil is built around shared labor and profit, shared decision-making and shared ownership. It began as a pandemic-era project for worker-owners Noah Wolf and Gabby Gignoux-Wolfsohn. Wolf (who uses “he/they” pronouns) had always been interested in working in food, but the restaurant industry’s structural issues never sat right with them. “The existing ownership models felt inevitably exploitative,” Wolf said. “I wanted to do something worker-owned—where every person whose labor was involved had agency in the project and could benefit from any profits we’re able to generate.”

The pair, along with another founding partner no longer involved, started out making sandwiches and selling them in Prospect Park and Grand Army Plaza on weekends

while juggling their regular jobs.



SANDWICH ORDER CARD

Write in gilly's kit, and let's make substitutions or allergies!

the WREN corn, olive, pork, fermented carrots, dill, onion, salsa, white de tomatoes, onion greens, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

the NICO corn, olive, pork, fermented carrots, dill, onion, salsa, white de tomatoes, onion greens, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

the LUCY smoked trout, fermented, pepper, jam, pickled red onions, radish, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

the FIONA sea egg, tomato, jam, oil, avocado, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

the ISAAC corn, olive, pork, fermented carrots, dill, onion, salsa, white de tomatoes, onion greens, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

the IZ corn, olive, pork, fermented carrots, dill, onion, salsa, white de tomatoes, onion greens, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

the ELLIOT corn, olive, pork, fermented carrots, dill, onion, salsa, white de tomatoes, onion greens, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

the RAFA corn, olive, pork, fermented carrots, dill, onion, salsa, white de tomatoes, onion greens, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

the VEGAN RAFA corn, olive, pork, fermented carrots, dill, onion, salsa, white de tomatoes, onion greens, 1/2 avocado ☐ GF

Sliding Scale Price

Mark below the price you'll pay, to be applied per sandwich.

113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124

*suggested

Sliding scale pricing is in their DNA. Photo courtesy of Sea & Soil.

To keep the business viable and ensure prices remain within reach for their community, sliding scale pricing has been part of Sea & Soil's DNA from the start. The twin pillars of affordability and accessibility are at the core of what they do. "We really wanted to build those values into the foundation of what we were doing," Wolf said. "It had to be in the roots; otherwise, it couldn't take hold."

Wolf continued: "We're always trying to square the circle, sourcing ingredients as ethically as possible. How local can we get this thing? How seasonal can we be?" They added, "How conscious can we be of the labor standards of the companies we work with, while also providing just compensation for workers?"



Loaves baked by the Sea & Soil team. Photo courtesy of Sea & Soil.

In July 2023, Sea & Soil opened its first brick-and-mortar location, a small shop in Red Hook. Despite loving the neighborhood and the community they'd formed there, they eventually realized that they needed more space to truly grow. Running a tiny sandwich shop on a shoestring budget, the team began looking for a way to finance their next step.



The Working World, who provide funding for worker-owned businesses,
provided funding.

In a moment of serendipity, someone from The Working World, an organization that funds worker-owned businesses, dropped by the shop and encouraged them to get in touch if they ever needed financing. Its mission, Wolf explained, is to help create

more cooperative businesses by addressing one of their biggest barriers: access to capital.

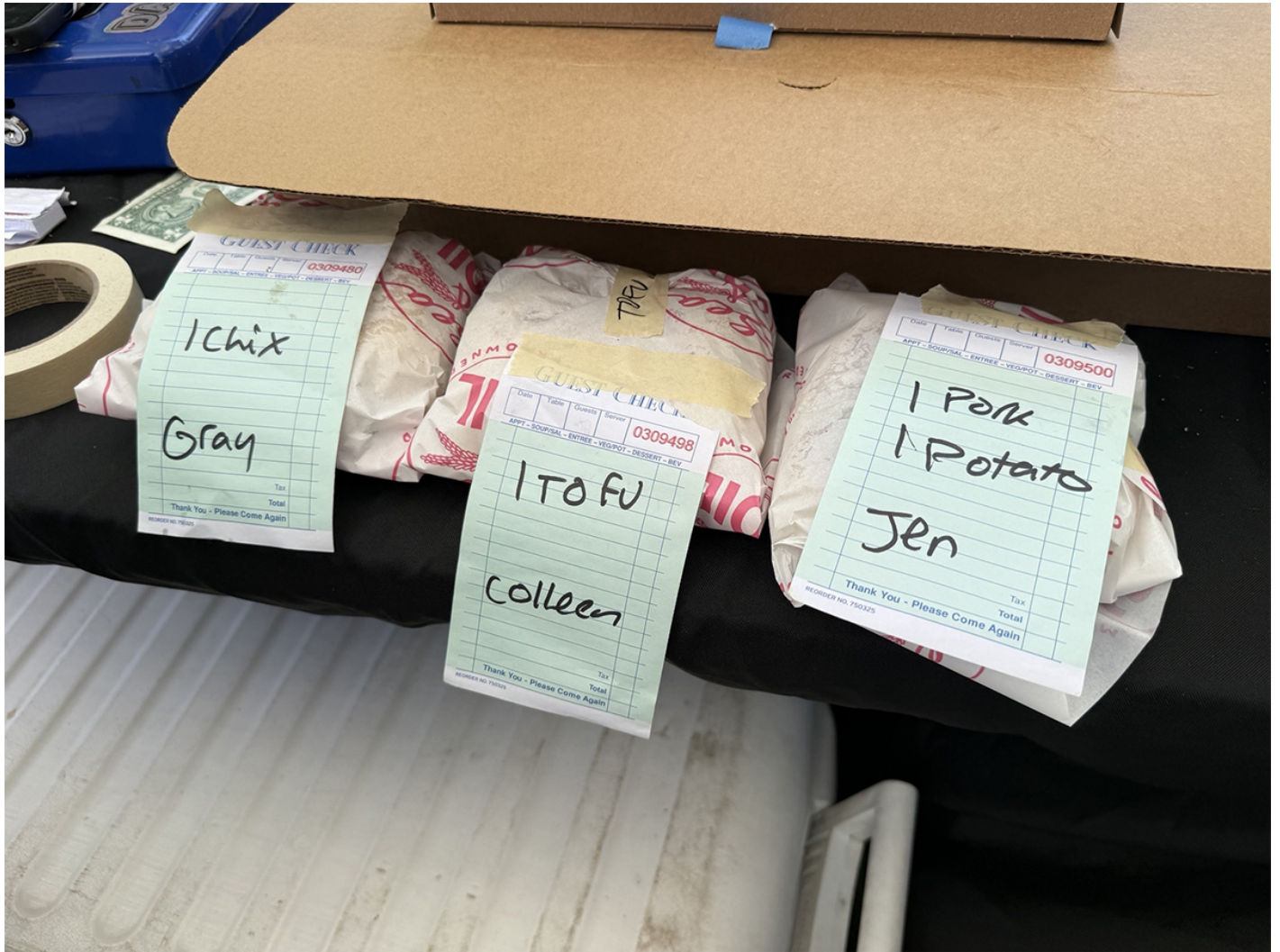
THE GOAL IS TO MAKE OWNERSHIP THE NORM AND NOT THE EXCEPTION, INSTEAD OF MAINTAINING A HIERARCHY IN WHICH A SMALL GROUP OF OWNERS HOLDS POWER OVER A LARGER GROUP OF EMPLOYEES.

Their application was accepted and, along the way, they learned that Seed Commons, a national network that provides financing and support to worker-owned cooperatives, which The Working World is part of, had recently purchased a building on Atlantic Avenue in Boerum Hill for their headquarters. The building's previous owner had run a small café on the ground floor before closing it during the pandemic. It required some work to transform it into what Sea & Soil needed, but the space was there.



"The Iz" sandwich. Photo courtesy of Sea & Soil.

"It's easy to remember the difficult moments, when things don't feel like they're going your way," Wolf recalled. "But it also feels important to remember the moments when everything clicks—when hard work, luck, collaboration and shared values all come together."



Pre-orders awaiting pick-up. Photo by Rod Morrison.

The Working World offers non-extractive loans, which means Sea & Soil is not required to begin repayment until it is profitable. Rather than prioritizing immediate returns, the model is designed to help worker-owned businesses become sustainable, supporting them for the long term. "It creates a collaborative relationship," Wolf said.



Their Atlantic Avenue store opened in April 2025. Photo courtesy of Sea & Soil.

Since opening their doors last April, this new space has laid the foundation for Wolf, Gignoux-Wolfsohn and fellow worker-owner Nilda Ortiz to build a more equitable, empowered workplace. Full-time hires enter a year-long candidacy process as worker-owners in training, during which they and the existing worker-owners decide whether the relationship is the right fit. After the candidacy period, employees are expected either to become worker-owners or to move on.



Working owners Gabby Gignoux-Wolfson, Nilda Ortiz and Noah Wolf.
Photo courtesy of Sea & Soil

The goal is to make ownership the norm and not the exception, instead of maintaining a hierarchy in which a small group of owners holds power over a larger group of permanent employees.

Building this kind of workplace is not without its growing pains. Wolf said Sea & Soil is

learning in real time how to make decisions collectively, communicate across different roles and unlearn the practices of conventional work environments—all while handling the constant day-to-day pressures of running a business in New York City.

“It’s really beautiful, and it’s also really challenging,” Wolf said. “It’s easy to make mistakes. You’re figuring it out and navigating. It’s cool and exhilarating and difficult.”



Noah on the grill at their Pioneer Works pop-up stall in Red Hook. Photo by Rod Morrison.

For Wolf, that willingness to adapt is one of the strengths of worker-owned cooperatives. As a Park Slope Food Coop member, Wolf appreciates that it’s always changing and looking for better ways to operate and work together, in conversation with its community. “We’re always generating new ideas and trying new approaches. There is

not one fixed right answer. You can keep experimenting, and there may always be a better solution down the road,” they said. “The Coop has been around for 50 years, yet people are still finding new ways to work within a relatively small space.” (The Park Slope Coop has its own non-extractive loan fund as well, helping food coops that rely on member labor start and sustain their businesses.)



“The Lucy” sandwich. Photo courtesy of Sea & Soil.

Sea & Soil wants to bring that same spirit of experimentation, iteration and collaboration to what they do. Beyond sandwiches, they envision the space as a venue for building community. Having recently hosted a worker-owner happy hour, they hope to make the space a home for classes, readings, pop-ups and other events—a place where people can gather, exchange ideas and grow together.

The goal is to become part of the fabric of both the neighborhood and the broader worker-owned community in New York: where people can get good food at a price they can afford, and where the people making it can build sustainable lives in a city that's becoming increasingly out of reach for many of its residents.



"The Isaac" sandwich. Photo courtesy of Sea & Soil.

The name Sea & Soil, Wolf shares, takes its name from the Pablo Neruda poem "Ode to Bread." The sea is the salt in each loaf, and the soil is the wheat. It's a fitting name for a shop trying to make something humble and essential—good food, shared work and profit, and community—more available to everyone.

Liz Yap is an editor-turned-strategist with a focus on naming and verbal branding.

She has been a member of the Coop since 2021. lizyap.com