

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

March 19, 2024

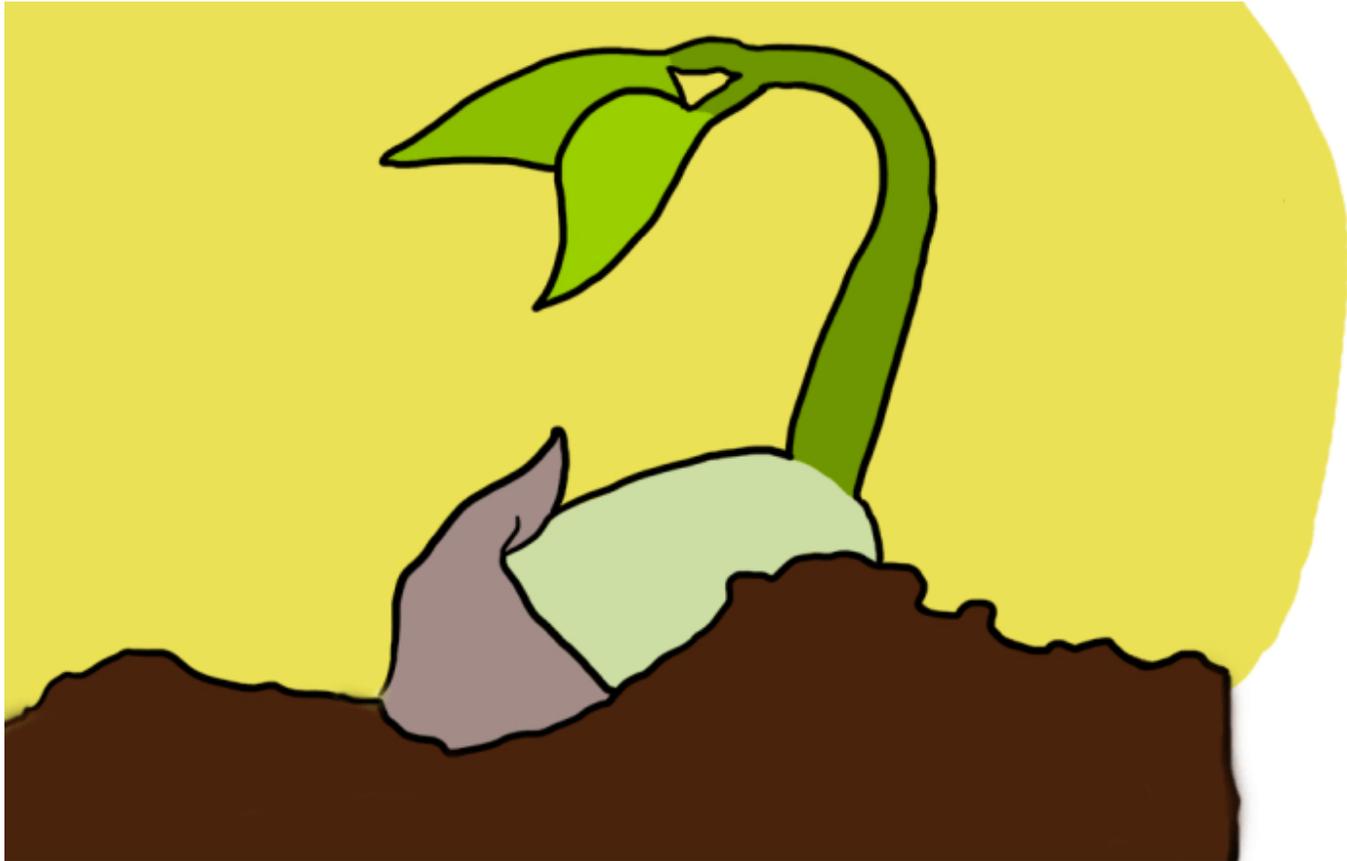


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

The Food Coop's Environmental Committee is seeking to grow! The mission of the committee is to provide education, research and advisement to ensure the Food Coop operates in fidelity to its environmental policy to support "the best products and practices with regard to the health, safety and preservation of humans, animals and the overall biosphere." You can learn more about the Environmental Committee's history and activities here. We seek members with education and professional experience in environmental topics relevant to the Food Coop's operations and impact. If you wish to apply, please fill out this web form.

RECEIVING COORDINATOR MIRIAM EUSEBIO PULLS UP STAKES FOR WEST

COAST PARENTS

March 19, 2024



By Hayley Gorenberg

In the late 1990s, Californian Miriam Eusebio set off to pursue a master's degree in directing at Brooklyn College, and her friend enrolled at New York University in the West Village. "We looked at a map, and put our fingers on the campuses—and in between was Park Slope. So that's where we decided to move," she said. The roommates soon learned of the Coop. "I thought, 'This seems kinda weird and cult-y. Don't know about that!'" Eusebio said. "Plus, I was going to be in grad school, which is designed to be more work than is humanly possible."

A turning point came when Eusebio tried to buy a single zucchini at Key Food. The squashes were packed in plastic-wrapped polystyrene trays, three zucchini to a package. Eusebio inquired about purchasing a single zucchini. An employee disappeared

into the back with the heavily wrapped three-pack, and returned to Eusebio after breaking open the package, discarding the original wrapping, and rewrapping a single zucchini in more plastic and polystyrene. “That was it,” she said. “I had to join the Coop.”



Eusebio has been a receiving coordinator for nearly 25 years.

Even though Eusebio and her roommate were frequently on work alert for missed shifts, and she had to reschedule for a new squad whenever her semester schedule changed, she stayed. “I really found a place that matched my values as a person in the world,” she said.

She earned her graduate degree in directing, but with jobs in theater scarce, Eusebio needed other work. She recalled being encouraged to apply for a part-time receiving coordinator position that seemed flexible enough to accommodate her efforts in “the real off-off-Broadway world, lots of self-produced stuff.” She landed the Coop job in 1999, and even made some connections to fellow members that led to theater work, stints teaching theater arts summer camps, etc. At one point she left her Coop job to do teaching artist work for a few semesters, but she soon came back. “The Coop does

not forget you!” she said.

“SOMETIMES LEARNING TO BE IN A COOPERATIVE IS LIKE LEARNING TO SHAVE OFF THE CORNERS OF YOUR SQUARE PEG TO FIT IN A ROUND HOLE.”

MIRIAM EUSEBIO

Needing more money, she took on more hours. She had started as coordinator for “health and beauty” items, but over time her responsibilities shifted to other disparate categories: stationery, batteries, and super-local Union Street Honey, advertised as “produced by a father-son duo who keep four beehives in Park Slope, Brooklyn.” Eusebio enjoys working with the distributors, recounting how she keeps in touch with the local honey business: “John calls me and says, ‘The bees have made some honey!’ And I say, ‘Send me as much as you can!’ And we get maybe ten cases.”

While she’s enjoyed her work at the Coop, Eusebio feels a pull back to her hometown of Davis, California, where her parents, now in their mid-eighties, could use her help. “It’s a pretty big life change, and I have a lot of sadness about leaving New York and leaving the Coop,” she said. “But I also feel really positive about the next part of my life.” Living with her parents, she plans to focus her outside work on theater. This spring she will direct a play with Acme Theater Company, a youth theater where she participated when she was growing up. The group plans to stage David Ives’ “The Liar,” based on a 17th-century French comedy full of “mistaken identities, running in and out of doors.”



Eusebio uses her theatrical directing skills to teach members how things should be done.

Eusebio applies her directing and teaching chops at the Coop, as a staff member connecting with working members. “It takes a lot of effort to teach 15,000 people something,” she said. “In other relationships you have, you say a thing, and it’s said: ‘This is how you stock the eggs.’” But at the Coop, with members who take shifts for a couple hours every few weeks, “even if someone is experienced, you always teach them how to rotate the yogurt, even if they think they know.” On a standard stocking squad, accumulating the working hours that would correspond to a week of labor in a new, full-time job could take a year, she noted. “You feel like you’ve been [at the Coop] a year, so you know stuff. But you’ve only had the job a week. Sometimes [members] feel like they know stuff, but you still have to teach them without alienating them,” she said. “It’s the nature of the lightly controlled chaos of the Coop.”

“YOU FEEL LIKE YOU’VE BEEN [AT THE COOP] A YEAR, SO YOU KNOW STUFF. BUT YOU’VE ONLY HAD THE JOB A WEEK... IT’S THE NATURE OF THE LIGHTLY CONTROLLED CHAOS OF THE COOP.”

MIRIAM EUSEBIO

Monitoring the Coop floor, she often finds herself “communicating and teaching, saying the same thing over and over again.” She admitted having felt “ticked off” early on at some of the required repetition, and she had to learn to approach members with patience. “I’ve learned to recognize the look in people’s eyes when they actually understand, which, as a director, is useful. I don’t have to wait as long to figure out whether they got it or not. You get a lot of practice.” She described the sequence: “Teach! They do something different. You recognize what you said taught them that thing that they did. You have to switch the way you say it. You get another chance to teach that same thing. Because we’re constantly stocking the shelves.”



Both workers and shoppers need to have a good experience at the Coop.

Further melding her directorial mindset with her Coop approach, she said, “You have to pay attention to the psychological balance of the ‘cast.’ I want everyone to have a good experience at the Coop, whether they’re working or shopping.” She tries to pay attention to how members are feeling about what she asks them to do, telling a member nervous about working the dairy case, ‘Do it as long as you can stand it,’ so that they have an out. It’s not quite a cast, but it sort of is. It’s a little group of people who are working together on a particular project for a particular length of time.”

Among the most memorable events at the Coop was the impromptu marriage ceremony of two coworkers. They were moving out of town, and realized that as a same-sex couple who eschewed certain heteronormative institutions, they nonetheless needed health insurance benefits available through marriage. With their departure clock ticking, another staff member who had secured a Universal Life Church ordination offered to help. An announcement over the PA system summoned staff to the ups-

tairs community room, where the couple exchanged twist-tie rings, “because they hadn’t been planning it, and it was what they had,” Eusebio said. “It was just the most wonderful and moving ceremony. They’re still together and happy.”



Eusebio uses the PA system to thank members at the end of their shift.

The spur-of-the-moment wedding PA announcement may be most memorable for Eusebio, but her own end-of-shift PA announcements have secured special regard. “I like to have an ending point rather than the shift just fizzling off,” she said. She makes a practice of announcing appreciation for the squad. “I thank them for being part of this weird experiment that’s been thriving for 50 years,” she said. “People don’t always understand the nature of what they’re part of. We’re so trained in our whole lives to being in a hierarchical structure. Sometimes learning to be in a cooperative is like learning to shave off the corners of your square peg to fit in a round hole. I emphasize they’re not a customer; they’re part of something. They came, and they’re running the business that they’re part of owning,” she said.

“It’s kind of a little miracle, a place to find community and to stretch your brain about how the world works, and the structures that we live in,” she continued. “We are so interconnected. The Coop shows how much we gain when we depend on each other, and when we’re responsible to each other. The Coop is a place where you can really live that out—not only to members, but to the world, to say, ‘Look at this thing that works!’”

When she’s not writing for the Gazette or teaching LGBTQ rights, Hayley Gorenberg may be found playing the Brazilian dobra with the Fogo Azul drumline.

ONCE-RESISTANT COOP MEMBER EDDIE ROSENTHAL LEAVES STAFF AFTER 20 YEARS RECEIVING MILK, EGGS

March 19, 2024



By Hayley Gorenberg

It would be sugar-coating to say Eddie Rosenthal, the Coop's milk and eggs Receiving Coordinator for more than 20 years, joined the Coop reluctantly. "Honestly, I had contempt for the Coop, because they were not overtly political," he said of his initial awareness of the store. Rosenthal had plunged into politics at an adjacent organization called the Mongoose Community Center, which he thought of as a center for "various kinds of liberation: antiwar, civil rights, feminism...a grab bag. I don't remember what the organization actually did," he said. "We gathered, we talked about things." But the Mongoose folded, and "I guess food won out." After a stint shopping at Back to the Land (a nearby natural foods grocery store some Coop members nicknamed "Back to the Bank" for its prices), Rosenthal joined the Coop "sort of unhappily."

"I LIKE PEOPLE BEING CROWDED INTO A PLACE AND TALKING. IT WAS A LIFE."

EDDIE ROSENTHAL

He quickly discovered he enjoyed socializing at the Coop. “I like people being crowded into a place and talking. It was a life.” The Coop had an atmosphere he experienced as “very homey,” and he played music with Fun’raising Committee. He recalls Park Slope as “nascent” and said, “I remember thinking of it as a postgraduate neighborhood.”



Rosenthal believes he quit the Coop around the time it acquired big freezer units and started selling chicken. He was a vegan at the time. He nonetheless returned (and is now an omnivore). And then the information technology job he worked at Methodist Hospital evaporated when the hospital changed hands and most computer facilities moved to the Upper East Side. Eschewing a wee-hours commute, he quit. Without a job for a year, he showed up at the Coop nearly daily, perhaps banking work credits, and certainly hearing about open positions. His first job application at the Coop did

not succeed. “I was rejected, but I was told they liked me very much, and I should apply again.” He did, and landed the receiving coordinator job managing the milk and egg departments.



Bringing important new products to fellow members and growing relationships with farmers and distributors were highlights of his job. “I really felt for the small distributors,” he said. He remembered one distributor who rolled up routinely with eggs in an unrefrigerated station wagon. “It stunk up the whole block! Their eggs were absolutely delicious.”



Giving school groups tours of the Coop was another bright spot of any workday. “I enjoyed asking children which was the biggest fruit they could see, or ‘Why is a trumpet mushroom called a trumpet mushroom?’”

And he waxed nostalgic about Coop staff parties back in the day when “staff pretty much cooked everything,” generating “lavish” feasts he imagined could have graced the magical tables of Hogwarts. “It was always about bringing staff closer to each other,” he said, recalling his efforts to create his mother’s Hungarian *gesztenyepure* from pureed, sweetened chestnuts topped with whipped cream.

“I WOULD SHOP AT THE COOP EVEN IF THE PRICES WERE A LITTLE HIGHER, BECAUSE THE COOP IS MY FAMILY, AND I WOULD SUPPORT MY FAMILY—EVEN IF THEY WERE UNREASONABLE.”

EDDIE ROSENTHAL

Rosenthal's stint at the Coop took a tough turn with the pandemic. COVID frightened him, and working remotely was tough because it required installing new technology in his apartment, which made him very uncomfortable. He gave up significant parts of his job, and in addition after he returned, he started to experience problems with balance and other neurological symptoms he's still working to have assessed. He was out on disability, and ended his employment at the Coop on November 26. He hasn't decided what to do next, he said. He has worked as a math tutor in the past, and may return to that.



He remains a Coop member, and decades after his initial disdain, Rosenthal said he now tells people, "I would shop at the Coop even if the prices were a little higher, because the Coop is my family, and I would support my family—even if they were unreasonable."

Over time, he's even come to detect a family resemblance among Coop members. "When I walk down the block, as I approach the Coop, I'll try to pick out who's a Coop member and who's not. And I'm pretty accurate!" he said, describing typical Coop members as appearing "harried and optimistic." He continued, "I would like it if people were aware of their identity as Coop members. It's something very special, regardless of the problems that come up or injustices that happen. Maybe all groups have to work through that."

What changed for the former member of the Mongoose? "Compromise!" he said. "You have to start judging your battles. Human beings count for more than food. The relationships are important," he said. He described interrogating himself about conflicts, and learning from them at the Coop. "What's bothering me?" he would ask himself. "Should they change, or should I change? Once you stop turning away from people and turn towards them, your view of them changes, and people start trusting each other more."

When she's not writing for the Gazette or teaching LGBTQ rights, Hayley Gorenberg may be found playing the Brazilian dobra with the Fogo Azul drumline.

NON-ALCOHOLIC SPIRITS AND ALCOHOL ALTERNATIVES AT THE COOP

March 19, 2024



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN DIAZ

By Juliet Kleber

At a recent dinner out, I spent \$12 on a “mocktail,” specifically, a zero-ABV Yuzu Ginger Fizz. Throughout the past decade my body has started to respond less and less favorably to even small amounts of alcohol. So, while I love a great cocktail, the decision to get one is always a process of weighing long-term and short-term happiness. And when I see a or low- or no-ABV drink list on a menu, it feels like a treat. This particular drink was refreshing and complex, not overly sweet, as many alcohol alternatives tend to be. And though \$12 dollars is more than I like to spend on a drink, it’s become commonplace as the variety and sophistication of alcohol alternatives has proliferated over the past few years.

Part of the price of that particular drink was its key ingredient: Seedlip Grove 42, a popular non-alcoholic spirit and one of several you might have noticed at the Coop. Grove 42 is described by its manufacturer as “a sophisticated, bright, citrus blend of Mediterranean orange, lemon peel, lemongrass and ginger with a dry finish,” and it’s

one of four blends Seedlip makes, two of which you can find on the top shelf of the Coop's fancy foods end cap (which is across from the chicken case).

Seedlip is only one in an array of high-end non-alcoholic spirits, aperitifs and other alcohol alternatives you can find there, and it was a pioneer in the booming market of no- or low-alcohol drinks that grew 31% in 2023 alone (according to consumer intelligence firm NielsenIQ). And, as in the rest of the country, their popularity at the Coop has risen rapidly in the past few years.

“BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, [THE TREND] STARTED TO GET BIG, BUT [AFTER] THE PANDEMIC IT'S GOTTEN REALLY INTENSE.”

RECEIVING COORDINATOR KUSI MERELLO

In an interview with the *Gazette*, Receiving Coordinator Kusi Merello noted, “Before the pandemic, [the trend] started to get big, but [after] the pandemic it's gotten really intense.” The Coop had always stocked some non-alcoholic beers, she and fellow Receiving Coordinator/Buyer Britt Henriksson explained, but the game changer was Athletic Brewing's line of alcohol-free craft beers. Their cans (previous options had only been bottled) produced much more excitement and visibility at the Coop—today, canned non-alcoholic beer has its own permanent home in aisle 3. And with the pandemic, Athletic's popularity surged, as did the overall demand for alcohol alternatives and the selection of available options.



“From what I’ve read,” Henriksson said, “people felt like they were consuming too much alcohol at the start of the pandemic.” And while non-alcoholic beer remains the most popular choice (the same is true nationally), Coop members started asking for the newer herbal and botanical products around that time as well.

Seedlip and Ghia (a non-alcoholic aperitif) were two of the products that came in by member request. “Slowly, we were getting a lot more recommendations for the whole spectrum of drink options from mixers to liquor,” Merello said. In addition to those already mentioned, you might find Lyre’s on that top shelf, a producer of a full range of alcohol-free spirits, including whiskey, gin and tequila alternatives. There’s also Kin Euphorics, which purports to use “nootropics and adaptogens” to improve mood and offer cognitive benefits. The Coop now carries dealcoholized wines and a selection of canned, pre-mixed mocktails as well.

ACCORDING TO THE SAME NIELSEN REPORT, 82% OF NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONSUMERS ARE STILL BUYING ALCOHOLIC DRINKS AS WELL.

Unlike the non-alcoholic options of the past, most of these products are not necessarily targeted to people who abstain from alcohol entirely. They're marketed as an alternative "adult beverage" for people who may want to reduce their alcohol intake (often for health reasons), for people like myself who only drink in small quantities, or for people (especially younger members of Gen Z) who are just not that interested in consuming alcohol. According to the same Nielsen report, 82% of non-alcoholic beverage consumers are still buying alcoholic drinks as well.

And while old-school mocktails made from juices and syrups were less expensive due to their lack of alcohol, the same can't be said for those featuring non-alcoholic spirits. A 700 milliliter bottle of Seedlip retails for \$31.99. A bottle of Ghia goes for \$38 on their website—it's currently \$32 at the Coop, comparable to the price of a bottle of traditional aperitif. This is partly due to the complexity of the alcohol-free distillation process and the fact that, as niche products, they must still be produced at relatively small scale. Some of those brands embrace the price-point as appropriate to a more sophisticated, artisan product.

And across the board (wines, beers, spirits and mixed drinks alike) these offerings are becoming more sophisticated—on their own terms, or as approximations of their traditional counterparts. "The [de-alcoholized] wines usually taste like juice to me," Henriksson said, "but we shared a sample in the office of the brand I brought in last week (Noughty), and it tasted more like what a wine would taste like."

The sales of these products at the Coop tend to follow the same curve that traditional alcoholic beverages do. They sell more in the summer and around the holidays—the times that people are often gathered in groups, drinking socially. With one notable exception: at the time of this writing, we're halfway through "Dry January," a month--

long break from alcohol that millions of Americans participate in (though many do not complete it).

During this time, there's a notable bump in sales of alcohol alternatives—helped in part by a display on the seasonal end cap (which is across from the eggs and tofu case). “Featuring it on the display makes everyone aware of it, whereas the gourmet end cap is usually [stocked for] people who seek [a product] out or ask for it,” Merello said.

According to the coordinators, St. Agrestis's Phony Negroni is always the most popular option at the Coop in this category, but it's been selling especially briskly this month,

“It's insane how much people are buying,” Merello said. The brand makes three “cocktail dupes”: Phony Negroni, Phony Mezcal Negroni, and Amaro Falso, all of which the Coop carries. “I ordered four cases of each last week, three cases this week, and I'll probably have to order more,” said Henriksson, “And they're huge cases.”



“There’ll probably be a new drink trend in two years that people will make a non-alcoholic version of,” she added, “but people are really digging these now.”

The popularity of individual products does wax and wane, so the selection rotates according to demand, as well as the inevitable issue of space on the Coop’s packed shelves. “It’s a balance between the people who like their regular things and the people who always want to try new things,” said Merello. And the Coop is always responding to new trends and member requests too: sparkling hop waters are a recent addition that have gotten good feedback.

But the general trend is clear: alcohol alternatives are not just for Dry January, and they’re not going away any time soon. “It’s pretty unreal,” Merello said, “Even super major brands have non-alcoholic versions. They’ve seen the trend and they’re getting on board.”



Juliet Kleber is a writer, editor, and musician based in Bed-Stuy. She joined the Coop in 2021 and always comes home with too much cheese.

COOKING THE ETHNIC AISLE

March 19, 2024



By Rahima Nasa

When I was a kid in the nineties, grocery shopping always meant going to two stores. The first was our local supermarket chain, such as Pathmark or C-Town, for American staples like Kix cereal, boxed cake mix and Oreos, while the second was for ingredients like curry leaves, mustard oil and other essentials needed for a proper South Asian meal.

My family immigrated to the U.S. in the 1990s with a wave of Bangladeshi immigrants. We settled in Queens and eventually moved to the Bronx, where a Bengali enclave was already thriving in Parkchester. This meant that there was already a proper South Asian grocery store with aisles brimming with spices, sacks of basmati rice and jars of ghee. At the time these stores were the only places my family could find the ingredients they needed so easily and cheaply. But as a kid, I couldn't care less. I was more interested in the Capri-Suns and string cheese sticks that I saw my friends eating in school.

As I moved farther away from my community, I stopped taking my Bengali grocery store for granted. When I was in college I was homesick one day so I decided to cook one of my favorite childhood staples: chana masala. I got most of what I needed at my local Wegmans and then as I was searching for garam masala I encountered an aisle where all items seemed to be from other places: masa flour, soba noodles, pre-packaged curries, and fish sauce. The food was categorized by place instead of the type of ingredient it was. Usually this type of aisle is labeled as "international foods" or simply "ethnic food." It didn't make a lot of sense to me, but I loved it.



ILLUSTRATION BY DEBORAH TINT

Since my discovery as a college student, the ethnic food aisle quickly became my favorite part of my shopping trip. Not only because it was the only place to find ingredients that reminded me of home, but also because it was a place to discover new ingredients from other places. Kewpie mayo from Japan was an immediate hit.

The ethnic aisle started to appear in American grocery stores after World War II. Soldiers returning from countries like Italy, Germany and Japan wanted the foods they

had experienced while stationed abroad. Pasta eventually transitioned out of the aisle to dominate its own corner of the grocery store; now it seems that foods from mostly non-European countries dominate the ethnic aisle, and consumers have come to understand that. This is why brands like Brooklyn Delhi, which sells sauces inspired by Indian flavors, feel like they would have more success placing their products in this section of the store.

As I started to cook more of the foods I grew up with, the ethnic aisle started to feel more constraining. Why wasn't the grocery store organized like the one my family went to, where similar items were grouped together? Why weren't the cans of coconut milk next to the other canned items? Over the years critics like David Chang, owner of the Momofuku restaurant group, have pushed back on the ethnic aisle. Chang argues, it's the "last bastion of racism you can see in full daylight in retail America." I can see his point. Isolating products based on which country they're eaten in feels like another reminder of the fact that I'm different or not American enough because of what I eat.

When I became a member of the Coop in 2022, I was prepared to spend a lot of time in the ethnic aisle but was pleasantly surprised to find that there wasn't one. I don't have to go to two grocery stores to get what I need for dinner either. I can find curry leaves, bushels of rambutan, and lychee in the produce section. All the noodles (pasta and noodle-adjacent) are grouped together. I can find chutneys with the rest of the sauces.

The Coop doesn't treat the food I grew up with any differently than the boxed mac and cheese that lines its shelves. I'm just like every other shopper, and the Coop is unlike any other store.

Rahima Nasa enjoys writing for the Gazette because of all the members she's gotten to meet and because it allows her to learn about how the Coop works. When she's not writing for the Gazette, Rahima likes to experiment with new ingredients and is on a never-ending quest to make the perfect pie crust.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

March 19, 2024



BRING BACK CHEAPER ITEMS

To the editor:

I have been a member of the Coop since 2009, off and on (spending time in California, Texas and Colorado since then, made it hard to fulfill work requirements from thousands of miles away). I find myself often eschewing offerings at the Coop—mostly staples like flour, sugar and pasta—because I can find them cheaper at capitalist enterprises like Target. Coop members tend to be foodies, hippies or people looking for cheap food; I feel like the Coop is serving one and two better than three. Since I am currently unemployed, I slot into categories one and three (punk, not hippie, but hey). If I remember correctly, the Coop is an IGA member, and has access to products from Krasdale, the IGA's store brand. I, for one, would happily purchase generic, store-brand merchandise at low prices from the Coop, rather than patronizing another establishment for them, if they were available. And if I remember correctly, the Coop used to offer select Krasdale-branded goods, but no longer does.

I respectfully submit that the Coop should resume stocking Krasdale merchandise for staples such as flour, sugar, and possibly some other categories, to better serve the needs of their income-constrained members.

*Regards,
Greg Costikyan*

RICK'S PICKS (PICKLES)

Dear Coop:

Rick's Picks started by sourcing and manufacturing pickles in the Hudson Valley. As I recall this was a point of pride and part of the sales pitch by the company.

While the company is still based in Brooklyn, for the items that the Coop carries, these are now sourced and manufactured outside of the U.S. But you really have to look closely at the label to see the tiny print for country of origin. It is under the

much larger corporate location of Brooklyn.

We have since purchased McClure's Pickles instead. These are still made in the States.

*In cooperation,
Stewart Pravda*

RECENT DISCLOSURES RAISE ISSUES OF FINANCE CONTROLS

Dear fellow Coop members,

Two recent disclosures reported in the *Linewaiters' Gazette* lead me to wonder if the Coop should explore more formal financial decision-making.

At the May general meeting, General Manager Joe Holtz said he had decided to issue a \$100,000 "informal agricultural loan," according to the *Gazette*, "to a farm in financial need" who had approached the Coop.

At the November meeting, Holtz said he "personally makes the investment decisions" on \$7 million in Coop funds in consultation with a member, according to a *Gazette* report.

Joe Holtz is a deeply valued Coop leader and I very much appreciate his decades of service. Further, I do not take particular issue with either of the aforementioned decisions, about which I know little.

But I do not believe any single officer of the Coop, no matter how well regarded, should have the authority to make decisions impacting such quantities of money. In addition, I believe it would make more sense for decisions to be guided primarily by

financial policies set by members through some formal structure such as committee rather than by individual members selected by an officer personally.

I urge further discussion of these matters.

*In cooperation,
Ryan Tate*

AN INFORMED MEMBERSHIP

To the editors:

The Coop's direct democracy model requires an informed membership. People have limited time. They need to know the issues, and they need to know when important votes are happening. Critical to this are the sterling efforts of the editorial staff of the *Gazette* and the reminders emailed to the membership in the week before each GM.

Unfortunately, the system does not always work perfectly, leaving many members in the dark about important votes. Take, for example, the October 31 vote to reintroduce a partial mask mandate. This issue was debated at the September 26 GM. But the *Gazette's* report on the September GM was not published until November 7, a week *after* the Halloween vote on the new mask mandate. Nor do the monthly reminder emails always include information regarding upcoming votes in the text of the email. For the October 31 meeting, for example, the email included only a link to the agenda, which may be why some were surprised to find out that a two-day mask mandate had been reintroduced.

Coop members have strong views on many topics. Ensuring that members know when votes are on the agenda will surely increase participation in the GM and the quality of the Coop's democracy.

Julian Brod

Response from General Coordinator Ann Herpel: The General Meeting agenda is available on foodcoop.com up to 21 days prior to the General Meeting. The agenda is also promoted on social media shortly after it is published on our website. Members do not have to wait until the Coop sends an email to learn what's on the agenda.

TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY

Dear members,

“Come on, people now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now”

Chet Powers song lyric, 1967

On a recent weekend, I found no less than three people with clipboards outside the Coop, urging members to support BDS. When approached by one, I explained why I could not support this continuing divisiveness and finger-pointing, as neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians are without blame. Not to mention that if you want to call out countries that have harmed others, you need look no further than the United States. And as in the United States, where not all of us agree with government actions, not all Israelis agree with Israeli policy and not all Palestinians agree with Palestinian policy. Banning a particular product from the Coop may be affecting a small family business that doesn't agree with their government. Casting blame on one side or the other doesn't solve the problem.

I shared my past experience with a Dialogue Project workshop. People were asked

questions about their connections, however remote, to Arab and Israeli lands. Group discussions helped participants better understand one other.

I mentioned a recent virtual meeting of Standing Together, an organization combining Israelis and Palestinians who are working to foster peaceful communications. Israeli and Palestinian people shared their thoughts in a workshop joined by almost 2,000 people worldwide.

I urge people to make their own decisions about which Coop products to buy and learn about initiatives that promote peaceful communications, such as:

1. *Standing Together*, Israel
2. *Combatants for Peace*, Israel/Palestine
3. *The Parents Circle – Families Forum*, Israel/Palestine
4. *Women Wage Peace/Women of the Sun*, Israel/Palestine
5. *EcoPeace Middle East*, Israel/Jordan/Palestine
6. *Hand in Hand*, Israel
7. *Jerusalem Peacebuilders*, U.S.

*In cooperation,
Cynthia Blayer*

SIGN THE PETITION TO BOYCOTT ISRAELI PRODUCTS AT PSFC

To the editor:

On a recent Sunday (January 14, 2024) afternoon outside the Coop, I signed a petition in support of a boycott of Israeli products at our cooperative. It's bad enough by accident of birth my taxation aids the Israeli genocide in Gaza, but that my elective cooperation with a seemingly like-minded community also does is unacceptable and must be stopped immediately. I urge fellow members to join me in signing this petition by PSFC Members for Palestine, which is searchable online by that name.

Damien Neva

OUTSIDE THE COOP

Dear Coop:

This evening (January 11, 2024) as I went to enter the Coop to shop, I was swarmed by three individuals with clipboards and info about their cause relating to the Coop. This was in the area of the signposts numbered 1, 2 and 3 for immediate line waiters, closest to #1. I experienced being swarmed as disorienting and disconcerting. I also experienced these individuals as rude and belittling when they laughed at me for ignoring them and their cause. It wasn't like I was being approached in a friendly manner by one individual and given the option to engage or not. There were two petitioners to my left and one to my right, leaving me feeling encircled, and almost trapped.

I think there should be a Coop rule similar to ones at voting polling sites. Petitioners should be held to standing a certain number of feet away from entry and line waiting for the Coop. Engaging with petitioners should be an optional experience, not an in-your-face experience.

I felt like I was being harassed at entrance of the Coop, as opposed to being benignly

approached. Over the years I have experienced many petitioners in front of the Coop for various causes, or at the top of the block at Union & 7th Ave. This was the first time I felt threatened. The Coop has always felt like a safe space. This evening, it did not.

Barbara Bedick

THANK YOU

Dear Gazette:

We publicly thank the General Coordinators for their dedication, fortitude, and initiative in safeguarding the Coop. We 100% support the decision to remove the BDS discussion item from the November GM Agenda.

Anita Aboulafia

Ralph Friedman

Jill Friedman

Felicia Glucksman

Leonid Gorokhovsky

Asya Gorokhovsky

Bob Graziano

Sybil Graziano

Feotiniya Grechko

Allison Halpren

Fran Hawthorne

Elian Jeifez-Neiman

Maya Koenig

Joshua Kranz

Ben Krawitz

Corrine Lang
Harvey Lang
Constantine Kaniklidis
Sylvia Lowenthal
Diana Maislen
Ramon Maislen
Avishay Mazor
Barbara Mazor
Marjorie Ordene
Rodger Parsons
Saul D. Raw
Michael Rieman
Jesse Rosenfeld
Marion Stein
Nancy Spitalnick
Gerald I Weider

RESPONSE TO GAZETTE

Dear editors:

Happy New Year!

I was disheartened to see communications about BDS, especially after the terror attacks on Israel on October 7th. BDS as a movement is unfit for a community that embraces the background of all of its members. I joined the Coop after a particularly difficult time in my life and was in search of more community of like-minded people who are as food-obsessed as me. So seeing support for a movement that attempts to justify violence on a day when people were massacred because of their religion, is not aligned with the Coop's mission statement to "make the Coop welcoming and accessi-

ble to all.”

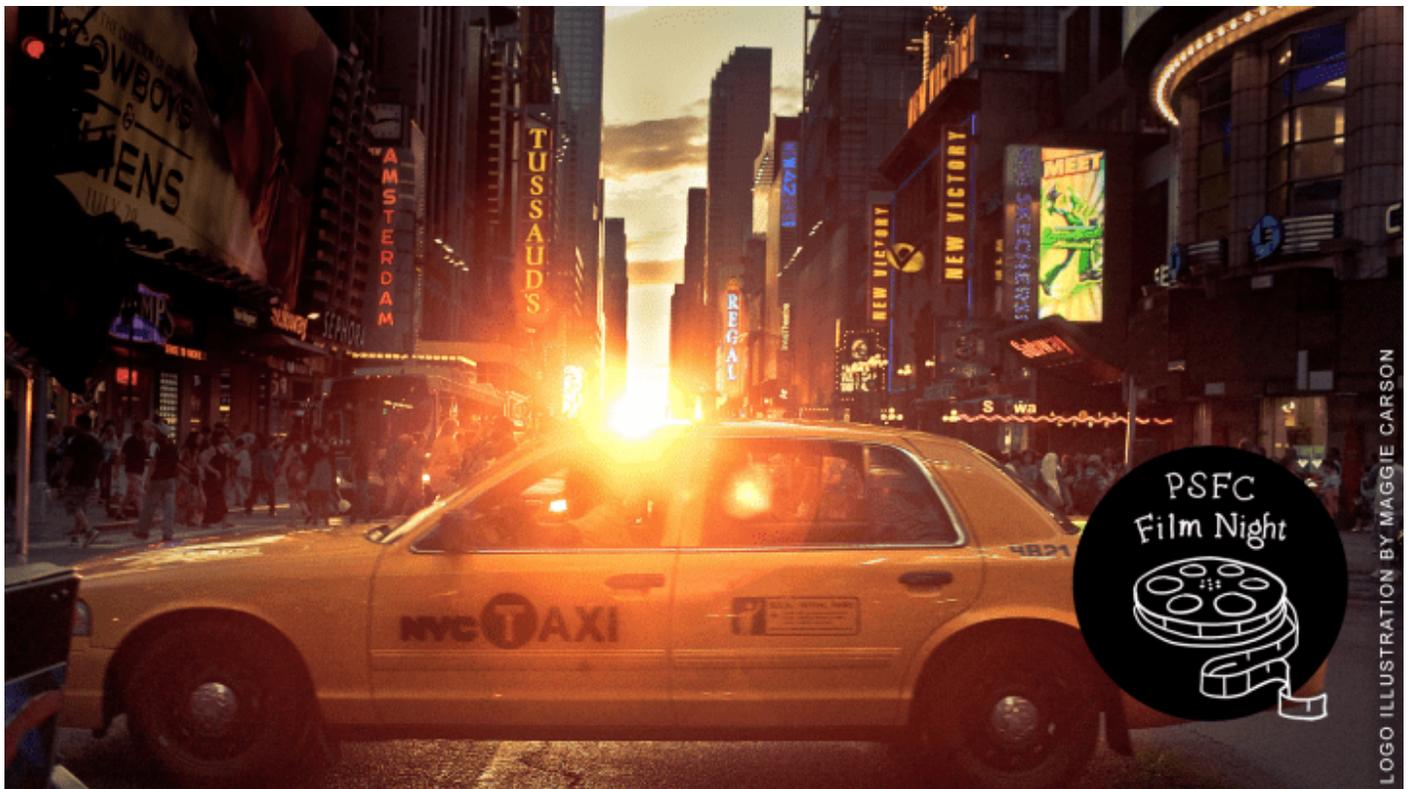
It is not appropriate for the *Gazette* to be publishing letters supporting the BDS movement if it does not represent all of the community members or for that policy to be considered for adoption.

Looking forward to seeing you in the Coop soon.

*Thank you for your time,
Rebecca Gladstone*

FILM NIGHT: DRIVERS WANTED

March 19, 2024



Every day for the past 67 years, 90-year-old cab driver Johnnie “Spider” Footman has shown up for work at one of New York City’s most eclectic communities—the taxi

garage across from the river from the United Nations. The garage is a kind of a refugee camp in the heart of New York, a city where drivers have come for protection from human rights abuses, racism and economic instability.

But to be a cabbie demands reserves of patience and persistence, in the face of long hours, disrespectful customers, blinding blizzards and a host of other challenges.

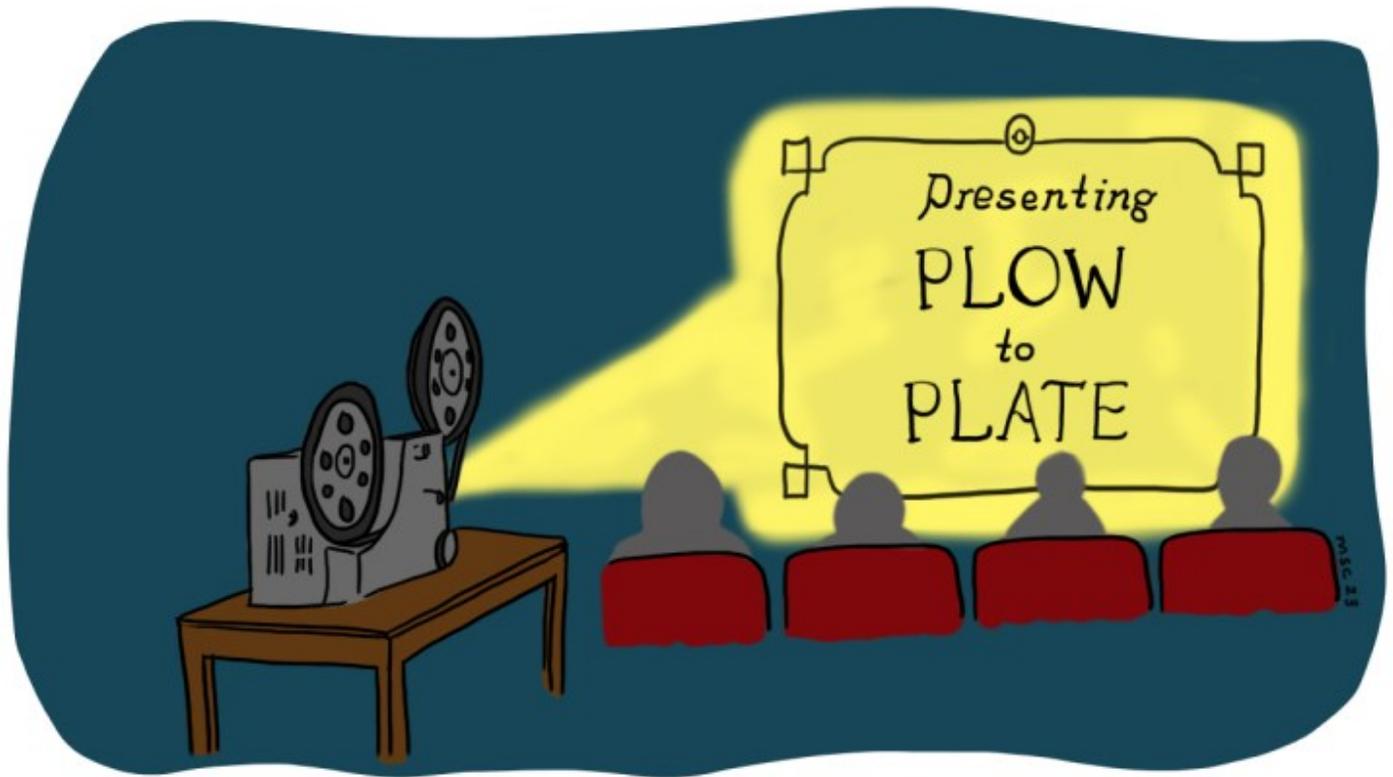
Filmmaker Joshua Z Weinstein directed the feature film *Menashe*, which was released by A24 and nominated for a Gotham Award for “Breakthrough Director,” as well as an Independent Spirit Award for “Best First Feature.” He has also directed the documentaries *Drivers Wanted*, *Flying On Engine*, and *I Beat Mike Tyson*. As a cinematographer he has lensed *Sell/Buy/Date*, *Elaine Stritch: Shoot Me* and *Bikini Moon*. Born in New York City, Joshua has been a Coop member on and off since 2008.

This documentary will be screened on this Zoom link on Thursday, February 8th at 7p.m. Director Joshua Z Weinstein will be present for a Q+A after the screening.

To be added to our email listserv for future screening announcements, please send a request to jlymiller@me.com

PLOW TO PLATE FILM SERIES: FROM FOOD TO FREEDOM

March 19, 2024



By Adam Rabiner

From Food to Freedom is written and directed by Nelson Campbell, son of Dr. T. Colin Campbell, father of the whole-food plant-based nutrition movement who conducted pioneering research on the links between animal protein and cancer. Forming the basis of his 2005 book *The China Study*, which he co-authored with his son, Dr. Campbell's research found that animal foods increase serum cholesterol, heart disease, and cancer rates. The meat industry and other powerful interests labeled him a maverick and a quack, hoping to discredit and silence him. The filmmaker believes this is still the case. In granting us permission to screen the film, he wrote, "I don't know if you are aware of this, but Facebook is censoring our film promotion. Facebook's largest source of ad revenue comes from the pharma industry, so their policy toward us is not surprising given their heavy-handed control of the information they allow on their platform."

“FACEBOOK IS CENSORING OUR FILM PROMOTION. FACEBOOK’S LARGEST SOURCE OF AD REVENUE COMES FROM THE PHARMA INDUSTRY, SO THEIR POLICY

TOWARD US IS NOT SURPRISING...”

NELSON CAMPBELL, DIRECTOR

From Food to Freedom is a highly entertaining but very serious, documentary that translates all the hard science and statistics into real-life stories. In this kind of vegan version of *The Real World*, Campbell recruits six individuals with type 2 diabetes (and their spouses) to spend ten days in a house in Greensboro, North Carolina, where every meal is plant-based. All participants are monitored and counseled, one-on-one and in group sessions, by a licensed physician. Their blood is sampled and scored at the beginning and end, while their glucose is continuously monitored throughout—an inverted version of *Supersize Me*, in which a month-long diet of nothing but McDonalds nearly killed filmmaker Morgan Spurlock.

The volunteers are not cherry-picked. They range from 18 to retirement age, and are not healthy. In addition to diabetes, many are overweight, have high cholesterol, triglycerides and blood pressure, suffer from sleep apnea, have trouble with mobility and are on multiple medications. Someone drove four hours to the house from out of state only to discover she had a broken arm. All are eager and positive, but none feel it will be easy. One is fond of telling his wife, “Rome was not built in a day...”

And yet, positive results are almost immediate. In group discussions, they enthusiastically describe how they feel better, have more energy, and appreciate the food—salads and vegetable-based versions of meatloaf, lasagna, macaroni and cheese and other familiar comfort foods. They are not just passive eaters but are welcomed into the kitchen to assist Campbell’s wife, Kim, a cookbook writer, and another chef, Fernando Peralto, with meal preparation.

At the end of the 10 days the eight individuals have collectively lost fifty-four pounds, good and bad cholesterol levels have universally dropped, blood pressures have improved and many have completely stopped or severely restricted their use of insulin

and other medications.

Of course, the real question is, can this awesome accomplishment achieved in a communal and supportive setting, translate into real, long-term change? *From Food to Freedom* does not shirk this vital inquiry. While six months later, people occasionally fell off the wagon for a Burger King onion ring or restaurant meal, most climbed right back on. Successful participants were supported by a spouse or benefited from friends and housemates.

Those who struggled were more isolated. One was hampered by her “meat and potatoes” husband who refused to eat much of what she cooked. Another lived alone and succumbed too often to her cravings for potato chips and soda. But she was still on the journey and trying.

From Food to Freedom alludes to the still-powerful forces in society that control the terms of the debate, for example the pharmaceutical industry with its highly effective marketing, public relations and advertising. The film, made during COVID, shows that most people who died from the virus had underlying pre-existing conditions and yet none of the advice offered by the experts—wear a mask, wash your hands, social distance—included a healthy plant-based diet.

Though the Campbells are not naïve they remain convinced that the truth will prevail. The movement in which they have played such an important part is growing by the day. Twenty years ago it was hard to find soy milk yet today there are supermarket sections dedicated to plant-based alternatives. *From Food to Freedom* and other similar films have companion websites, full of useful information as well as affiliated non-profit organizations promoting the cause of alternative food systems. In this, the Park Slope Food Coop and the Plow to Plate Food movie series play a small but important and proud part.

From Food to Freedom, *February 13, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.*

Screening link: <http://www.plowtoplatefilms.com/events/>

To be added to our mailing list for future screening announcements, please email a request to plowtoplate@mail.com.

Adam Rabiner lives in Ditmas Park with his wife Dina and two children, Elan and Ana.