

IFTAR MENUS—HOW DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES BREAK THEIR RAMADAN FASTS

April 9, 2024



By Leila Darabi

You don't have to be one of the world's nearly two billion Muslims to know that for observant followers of the faith, Ramadan marks a month of fasting, from sunrise to sunset. What non-Muslims may not realize is that seasonal traditions also include self-reflection, donating to charity, volunteering, and spending time with family—and that for many, breaking the fast each evening is a joyous, communal event.

For this issue, the *Linewriters' Gazette* ("Gazette") spoke with four New Yorkers from four different countries about what they prepare for *iftar*, the meal eaten after sunset during Ramadan.

A BANGLADESHI COOKING INSTRUCTOR PREPARES A FEAST

On a recent Sunday morning, Afsari Jahan rose before sunrise, and after a simple pre-dawn breakfast of a banana and some coffee, she began preparing a Bengali feast for the *Gazette* team to sample that afternoon, and for her son and grandchildren to enjoy that evening.

She started by preparing *haleem*, a stew thickened by slow cooking bulgur wheat. She then added meat and five kinds of lentils to the dish, resulting in a hearty, savory porridge that she garnished with fried shallots.



Cooking instructor Afsari Jahan prepares traditional Bengali cuisine

Alongside this main dish, Jahan cooked a special Ramadan version of *chana*, using black chickpeas—which are both higher in protein and fiber and easier to digest than white chickpeas. She then battered and fried slices of eggplant; made *pakora* (veggie fritters); fried some chicken rolls. Afterwards, she mixed a batter and cooked simple pancakes that could be used to scoop up the other dishes.

To accompany this spread, she fixed a platter of coarsely chopped ginger and soaked yellow chickpeas to aid in digestion, and a bowl of plain, puffed rice that could be sprinkled onto any dish for added texture. For dessert, she prepared two selections: fried, donut-like cookies, as well as crispy spirals of *jalebi* (a sort of funnel cake), doused in a sweet syrup.

Spending hours in the kitchen during Ramadan, surrounded by the aromas and temptations of food, no longer bother Jahan, a garment merchandizer turned food entrepreneur who has fasted for the holiday since the age of ten. On this day, she broke

her fast in the evening first with a medjool date (for the burst of sugar and calories) and a cantaloupe smoothie seasoned with ginger and lime.



A refreshing cantaloupe smoothie seasoned with ginger to aid in digestion. When not cooking for her own family, Jahan shares her culinary skills through a plethora of businesses and hobbies. She teaches cooking out of her home through League of Kitchens, a collective of immigrant women who offer culinary classes showcasing food from their homelands; she caters full meals and creates edible fruit bouquets and arrangements for events; she teaches edible design and food business skills; and she is a member of a co-op of small food business owners; and she recently began another part-time job as a second-grade teaching assistant at a local school.

Whereas iftar in Bangladesh meant a large family gathering, Jahan said she typically breaks her fast on her own in Brooklyn, or sometimes brings food to the Moroccan employee and Yemeni proprietors of her corner bodega who, like her, are often still working when the sun sets.

“In all the Muslim countries, they adjust to the evening prayer time. But here it’s not possible.”

AN IVORIAN FATHER SHARES FAMILY TRADITIONS WITH HIS SON

A bit further north in Brooklyn, Bobo Diallo was pleased when his 14-year-old son Ismael expressed interest in joining him in observing Ramadan this year. Originally from Cote D’Ivoire, Diallo has fond memories of the communal nature of Ramadan during his childhood.

“It’s a completely different experience,” he said of celebrating Ramadan in a Muslim--majority country. “Growing up, [I had] memories of Eid with my parents, waking up before morning prayer to eat. So, the house is full and everything is lively...You wake up and then you do the prayer, then most of the kids go back to sleep. In the evening, during the break of fast, it’s very festive.”



Bobo Diallo prepares fish to break the Ramadan fast



Bobo Diallo explains preparation of iftar to his son Ismael



Typical Ivorian dinner of fish and alloco (sweet plantains)



Dèguè, a sweet yogurt-based couscous porridge enjoyed across West Africa
At his son's request, on a recent evening, Diallo prepared a traditional Ivorian meal of fish with sweet fried plantains, or *allico*. For dessert, he made *dèguè*, a yogurt-based couscous porridge mixed with vanilla, sugar and raisins. "It's very, very delicious," he said as he enthusiastically listed off the ingredients. "I love it. I can eat bowls and bowls of it during Ramadan."

Like Jahan, Diallo notes that Ramadan takes on a far more festive feel in his home country. "Of course, being here [in the US] you don't have that. It's just me and my little family."

Beyond fasting and family iftar gatherings, Diallo speaks reverently of other aspects of Ramadan. "For me, it's really a time of reflection. It's a time when you feel you are really living your faith... It's a time to be even more generous than you are [the rest of the year], the sense of community, helping people in need, doing some charity work, feeding the poor."

A SENEGALESE COOP STAFF MEMBER RETURNS HOME FOR THE HOLIDAY

In search of the same sense of community and charity, Coop staff member Ibou Diallo traveled home to his native Senegal this Ramadan.

“I feel at home,” he said during a WhatsApp call one recent afternoon in New York (evening in Dakar). He added, “[Iftar] is a tradition that people enjoy, not only eating a meal but sharing time with loved ones.” Like Bobo Diallo (no relation), Ibou Diallo contrasted a warm West African Ramadan with a more isolating experience in New York.

“Here I feel good—I look forward to a beautiful evening. You don’t eat alone,” he said. “In Brooklyn it’s totally different. I was by myself. I was all alone, I had to take care of myself and get everything myself in addition to working at the Coop.”



Ibou Diallo's Senegalese *iftar*. Photograph by Ibou Diallo

In contrast, Diallo described a recent evening in Senegal when he found himself on a bus when the sun set, and another passenger produced a bag of dates and passed them around, sharing with fellow commuters and a police officer—a scene Diallo could never imagine transpiring in Brooklyn.

In Senegal, he noted, female family members spend the day preparing the evening meal. Business slows down as it is universally understood that people are fasting and have lower energy. Students from local religious schools go door to door in the morning and receive donations of food to later break their fast.

Growing up, Diallo recounted, his mother would prepare a huge pot of corn or millet porridge. “My mother was one of those who would feed 50 people,” he said. “Different households came together.”

A NEW YORKER TAKES A GRAB-AND-GO APPROACH TO IFTAR

Back in New York, Coop Membership Coordinator Jana Cunningham describes Ramadan as: “Some of my best times of year to focus, an opportunity to slow down and focus in a way that life doesn’t always allow.”

She tries to visit with family during Ramadan, watch fewer videos, and generally be as present as possible.

“Being a New Yorker, the idea is that if you don’t have five jobs and 20 hobbies, you’re a lazy bum,” she jokes.

Cunningham, who grew up in Harlem and the Bronx, told the *Gazette* in a previous profile that she discovered Islam through an older sibling and converted as a teenager.

On a typical evening during Ramadan, she gets off work at the Coop around 5:30 p.m., then heads to one of many classes she takes or teaches: tai chi, yoga, or salsa. She might break her fast with dates, like so many other Muslims around the world. After that, she said, her iftar menu mirrors what she eats the rest of the year.

“For me, dinner last night was broiled salmon and broccoli with cauliflower, and two nights before it was asparagus with cauliflower and sauteed mushrooms.”

LONGING FOR COMMUNITY

Though their iftar menus varied, each of the four people the *Gazette* spoke with echoed similar sentiments: that observing Ramadan can be an isolating experience (particularly in a Western city like New York), and that the season is a time to focus on community.

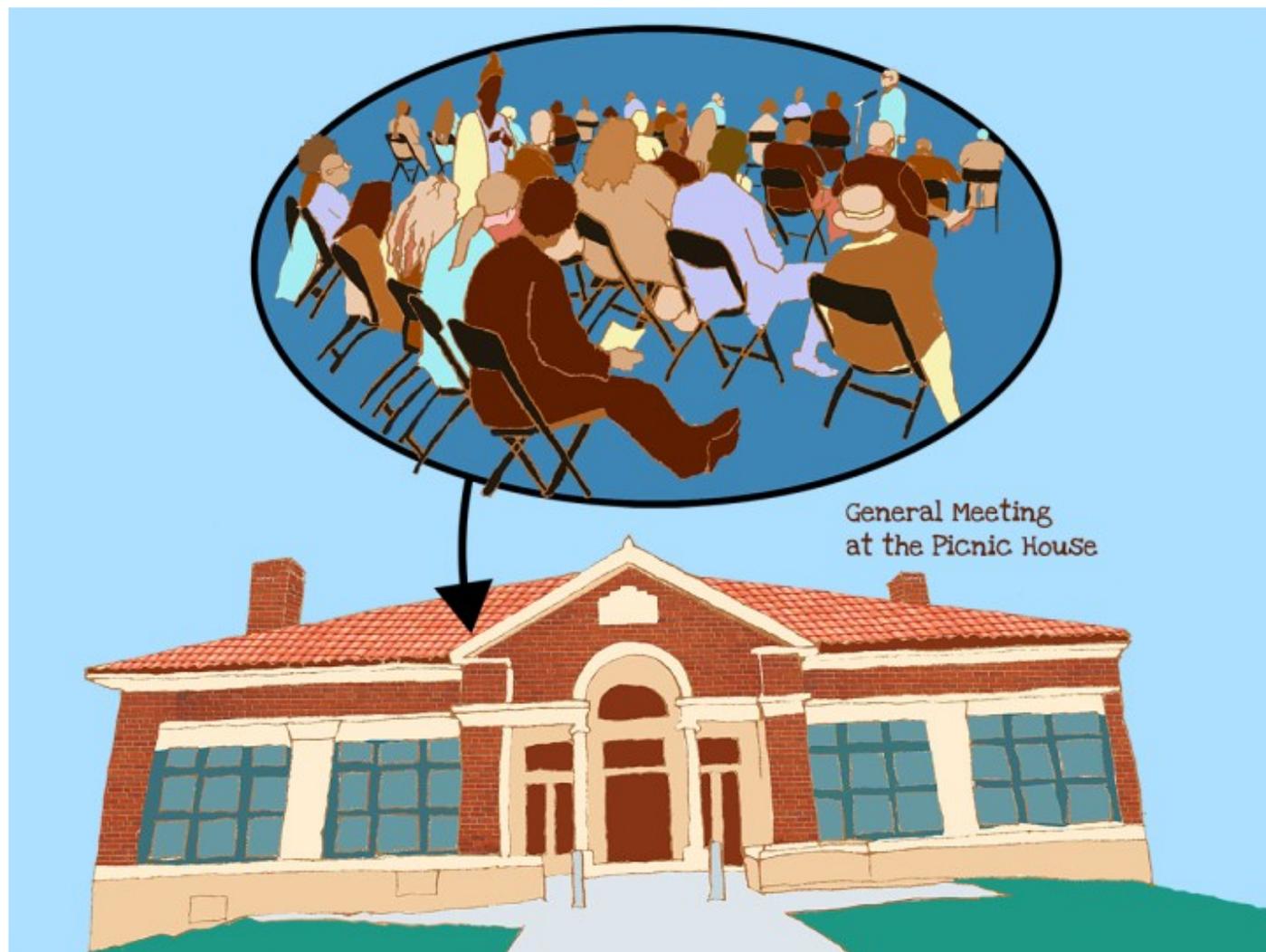
As Cunningham put it, remembering fondly traveling to Senegal and experiencing Ramadan outside of the U.S. in a completely new light: “It was a whole month of people

being courteous, conscious, and kind.”

Leila Darabi joined the Gazette as a reporter in 2016. She is the cohost of the feminist TV podcast Cringewatchers and shares photos of the things she cooks with Coop ingredients via @persian_ish on Instagram.

TWISTS AND TURNS OF ROBERT’S RULES AT THE FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

April 9, 2024



By Jess Powers

The General Meeting (GM) held its February 27 gathering in person at ShapeShifter Labs, a performance space diagonally across the street from the Park Slope Food Coop. Roughly 132 members attended that rainy evening.

OPEN FORUM POLITICALLY CHARGED BUT RESPECTFUL

The Open Forum began with questions about securing a larger meeting space, so the Coop can hold a vote on a proposal to boycott Israeli goods. Past votes drew large crowds and led to a rules change requiring a supermajority for boycotts. The current venue doesn't have sufficient capacity to house the vote.

FLEX WORKER CAROL WALD'S REMARKS ELICITED BOTH APPLAUSE AND A REMINDER FROM CHAIR COMMITTEE MEMBER IMANI Q'RYN THAT APPLAUSE AND BOOS ARE DISCOURAGED AT THE MEETING.

Carol Wald, a flex worker, acknowledged strong feelings on the subject as "a proud Jew, whose grandfather and uncle were killed in Auschwitz. The rage and grief and trauma that propels so many to work against the boycott," she said, "[is what] compels me to work with Palestinian people against genocide." She called for mutual respect as debate continues. Her remarks elicited both applause and a reminder from Chair Committee member Imani Q'ryn that applause and boos are discouraged at the meeting.

Coop member Sophie Glickman spoke of a strategic boycott as the civilian death toll in Gaza exceeds 30,000, many of the victims women and children. She continued that Israel is using starvation as a tactic—a war crime—and that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has openly stated his opposition to Palestinian statehood. She did not wish to "[make] fellow Jewish Coop members uncomfortable" but inquired about the location for the vote.

Outspoken Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) critic, Jesse Rosenfeld said that Coop members who support Palestine support BDS, and that BDS supports violence. He stated that the BDS website itself describes “armed resistance” and “any action, whether one considers it legally or ethically justifiable.” [Note: This reporter’s review and fact check of the BDS website did not find these words; rather, “non-violence” and opposition to “discrimination, including anti-Semitism.”]

Rosenfeld continued, “October 7, rape, infanticide... when will the Chair Committee clamp down [against BDS]?” His comments were also met by applause—and another reminder from Chair Committee member Q’ryn about applause and boos.

Brian Shuman, a food processor, expressed appreciation for Carol Wald (who spoke earlier), even though he disagreed with her position. He supports Anera (American Near East Refugee Aid), which provides immediate emergency aid and he “opposes BDS, which does not acknowledge Israel’s right to exist and is anti-Semitic.”

In response, someone in the audience called a point of order, asking whether clarification can be made if a point made is based on fact or opinion.

GENERAL COORDINATOR UPDATES ON SPACE FOR BDS VOTE, CHILDCARE AND FLYERS IN THE STAIRWELL

Ann Herpel provided updates as one of five General Coordinators. Regarding the larger space for a BDS vote, “we are making progress,” she said. The Coop is negotiating with a venue, and although an agreement isn’t finalized, “it looks promising... hopeful,” she continued.

“CHILDCARE WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO THE COOP,” ANN HERPEL ANNOUNCED. THOSE INVOLVED HAD BEEN WAITING TO HEAR BACK FROM A FINAL INSURANCE BROKER AND WERE UNSUCCESSFUL IN SECURING COVERAGE.

“Childcare will not be returning to the Coop,” Herpel announced. Those involved had been waiting to hear back from a final insurance broker and were unsuccessful in securing coverage. The “landscape around insurance has changed dramatically,” she continued, and “would now require a license to operate [childcare].” The Coop will repurpose the room for operational needs.

In another shift from pre-pandemic times, the stairwell leading up to the office used to be covered in flyers announcing things like shows, rooms for rent and kombucha SCOBYs to share. That practice is not going to return, Herpel declared. The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) and New York State Insurance Fund (NYSIF—which the Coop gets inspected by) declared that fire exits have to be “unobstructed.”

Herpel is working with the staff liaison to the *Gazette* to create a digital listing for community events, things for sale or trade, etc.

TREASURER’S REPORT

General Coordinator Joe Holtz presented the preliminary 52-week Financial Statement, provided online with the agenda for the GM. He explained that the financial statement needs to be audited, and there are usually not many changes.

ONE OF THE “EXTRAORDINARY THINGS” ABOUT THE COOP, GENERAL COORDINATOR JOE HOLTZ EFFUSED, IS THAT WE HAD A COMPLETE INVENTORY TURNOVER OF 62 TIMES THIS YEAR. PLENTY OF STORES HAVE TURNS OF 14 TIMES A YEAR.

One of the “extraordinary things” about the Coop, Holtz effused, is that we had a complete inventory turnover of 62 times this year, exceeding the year prior. Plenty of stores, he continued, have turns of 14 times a year. “Our dried mangos are less hard,” he mused.

REPORT ON NEW LABELS AND FUTURE NCG SAVINGS

General Coordinator Joe Szladek explained that new electronic shelf labels appearing in the produce aisles (and soon to spread throughout the store) will provide more accuracy in pricing, as prices change often. This is due to purchasing from a vendor at a different wholesale price or when United Natural Foods, Inc. (UNFI) has a deal on some items.

Szladek continued that he hopes the electronic shelf labels will save a few hours a day of staff time daily by not having to reprint and post new labels. He also expects the Coop to implement a National Cooperative Grocer program called Coop Deals after the deployment of electronic shelf labels is complete throughout the store. With Coop Deals, members will see savings on particular items of 20-30% off every two weeks, from Kettle brand potato chips to yogurt. Currently, staff are “too busy to handle all the labels” in order to comply with requirements NCG has set, but electronic shelf labels will solve some of those issues. Additionally, utilizing NCG resources would save staff time previously spent negotiating prices.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE PRESENTS REVISED RULES

Deb Magocsi, Helen Koh, and Grace Protos from the Dispute Resolution Committee presented the sole proposal on the agenda, “Revisions to the Procedures that Govern the Coop’s Disciplinary Process.”

Magocsi explained that the original rules were written in 2005, revised in 2012, and again in 2018. The nature of disputes has changed and committee members have “seen many opportunities to make the process better,” she continued. She described the process as unnecessarily adversarial and legalistic, and the intent of the new rules to be “more reflective of a cooperative institution.”

DEB MAGOCSI FROM THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE DESCRIBED THE HEARING PROCESS AS LONG, “ARDUOUS AND PAINFUL FOR EVERYONE,” “HUMILI-

ATING FOR THE ACCUSED,” AND SHARED THAT THE “HEARING GROUP FELT IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME AND ENERGY.”

The disciplinary process involves the Dispute Resolution Committee, which investigates complaints and recommends actions; the Hearing Administration Committee, which organizes and administers hearings; and the Hearing Officer Committee, which runs hearings. In summary, when the DRC receives a report of member misconduct, it assigns a member to investigate, and the full committee decides by consensus how to respond, typically a warning letter—but potentially the maximum penalty: being asked to resign. See also: [How the Dispute Resolution Process at the Coop Works](#); [Inside the Coop Hearing Process](#); and [Coop Member Expelled After Repeated Mask Wearing Violations](#).

The goal, Magocsi explained, is to use “more accessible language,” to have a “clearer definition of member misconduct,” and to recommend “mediation as the first option” thereby “[avoiding] hearings and judicial style process.” Hearings would still be available to members wishing to appeal serious DRC decisions, but the rule change would mean instead of the hearing group, three members of the HOC would determine whether the misconduct took place, rather than Coop members selected at random.

Magocsi described the hearing process as long (up to five hours), “arduous and painful for everyone,” “humiliating for the accused,” and shared that the “hearing group felt it was a waste of time and energy.”

Jesse Rosenfeld then proposed an amendment to “various ‘-isms’” in Article III sec D Part 6, which reads: “Racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, discriminatory, or other harmful conduct.” He said that “harmful conduct is a good start” but urged the members to “add to it” after the “Trump administration normalized a lot of hatred.” Specifically, he asked to add: “xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia.”

Member Abdi, who is Muslim and Somali, countered that he “[feels] protected by the

amendment as is.” Others chimed in for or against. A vote on the amendment was held and the “nays” had it.

The meeting then returned to discussion of the proposal of the Committee. George, a floor monitor, argued that we “need a process that allows more informed, deliberative decision-making.”

There was a move to table the vote, followed by a Robert’s Rules check. (Robert’s Rules of Order are the parliamentary procedures used by many voluntary organizations for governance of meetings.)

A point of information was made and Koh explained that the agenda item was presented for discussion at the previous meeting. A vote to table was held, and the “nays” had it again. Discussion continued on the proposal.

David Moss of the Chair Committee argued that it’s a “good proposal and there’s no f—ing way to get a group of people to read 20-page documents before they come to the meeting.” Member Jim concurred that there are “a lot of holes in the democratic process overall,” but he believed that it’s important to be fair to those who invested time in the agenda item. “In a democracy,” he continued, “it’s on us to be informed and to come to the meeting prepared. As we move forward, there are a lot of discussions to be had about procedures.” Dan agreed and reminded the room of the process already in place: Vote on the item tonight, propose an amendment if there are any issues, and resolve those later.

In the end, 115 voted in favor of the new guidelines and five opposed. The Coop board accepted the advice of the members and the meeting was adjourned.

Jess Powers works in emergency management and enjoys adventures in nature and cooking. She’s on IG @foodandfury.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE CHEESE CASE

April 9, 2024



By Dan Bergsagel

OK, so tell me: Why did you really join the Coop? Was it because you believed in member-owned businesses? Was it because you wanted to feel truly part of your community? Did you want to support the cooperative movement? Or was it the cheese?

If it's the latter: You're not alone. We *all* love the cheese. While the cheese itself is important, a *Gazette* article providing news of imminent repairs to the refrigerated cheese storage case in the basement would probably seem less noteworthy. However, today's story of the humble cheese case is the perfect foil for many wider aspects of the Coop: prioritizing quality, long-term investment, a focus on sustainability, utiliz-

ing unique member skills and—of course—providing a healthy serving of controversy.

CHEESE HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE COOP'S OFFERING. IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE COOP, IT WAS ONE OF THE KEY ITEMS THAT MEMBERS COULD EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS ON.

According to Coop General Manager Joe Holtz, cheese has always been an important part of the Coop's offering. In the first years of the Coop, it was one of the key items—along with better cooking oil and soy sauce—that members could experience significant savings on. Then, as now, cheese was an item that conventional stores felt they could make extra profit on, and an item which the Coop's standard markup policy made comparatively affordable.

Holtz purports that the Coop is "operating on a much higher cheese plane" today than it was at the Coop's founding. This may be reflected in the cheese varieties available, but not in its level of service. Did you know that the Coop used to have a cheese counter? Most Coop members don't.



The cheese case in its former location on the ground floor, next to the storied cheese counter. From the PSFC Archive.

In 1980 the Coop purchased its first building—the middle of the three adjacent buildings that make up the Coop today, which ranges from the freezer aisle to the bulk aisle. In 1979, a year before the Coop bought the building, the shopping floor moved from the second level to the first. In this new store configuration, the cheese counter became the first stop that members would make on arrival.

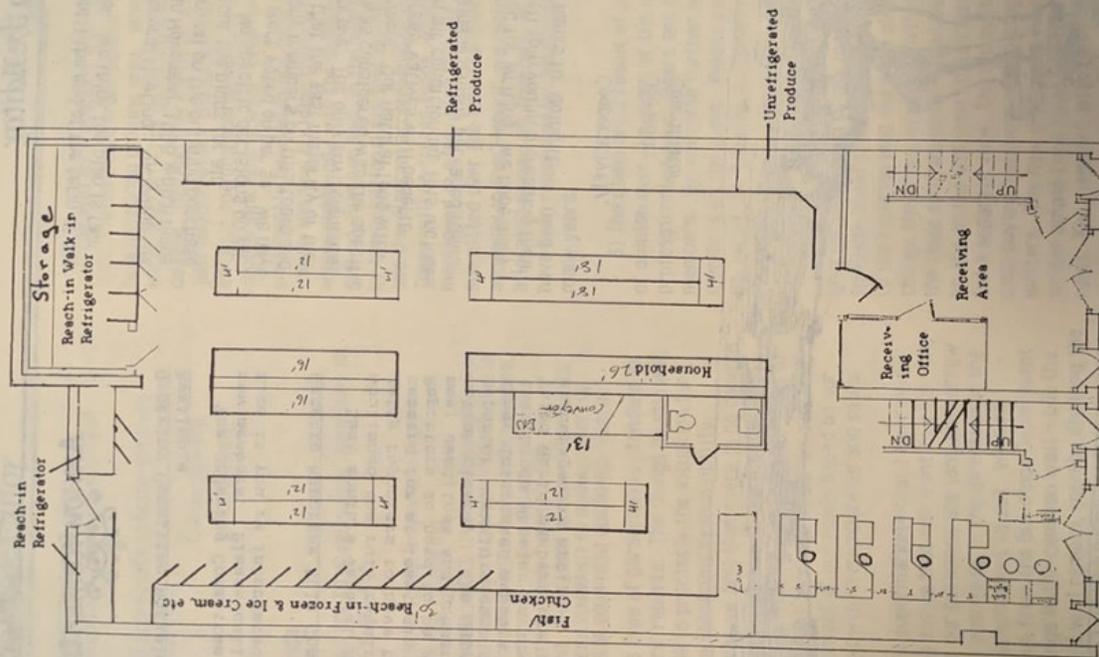
Members would pause on entry, discuss the cheeses available with the cheese workers, place their cheese order, and then begin the rest of their shopping. While the member shopped, the cheese workers would diligently prepare their custom cheese order. Finally, the member would pick up their cheese parcel on their way to the checkout.

AS PART OF A 1991 LAYOUT, THE STAFF REALIZED THAT TO BEST UTILIZE THE SPACE ON THE SHOPPING FLOOR, THE LARGE CASE HOLDING BIG BLOCKS OF CHEESE SHOULD BE MOVED TO THE BASEMENT, AND THE CHEESE COUNTER ABOLISHED.

So, what happened? In 1991, over a decade after the Coop expanded from the second floor to the entire first building, it also took over the adjacent building to its west. This expansion doubled the shopping area and changed the way the Coop viewed itself. Holtz described it as “part of becoming a one-stop shopping experience. We needed to cover as many lines as possible, and needed to provide as much food as possible.”

As part of this 1991 layout (see image below), the staff realized that to best utilize the space on the shopping floor, the large case holding big blocks of cheese should be moved to the basement, and the cheese counter abolished—to be replaced instead by an unstaffed display case for pre-cut cheese.

Tentative Store Layout



The proposed expanded store layout (from the Linewaiters' Gazette Archive, Volume K, No 1 - January 11, 1990). From the PSFC Archive.

The archives revealed many heated topics at the time: boycotts of food from Nicaragua and Chile, and a discussion on whether the new, larger Coop should enjoy air conditioning. However, in examining the archives, concerns over the depth of the cheese counter controversy grew—rather than narrowed—based on a suspicious gap in the archive for the year in question of the cheese counter's removal: 1991. There was only one *Gazette* edition available between December 27, 1990 and November 28, 1991. In the preceding and following years, nearly every edition of the bi-weekly *Gazette* was available for review. Suspicious, no?

CHANGE IS NEVER EASY, AND MEMBERS FELT THE LOSS OF THE CHEESE COUN-

TER KEENLY AT THE TIME. COOP GENERAL MANAGER JOE HOLTZ REPORTED THAT MEMBERS AND STAFF TALKED ABOUT THE CHEESE COUNTER FOR YEARS.

Change is never easy, and members felt the loss of the cheese counter keenly at the time. Holtz reported that members and staff talked about the cheese counter for years, and he recommended reviewing old editions of the *Gazette* to illustrate the strong feelings the membership held on the matter. The Center for Brooklyn History (which requires an appointment) holds the *Linewaiters' Gazette's* archive. This archive includes the equivalent of cheese counter requiems during that period, in the form of articles by *Gazette* reporters and letters to the editor.

While this potential cheese censorship was extensive, it wasn't perfect. The available *Gazette* records give us two insights into the status of the cheese counter at the time: The first is a letter submitted to a regular column, "Minnie O. La Tangelo Tells All," in the March 8, 1990, edition, nearly a year before the relocation of the cheese case to the basement. An anonymous member writes: "Dear Minnie, Maybe you could explain to me (or all of us at the Coop) why there are so many people with an attitude problem working in the cheese area?" Does this letter hint at ulterior motives for the removal of the cheese counter? The plot thickens.

CONTRARY TO SOME MEMBER CONSPIRACY THEORIES, THE COOP PROBABLY REMOVED THE CHEESE COUNTER TO BETTER MAXIMIZE ITS USE OF SPACE, AND THE MISSING ARCHIVE EDITIONS OF THE *GAZETTE* ARE LIKELY RELATED TO DISTURBANCES AT THE COOP DURING THE BIG MOVE.

The second relevant piece from the archives is an article from May 30, 1991, the sole edition available within that lost year in the archives. Titled "The Cheese Counter Crusade," it's written by Arlene Krebs—who identifies as both a cheese worker and cheese shopper. The article complains that the relocation of the cheese counter and

cheese case happened without consultation, and that it reduced contact between Coop members. Some excerpts from Krebs' piece: "Do you want your cheese cut in the basement among the boxes?", "We need to be able to talk to the people who are cutting our cheese." "How foolish. Just goes to show that many are unaware of what the cheese workers do."

More than 30 years later, the cheese counter controversy has blown over. Contrary to some member conspiracy theories, the Coop probably removed the cheese counter to better maximize its use of space, and the missing archive editions of the *Gazette* are likely related to disturbances at the Coop during the big move.

However, amazingly, that same cheese case lives on. Lowered through a temporary hole in the floor during building works in 1991, the trusty 45-year-old cheese case continues to hum away, entombed in the basement next to the cheese- and meat-processing area.



The cheese case cooling coils. Photography by Michael Berman.

THE COOP LOOKS AFTER ALL ITS FRIDGES WELL: THE BUILT-IN MILK REFRIGERATOR WAS ORIGINALLY INSTALLED 33 YEARS AGO, AND THE CHEESE DISPLAY CABINET ON THE SHOPPING FLOOR IS 23 YEARS OLD.

To keep the Coop's cheeses cool and moist, the case uses old-fashioned cooling coils located at the top of the fridge, instead of the blowers that circulate cool air in conventional refrigerators. The fast movement of blown air in conventional refrigerators can dry out products, whereas the air cooled by the coils gently falls to the bottom of the case, maintaining humidity while lowering the temperature.

The age of the case is notable, if not entirely out of character for the Coop. The Coop looks after all its fridges well: The built-in milk refrigerator was originally installed 33 years ago, and the cheese display cabinet on the shopping floor is 23 years old. This longevity can be attributed to long-term thinking that values purchasing long-lasting, high-quality equipment over low-quality, stop-gap equipment. This approach limits the environmental impact of disposing of unwanted equipment, and it avoids the environmental impact of procuring new equipment.



Cheese workers on the cheese shift in the basement. Photography by Michael Ber-
man.

However, even high-quality equipment degrades, and over decades of use, the sliding glass doors of the cheese case have required particular attention. In the past, the glass panels themselves have been repaired, but now the plastic slider components that sit in the tracks that the doors slide in have broken.

Fortunately, as ever, the Coop can call on its multitalented members to help. Enter sculptor and furniture designer Michal Cihlar. Cihlar will make a negative mold of the broken components and will use this mold to cast a polyurethane machining resin replacement. Crystal Goldenstein, the Coop staff member who oversees repairs and maintenance and keeps the building ticking, has requested that the restoration stay as true to the original design as possible, so even the use of a color-matching resin is planned to keep the 1970s appearance.



A cheese worker preparing cheese. Photography by Michael Berman.

The cheese case persists today in large part due to the careful attention of members like Michal Cihlar. The current case repair work is in the planning stage, and the Coop expects it to be done later this year. While this repair may be just the latest stage in the Coop's love affair with cheese, for our repair hero, Michal Cihlar, it is a different story: Until recently, he didn't even eat dairy. He notes that, unlike the Coop, his "journey with cheese has only just begun."

Dan Bergsagel is a structural engineer from London. He likes to talk about the unexpected things hiding in plain sight.

WHERE THE HECK DO WE PUT THIS STUFF? STORAGE IS AN ONGOING CHALLENGE

April 9, 2024



By Walecia Konrad

Making the most of the limited storage space at the Park Slope Food Coop is a science, an art and—these days—a complete obsession.

As most members know, the Coop prides itself on unusually fast turnover of inventory—many times higher than traditional grocery stores. It's a good thing inventory moves fast, because there is limited space to store all the produce and other goods that the Coop sells. Coop coordinators are experts at ordering just the right amount of stuff to store in the basement for just the right amount of time before storage space becomes nonexistent.

But it's a delicate art. There are times when holiday products, bumper crops from favorite suppliers or close-out deals just too good to pass up turn into extra palettes and U-boats full of stuff waiting to be sold. On top of that, staffers are grappling with life after the height of the pandemic and shutdowns.

THERE'S A REASON WHY STORAGE IS A UNIQUE PROBLEM FOR THE COOP: THE SELLING SPACE IS SMALL—ONLY 6,000 SQUARE FEET. HOWEVER, ANNUAL SALES ARE \$9,000 PER SQUARE FOOT, WELL ABOVE MOST GROCERY STORES.

Storage was already very tight before the pandemic, explained General Coordinator Joe Szladek, "but now with all the changes we've made, there's a lot more to deal with as we try to get back to normal."

A DIFFERENT KIND OF STORE—AND STORAGE

There's a reason why storage is a unique problem for the Coop: The selling space is small—only 6,000 square feet, Szladek explained. However, annual sales are \$9,000 per square foot, well above most grocery stores.

Many traditional grocery stores, with more square footage and shelf space than the Coop, stock most of their goods directly from the truck onto the shelves, eliminating the need for paid staff to move the goods from a storage space onto the shelves. This is especially true with non-perishables.

"[The Coop's] member labor means we can take advantage of the storage space we do have, so we can keep our smaller store stocked fast enough to meet shoppers' needs," explained Szladek.

DURING THE PANDEMIC, THE COOP BOUGHT A LARGE MACHINE CALLED A HOP-

PER THAT BAGS BULK ITEMS SUCH AS RICE, BEANS, AND GRAINS—PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING THAT SHOPPERS USED TO FIND IN THE SCOOP BINS ON THE FLOOR OF THE BULK AISLE.

Therein lies the puzzle: how to make the most of the storage space we do have in an organized efficient manner?

A NEW SPACE HOG: THE HOPPER

The biggest storage challenge the Coop has been facing in the past few months basically boils down to rice and beans.

During the pandemic, the Coop bought a large machine called a hopper that bags bulk items such as rice, beans and grains—pretty much everything that shoppers used to find in the scoop bins on the floor of the bulk aisle.

This change to some prepackaged bulk definitely cuts down on crowding in the bulk aisle—a huge priority during the pandemic. As a result, shoppers now simply grab a prepacked bag of these items out of the boxes along the floor and keep moving.

The bins with pour spouts holding granola, nuts and other bulk items above the pre-packed items are still self-serve.

Today, as shopping returns to normal at the Coop, many members appreciate the convenience of not having to scoop and bag the prepackaged items themselves. (Although that hasn't stopped some members from complaining that the pre-filled bags aren't the right size for their needs.)

Until the beginning of this year, the very large, tall and heavy hopper was housed and operated in the former childcare room. That made sense, since childcare had been suspended during the pandemic. It was a relatively spacious place for staffers to work

on the machine and there was enough room to stack the giant bags of rice, beans and other items, as well as the boxes of plastic bags and twist ties used to package bulk goods.

Now, post-pandemic, members and staffers are looking to reclaim the former child-care space.

COORDINATORS ANNOUNCED AT THE FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING THAT CHILD-CARE WILL NOT RETURN. IT PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO GET LIABILITY INSURANCE BECAUSE THE COOP WOULD HAVE HAD TO SECURE A LICENSE TO OPERATE A CHILD-CARE FACILITY.

So the coordinators decided to move the hopper to the basement. Staffers needed to find an area large and well-ventilated enough to safely operate the hopper, with enough room for the supplies and bagged bulk items. The answer was a relatively roomy corner near the freezer that already had an air vent.

But the move wasn't simple, said General Coordinator Elinoar Astrinsky. It entailed adding power, threading the hopper air hose through the current venting system to the air compressor outside the Coop, improving the lighting, installing new water pipes and redoing the floors so they are easy to clean and mop.

So far, members and staffers are operating the hopper just fine, Astrinsky reported. She did add that shift workers are moving a bit more slowly, though, as they get used to the new digs, and many miss the windows and high ceilings of the former childcare room.

The move freed up the childcare room, but—disappointing for many members—coordinators announced at the February General Meeting (GM) that childcare will not return. It proved impossible to get liability insurance because the Coop would have had to se-

cure a license to operate a childcare facility, explained General Coordinator Ann Herpel.

EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY

Coop staffers are great at taking advantage of any nook, cranny or corner in the Coop to store everything from pallets of Passover matzo, to dish towels, to endless cartons of craft beer.

In late January, housewares were dominating the upstairs meeting room, including glassware, kitchen gadgets, dishtowels and candles. Those items have since been moved to the former childcare room. “Now we can have staff and member meetings upstairs again,” said Szladek.

STAFFERS ARE CONSTANTLY ADAPTING AND INSTALLING CUSTOM-DESIGNED SHELVES, MOVING BOXES AND CARTONS OF MERCHANDISE FROM ONE AISLE TO ANOTHER, AND MONITORING THE SURPLUS ITEMS STACKED ON U-BOATS.

Elsewhere upstairs you might find a few U-boats stacked with surplus non-perishables or seasonal items. Boxes of supplies and other items are stacked on every shelf above and below people’s desks, including on the ceiling beams. In General Coordinator Joe Holtz’s office, some very old financial files have given way to storage for bulk bags, and, in the kitchen, staffers have donated cooking supplies to make room for pallets of merchandise that needed a home.

Back in the basement, staffers are constantly adapting and installing custom-designed and precisely measured shelves, moving boxes and cartons of merchandise from one aisle to another and monitoring the surplus items stacked on U-boats towards the end of the week when inventory swells to accommodate weekend crowds.

HALF PRICE BUT TWICE THE SPACE

Shoppers love the end cap across from the yogurt that houses half-price items, ranging from peach juice for bellinis to cranberry crackers. Staffers call these “dusty box deals.” Trusted vendors call Coop buyers asking if they’d like to take on some almost-expired, need-to-move-quickly inventory at really good prices.

“THERE’S NOT ENOUGH STORAGE AND THERE WILL NEVER BE ENOUGH STORAGE,” SAID RECEIVING COORDINATOR BRITT HENRIKSSON.

Those vendors know how fast our turnover is, and that our members love a deal. While the shelf on the shopping floor takes very little space, storing these dusty boxes, thanks to mondo shipments all at once, does not. The aisles that store these items are constantly being rejiggered to fit the latest shipments.

AN EVOLVING TASK

These are just a few of the storage highlights going on at the Coop. Think for a minute about the daily, sometimes hourly, trucks full of produce (another story for another time), the giant bags of coffee, dried fruits, nuts, wheels of cheese, loads of vitamins, boxes of personal care items and countless other Coop goodies that need their space.

Figuring out storage for all of that is a constantly evolving Coop Rubik’s Cube. And sometimes it seems insurmountable—even for staffers.

“We are not calibrated yet for sales, [at a] pre-pandemic [level],” Receiving Coordinator Yuri Weber said matter-of-factly.

“There’s not enough storage and there will never be enough storage,” exclaimed Receiving Coordinator Britt Henriksson.

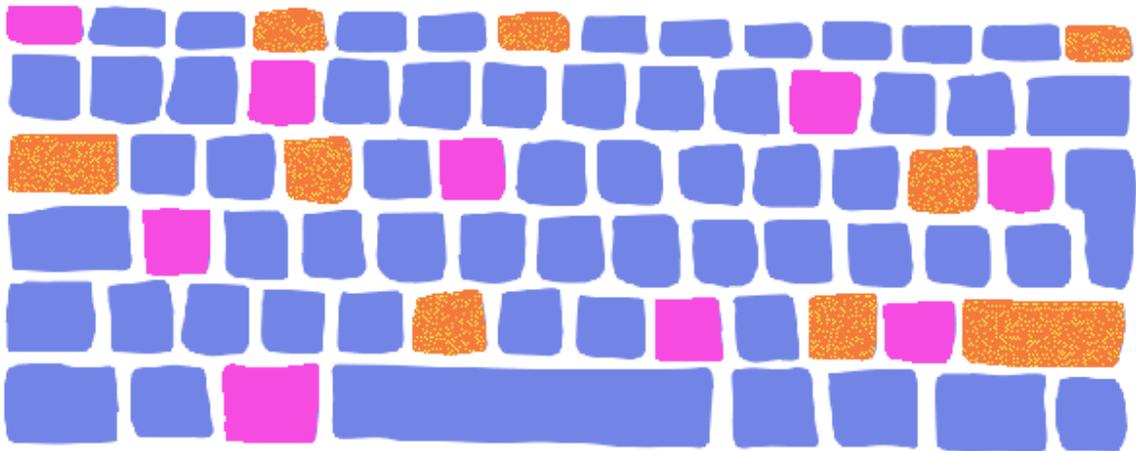
Dire as these pronouncements sound, it's likely that staffers and members will work out all the storage issues—like we do all Coop challenges.

Walecia Konrad is a freelance writer, editor and content producer specializing in personal finance. She has been a PSFC member since 2001 and on-and-off contributor to the Gazette for almost as long.

APRIL 9, 2024

April 9, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PROVENANCE PLEASE FOR ALL COOP PRODUCTS

Dear Fellow Members:

Can we add country of origin as dedicated information on shelf labels? On housewares, on dry goods—the Coop is about educated choices. I know we make a sign

when we're proud of something, usually involving fair trade, but I would appreciate this information for all items, especially as the tech team programs labels like we now have in produce.

Thank you,
Lisa Guido

REFINING MEMBER USE OF THE PAGING SYSTEM

Dear Fellow Members:

While many of the initiatives to improve the Coop's sonic experience, from a "Shift DJ" discussion item at a GM a few months ago to a PSFC Spotify channel, are music-oriented, there is one simple thing that every member who is able can do to go easier on the ears of your fellow shoppers and workers.

Our awesome paging system enables anyone using it to be heard using our "inside voices," but there is an enormous difference between ending a page with a finger and the amplified collision of plastic that blasts everyone at the Coop when a page is ended by hanging up the phone.

For many, this is one more piece of noise pollution, like sirens and hydraulic bus brakes, that we simply tune out. But for others, it is an unnecessary aural assault that can be avoided with a small amount of mindfulness.

Please. If you use the paging system and you are able, use your finger to hang up the quiet way.

Thanks,
Brian Shuman

WHAT'S THE PLAN FOR WORKING PARENTS?

Dear Editor:

Two years ago, the world—and our member work requirements—asked us to return to a version of the “way it was.” A single mother of two—as hardcore a Food Coop member as you can get—told me she was leaving.

“What am I supposed to do?” she said.

Many families feel abandoned by the new policies of the Coop. With work, school, meals and bedtime, they find it increasingly difficult with the online platform to even schedule a shift, let alone worry about who'll care for their children while they do it. This leads to an increased work debt many are reminded of every time they need to buy food for their families.

“Why must I ask permission to shop at a store I've been a member of for over 10 years for having a lapsing grace period after being suspended for not doing shifts that are impossible to schedule?” is a sentiment I've heard more than once.

In the past few years, I've spent a lot of my (limited) free time and energy working to bring back childcare, and when we voted as a community, the item overwhelmingly passed. Then we hit a hiccup: our childcare insurance policy is impossible to renew.

So, what now? We've already lost many families, and we continue to fail to serve young families who are members, especially those in single parent households. The end of childcare should not mean the end of support for working member families.

As we move into the next 50 years of cooperation, we need to ask ourselves how will equity, in addition to cost efficiency and convenience, shape our idea of membership

and work requirements? How can we make it easier for families with young children to complete their required shifts?

Lauren Belski

HUMAN-SIZED PORTIONS, PLEASE

Dear Gazette:

Buying four bags of smoked paprika, three bags of peppercorns, five bags of parsley and so on, I would suggest a larger serving size in our member packed goods. If we could have a number of larger sizes of bags so I don't clear out the tamari roasted pepitas and smoked paprika in one run, I'd feel less guilty and I think many members with larger households would be happier, plus fewer wasted bags.

Here's my Coop spiced pasta recipe for a quick easy meal (feeds four):

Ingredients:

2-3 tbs of parsley

2-3 tbs of oregano

3-4 tbs of garlic

1-2 tsp of Aleppo pepper

Salt to taste

Freshly ground pepper to taste

½ cup of olive oil or whatever else you like

1 lb of pasta (I prefer Molisana brand but whatever works, gluten free can be fine too)

Optional: Fresh grated Parmesan or Romano cheese

Steps:

Boil 7 cups/1.7 liters of water in electric kettle and transfer to pot or boil on stove.

Pour pasta in water and give an initial stir, cover and bring to boil, drop to lowest flame that keeps it boiling, maybe smallest burner. Stir every couple of minutes so it doesn't get stuck together.

When the pasta reaches correct tenderness (which is usually indicated via the time shown on the pasta package), drain water over another vessel to save some pasta water.

Dump pasta in a big bowl, pour olive oil over it and add in $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the pasta water.

Pour all the spices in and stir for a bit till everything is coated with oil and spices.

Serve into bowls and add black pepper, salt and/or cheese as needed.

Enjoy,

Mark Paperno

NATIONAL GRID? HA! NATIONAL GREED'S MORE LIKE IT.

To the Editor:

A Coop member since the 1980s, I raised my family in the neighborhood, and one of the changes I've become keenly aware of is the skyrocketing cost of utilities. Their rates are putting New Yorkers in debt; the greed of National Grid hurts us all. It makes exorbitant profits off captive ratepayers while poisoning those who live in their shadow with their product, a potent greenhouse gas.

It's unconscionable that utilities across the country are building infrastructure we don't need, don't want and can't afford at a time when the city and state of New York are passing legislation that will wean us off this high-emissions fossil fuel completely by 2050, a few decades into the future.

We must do this to have a livable planet. Yet, seeing the end of business as usual, National Grid is milking the system as fast as it can, expanding pipes and infrastructure because that's where their profits lie. Money pours into the purses of executives and investors while the public struggles to pay bills. And methane, the main component of "natural" gas, is 86 times the heat-trapping gas as carbon dioxide, when measured over a 20-year period. We now experience unhealthy emissions in the air and from our stoves and pay exorbitant fees at the same time—all of which is contrary to the spirit that we stand for.

But we can do something.

While our Coop was established to provide healthy food at affordable prices, it's up to us to stand up to National Greed and oppose their latest rate hike proposal, which translates to over \$30/month more per household or a total of \$3.8 billion. To make your voice count, call your legislators and Governor Hochul, and demand they pass the NY HEAT Act, S2016, which would limit utility bills for low- and moderate-income ratepayers to six percent of income.

JK Canepa

A NOVEL IDEA: BOYCOTTS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Fellow Coop members,

Why spend the time, money, and emotional energy on renting out a large space, hir-

ing security, and debating a contentious issue endlessly when there is another possibility?

The people in favor of boycotting Israel would like to see their beliefs and shopping decisions forced on others. As a democratic institution, why are we looking for imposed mandates as solutions to divisive product issues when we have individual shopper decisions as a freer, more representative alternative?

I propose a novel idea: the individual boycott. What could be more democratic than each shopper making their own purchasing decisions based on their unique backgrounds and political persuasions? Products under minimal turnover thresholds due to these individual boycott decisions could then be removed from shelves.

Let's allow members to "vote" through their purchases, and we can avoid this whole *balagan* (commotion). How many of us really want to ruin an evening of our lives debating the conflict in the Middle East? Believe me, faster than you can say *gefilte*, I'll be the first to schlep my tuchus to whichever hapless venue the Coop finds to host a vote on the topic. But do I want to do that when I could be sitting on my couch munching on Bamba? Not really.

Do you want to single out the only Jewish state because you believe it to be the world's greatest evil as it fights a defensive war to return its hostages from a barbaric terrorist organization? Be my guest! YOU do not need to buy products from Israel.

I, for one, will proudly continue to stock my cart with Sabra hummus until the end of my days. Please, let's stop with this bupkis and focus on what unites our community instead.

Jonathan Aranov

POLITICS ARE PERSONAL

To the Editor,

I am dismayed to learn that the Coop and the *Gazette* are once again putting politics before the cooperation and respect that the Coop has embraced since its founding.

I have been a member for over 20 years, and it was this feeling of community, combined with the quality of food and respect for farmers and the environment that has made me proud.

I am a Jew who strongly supports the Palestinian cause. I show my support in many ways—personal ways. I don't need the Coop to tell me what products to buy or what products to boycott. I urge the Coop to permanently table this discussion. Sadly, if this political battle is allowed to rage at meetings and in the *Gazette*, or worse, if the Coop begins banning products based on political considerations, I will have to resign my membership.

In cooperation,

Helene Davis

BDS AND THE INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

Dear Coop Members,

While I disagree with many points in Joe Holtz's recent Coordinator's Corner column, this letter addresses only his unsupported claim that the Coop can best "welcome"

members by avoiding a vote on boycotting Israeli products. How can anyone anguished over Israel's genocide in Gaza (including, by the way, Palestinian members) feel welcomed by Joe's preferred approach?

Writing "on behalf of the General Coordinators," Joe insists that a BDS boycott would transgress the International Principles of Cooperation. He paraphrases the first IPC principle as "essentially stat[ing] that coops welcome people" from divergent backgrounds. The actual language is: "Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination." Joe relies on the slippery word "welcome," used in the sense of "make comfortable." But being free from discrimination has nothing to do with being sheltered from controversy. If a boycott is enacted, the Coop will remain just as open to members who dislike that provision as it currently is to BDS advocates. A healthy cooperative must be resilient enough to accommodate serious disagreements, using democratic methods to decide a course of action.

Broadly hinting at the GCs' distaste for those methods, Joe writes: "Regardless of [a potential] vote's outcome, thousands of members could feel unsupported by their Coop and may choose to withdraw their membership." These are scare tactics, given that a tiny, vocal group of people desperate to shield Israel from legitimate criticism appears to constitute the "anti" side of the debate. Joe correctly notes that "The GCs... are obligated to support the Coop's democratic processes." I urge them to take their thumbs off the scale as we address this vital matter.

Jan Clausen

BOYCOTTING A BOYCOTT

Dear Editors:

Letters, opinions related to the Hamas war are wholly inappropriate and must be rejected.

Letters, opinions related to Hamas's terrorism and war are wholly inappropriate and must be rejected.

Boycotts, especially those against those that FIGHT anti-American, anti-Western Jihadi terrorism have NO PLACE in Park Slope.

We've had ENOUGH division and polarization in America, in American Politics, in Park Slope, and in the COOP.

THANK YOU FOR REJECTING any such offensive and objectionable initiatives.

J. Anthony Levy

INCLUDE MEMBER INPUT IN LETTERS POLICY CHANGES

To the Editors:

As a group of proud Jews particularly affected by *Gazette* standards, we feel that your Letters policy changes required input from us. We needed to be consulted on your new standards for Letters to the Editor and Member Contributions so that the new standards would allow all members to see in print that we feel welcome at our own Coop.

You made clear with your suspension of letters that content in letters and contributions are a very real problem to be considered, and we agree one hundred percent. A

respectful dialogue between the Gazette editors and our group in the same room would have been productive.

Instead, the Editors took about a week, seemingly without consulting anyone but themselves.

That Israel is criticized is not the issue. Israel is subject to more legitimate criticism by Israelis than anyone else. Yet we read a great deal of illegitimate criticism in the Gazette, and our harsh and deadly history shows us the veiled anti-Semitism underneath. Some of it is not veiled at all, just taking new forms that may be unrecognized for now by others. Our group cannot know what is legitimately offensive to other Jews and other groups of people in general until we are told. And others cannot know what is legitimately offensive to us unless they are told. More dialogue, not less, can bridge this gap in understanding.

The only litmus test in this regard for submissions to the Gazette is whether a Coop member feels unsafe and/or unwelcome in the Coop. This group of proud Jews have collectively felt both since October 7th of 2023.

Jesse Rosenfeld (+150 signatories)

Editor's response:

The change in policy regarding letters was further amended in early March. Letters and member contributions concerning the ongoing violence in the Middle East and its potential impact on the Coop are no longer restricted.

A RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF OVERREACH

Dear Members,

I would like to respond to Kristian Nammack's February 28 letter on the subject of the vote to dissolve the Committee Oversight Committee (COC).

Mr. Nammack charges that the vote was based on "untruths." Having witnessed the formation and actions of the COC as a member of the Agenda Committee until October of 2023, I would like to address the alleged "falsehoods."

Firstly, he asserts that the COC "never attempted to arbitrate committee disputes—that is the job of the Dispute Resolution Committee." That is incorrect; the DRC concerns itself with the actions of individuals, not committees. The COC's own previous description of its mission on the Coop website declared it would serve as "a liaison between committees, members and staff," suggesting that the COC would indeed try to mediate between various groups.

Secondly, he says that the COC never claimed that it would reduce the staff's workload. This was a part of the original proposal passed at the January 2022 GM: "Importantly, the proposal is intended to increase the ability of committees to reduce staff work."

Thirdly, the COC did attempt to take on work credit management. In response to the Structure and Reporting Requirements for New Coop Committees at the April 2022 GM, the COC again declared its mission: "Supervise all committee reports and requirements including scheduling updates and tracking work credits." Left unaddressed and unresolved was that the Coop already had systems in place for reporting all work credit. Even so, further encroachments upon staff time and member privacy occurred when the COC took it upon itself to try to inspect the past work records of thousands of members, not just those on Initiative committees. The purpose of these investigations was unclear, but the inappropriateness of this endeavor, the lack of any mandate and the enormous demands on the staff were suggested at the GM.

Mr. Nammack ignores why the resolution to disband the COC passed by a near 3 to 1 margin. As staff member Jana Cunningham's presentation made clear, the COC failed

to perform its mission to have committee members of both Essential and Initiative committees report to the Gazette, GM, and website their information and activities. Instead, the COC took upon the task of forming a complaint desk and investigating the decisions made by Essential committees. There was no language anywhere in the final item approved by the GM to authorize these activities. It was only after the October 2023 GM that the COC removed from the Coop website its self-declared mission to “investigate committee activities as requested.” The COC’s staff liaison, Joe Holtz, has never explained why this language appeared on the website in the first place or why it was promptly removed after Ms. Cunningham called our attention to it at the October GM. Notably, he didn’t defend the COC’s activities at either GM where the fate of the committee was being determined.

As was her prerogative, Ms. Cunningham took the feedback she received at the October GM and modified her item to specify for a full dissolution of the Committee Oversight Committee. Surely, the January GM and Mr. Nammack’s letter make clear that, given the COC’s gross overstepping of its stated purpose, she was right to do so. Casting doubts on a longtime and highly respected staff member who went far beyond the call of duty to do what she felt was right for the Coop, Mr. Nammack has provided only further justification for disbanding the Committee Oversight Committee.

In cooperation,
Cynthia Payne

MY GRANDFATHER, AN EPICUREAN SPY

April 9, 2024

KATHERINE FENNELLY

FAMILY DECLASSIFIED:

UNCOVERING MY GRANDFATHER'S JOURNEY
FROM SPY TO CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR



TOP SECRET

Member Submission by *Katherine Fennelly*

If my Hungarian-American grandfather were alive today and living in Brooklyn, I have no doubt he would be a member of the Park Slope Food Coop. Francis Kalnay, or “Ferko” as we called him, was many things: a linguist, a spy for the Allies in World War II, an award-winning children’s book author and a designer of houses in Valle de Bravo, Mexico.



Francis “Ferko” Kalna making a loaf of bread in California, 1980s. Photo provided by Katherine Fennelly.

Ferko was also a superb chef who roasted his own coffee beans, milled his own flour, harvested honey from bee hives, cured meats in an underground smokehouse and grew fruits and vegetables on his properties in Mexico, and then in California. Late in his life he invented and marketed a bread plate (below) and built bread ovens for neighbors.

VIRGINIA SAFFORD’S BOOK WAS ABOUT THE BEST MEALS SHE HAD EVER EATEN.

ONE OF THE CHAPTERS FEATURED A REPAST PREPARED BY FERKO AT HIS B&B IN VALLE DE BRAVO.



The Greatful Bread Plate, invented by Francis “Ferko” Kalna. Photo provided by Katherine Fennelly.

My grandfather’s skill as a chef was highlighted in the book *Friends and Their Food* written by Minneapolis food writer Virginia Safford,[1] who visited him in Mexico, where he lived for 20 years after the war. Safford’s book was about the best meals she had ever eaten. One of the chapters featured a repast prepared by Ferko at his B&B in Valle de Bravo. She writes:

I saw a load of various beans drying in the sun on his terrace, and the smell of the freshly brewed coffee was almost as tantalizing as the bread. Everything we ate at

the simple wooden table in his little kitchen, with the cooking going on in full view, was delicious. We started out with what might be called country antipasto. In the middle of a table were crisp radishes and small green onions garnishing a platter of sliced, home-smoked turkey breast [from an underground smokehouse] to be eaten on fresh buttered rye bread. Then came the soup...and authentic Hungarian stuffed cabbage rolls. Last was Hungarian rum cake with wild strawberry jam and home-roasted coffee.

In addition to preparing delectable meals, Ferko wrote about cooking and published a series of articles for the magazine *House Beautiful*. An example shown below featured recipes for cooking with fresh flowers. Others highlighted smoked meats and Hungarian dishes, such as stuffed cabbage.

Flowers in Cooking?

And why not? Flowers are sugar and spice and other things nice. They can broaden your palette of flavors in several piquant directions. This summer give them a whirl in your kitchen

By FRANCIS KALNAY



An article Ferko wrote for *House Beautiful*, April 1960. Photo provided by Katherine Fennelly.

You can read more about my grandfather's life as a spy, linguist, children's book author and an epicure in my book: *Family Declassified* (Sunbury Press, 2023).

[1] *Friends and Their Food* by Virginia [Safford, Virginia. *Friends and Their Food*. Dillon Press, New York, 1969.] Safford, 1968

FILM NIGHT: "LISTENING TO KENNY G"

April 9, 2024

FROM EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **BILL SIMMONS**

DIRECTED BY **PENNY LANE**



HBO ORIGINAL
MUSIC BOX

LISTENING ^{☆☆}
to KENNY G

NEW DOCUMENTARY
STREAMING DEC 2

HBOmax

Kenny G is the bestselling instrumentalist of all time, and arguably the most famous living jazz musician. *Listening to Kenny G* is about why that makes certain people so mad. This inventive and thought-provoking documentary, directed by Penny Lane (*Hail Satan?*), looks at how our artistic tastes shape our personal identities and signal our social belonging.

The film features intimate moments with Kenny as he works on his first album in seven years, rare archival footage of his four-decade-long career, and conversations with music critics, record executives, radio personalities, market researchers and Kenny's fans. Whatever your opinion, *Listening to Kenny G* will challenge your preconceptions about music.

WHATEVER YOUR OPINION, *LISTENING TO KENNY G* WILL CHALLENGE YOUR PRE-CONCEPTIONS ABOUT MUSIC.

Gabriel Sedgwick (producer) hails from the grim and frostbitten kingdom of Sweden but lives in New York City, where he has produced both fiction and documentary films that have screened at festivals including Sundance, Toronto International Film Festival, SXSW, Rotterdam, Full Frame and New Directors/New Films. His productions include *Hail Satan?*, *Listening to Kenny G*, *August the First* and *Somewhere in the Middle*. He's a Sundance Creative Producing Labs fellow, Berlinale Talent fellow, Anders Sandrew grantee and two-time Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program grantee.

Naiti Gámez (director of photography) is a NYC- and Miami-based filmmaker. Naiti has worked as a director and cinematographer on award-winning films and television series. Her film *Love, Sadie* premiered at the Festival de Cannes Short Film Corner. Her film credits have screened at festivals worldwide including Festival de Cannes, Sundance Film Festival, Berlinale, Camerimage, SXSW, Tribeca Film Festival, Festival du Cinéma de Paris and Festival de Cine Internacional de Barcelona, among others. Re-

cent feature-length documentary credits include *Listening to Kenny G, Ailey, Through the Night, Hail Satan?* and *Captivated: The Trials of Pamela Smart*.

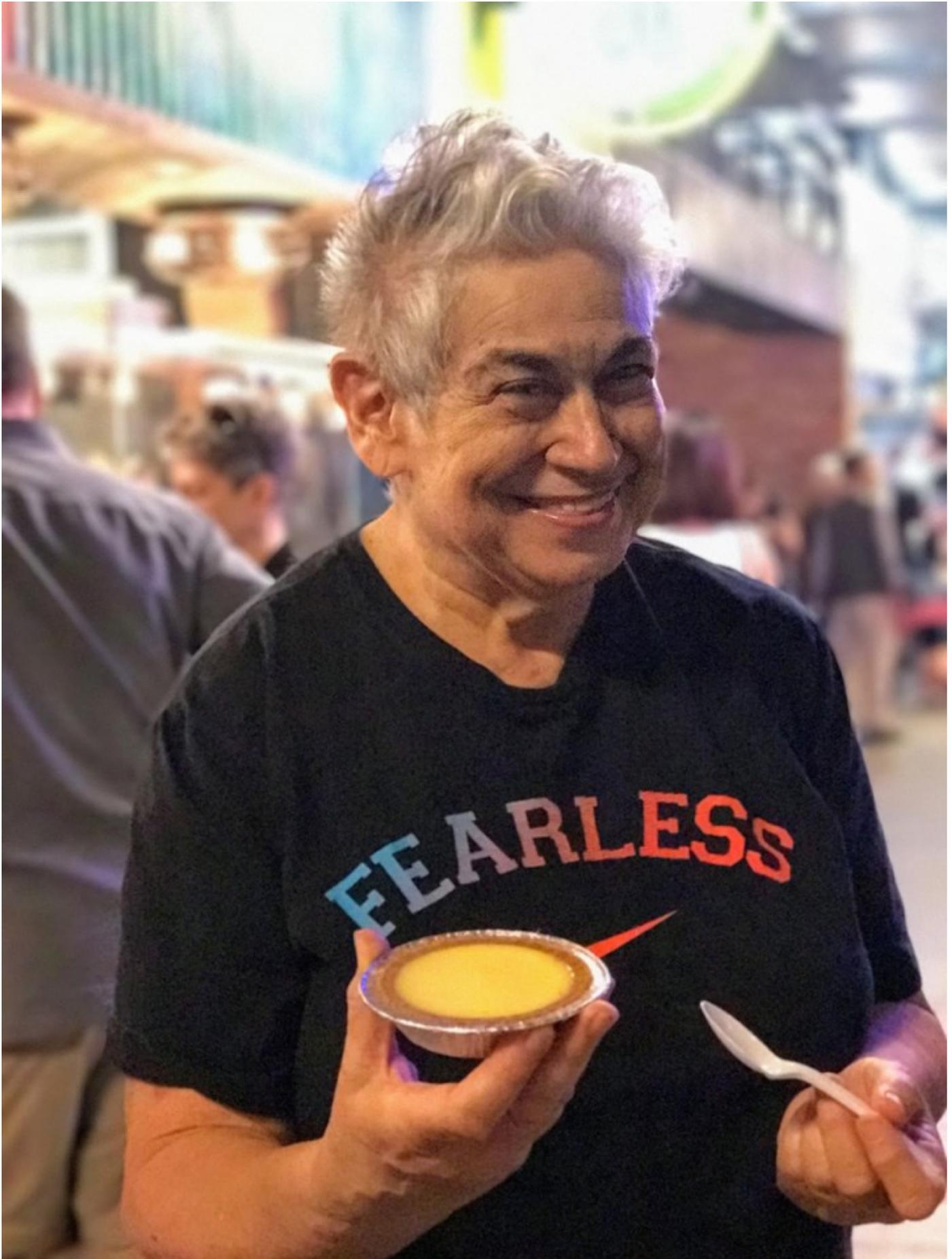
Listening to Kenny G will be screened via Zoom on Wednesday, April 17th @ 7pm.

Gabriel and Naiti 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.

IN MEMORY OF SHELLY WEISS

April 9, 2024



By Thomas Rayfiel

Shelly Weiss, an early member of the Coop, and, by all accounts, a force of nature at whatever she set her mind to, died February 22, 2024, of late-stage kidney disease. She was 77. Shelly joined the Coop in 1976. For many years she worked at the long-gone but fondly remembered cheese section, which she described in a *Linewaiters' Gazette* interview as:

...more like a phenomenon back then. People hustled over to the cheese section and wrote their orders, which were custom cut to size and picked up as they headed to the checkout line. We would set out samples, which made cheese the place to be and highly interactive. I think Trader Joe's plugged into our model.

Her motto, when putting out bits for people to try, was “ample samples.”

Shelly, considered by many to be the first “out” lesbian in Park Slope, had jobs as a social worker, couples sex therapist, health care administrator and elementary school teacher before finding her true calling when she started the non-profit OUTMedia, which specialized in booking LGBTQ acts at college campuses.

“SHE WAS DEDICATED TO MAKING THE COOP WORK DURING A PERIOD WHEN FUTURE SUCCESS WAS SOMETHING THAT HAD TO BE EARNED ONE WEEK AT A TIME. I WILL MISS HER AND HER CAN-DO SPIRIT.”

GENERAL MANAGER JOE HOLTZ

“I realized that the arts were a prime vehicle to change consciousness,” Shelly explained in a 2015 interview with the Keshet Blog—a project of My Jewish Learning, a website with articles, videos and other resources to help navigate all aspects of Judaism and Jewish life. In the piece, Shelly continued, “Forget people’s heads, reach

their guts, their hearts. In this new way, I could really reach a new generation and frame thinking.”

Shelly was a coordinator for Jews For Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ), an organization that describes itself as a movement to dismantle racism and economic exploitation. She was also a leader in JFREJ’S steering committee for New York Caring Majority, a statewide, multi-constituency movement that seeks higher wages for home care workers. Shelly also served on its Poor & Working Class caucus and Disability caucus.

She did all this as a single mother, raising her son, Noah, on three principles: “Try everything twice,” “Never go to bed angry,” and “There’s an unlimited budget for books.”

The Coop’s General Manager Joe Holtz remembers Shelly as “...one of the early members who understood how special the Coop was. She was dedicated to making the Coop work during a period when future success was something that had to be earned one week at a time. I will miss her and her can-do spirit.”

Shelly is survived by her son, Noah Desai Weiss, his wife Monica Desai Weiss and granddaughter Willow Desai Weiss; stepdaughter Rebecca Shaw and her wife, Jillian Sussman; her brother, Jerry Weiss, his wife Diane Weiss and their children and grandchildren.