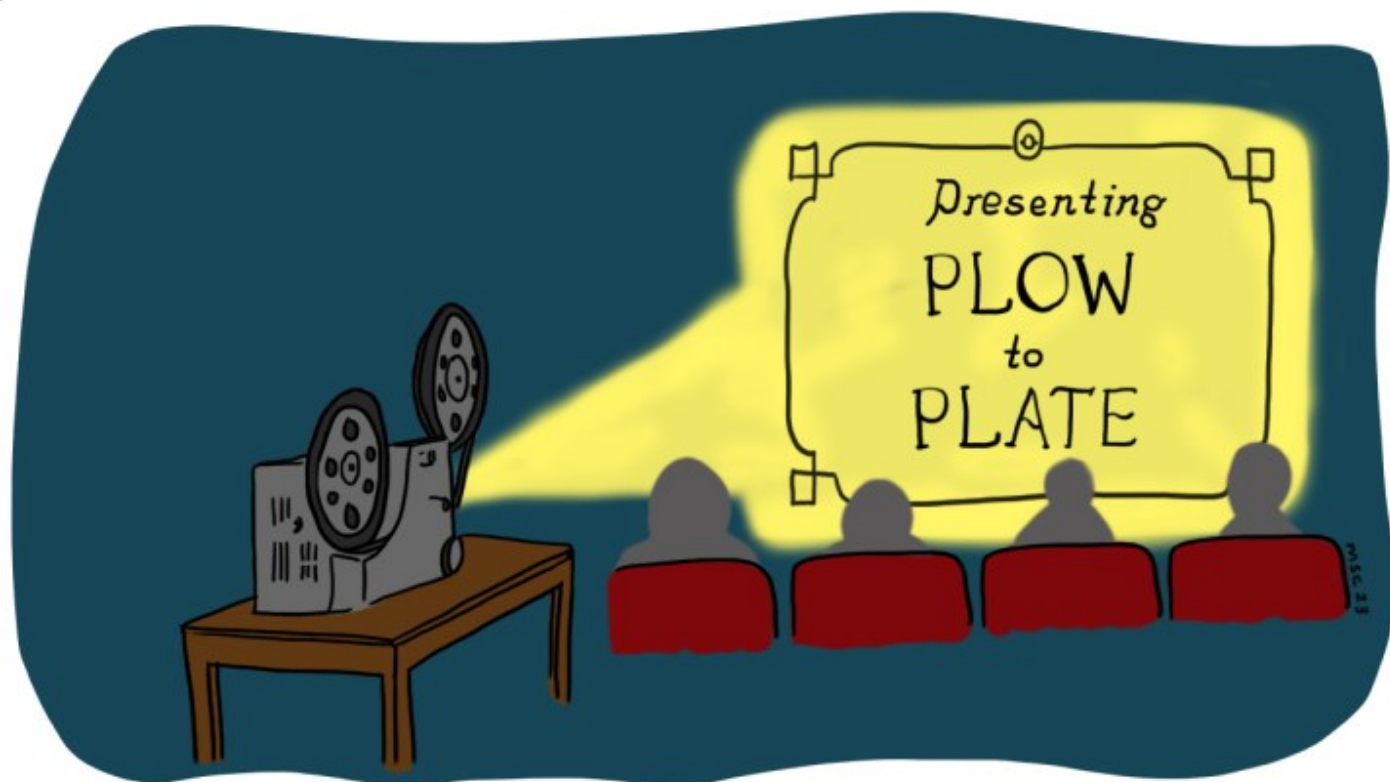


PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS: FOOD COOP: THE MOVIE!

June 4, 2025



June 3, 2025

By Adam Rabiner

The Park Slope Food Coop is as well-known as its iconic green and red “EST 1973” neon sign. With over 17,000 members, it’s a successful food cooperative, recognized for quality products, low prices, industry-leading metrics and, perhaps most famously, its founding principles of cooperation and a unique member-based work model. This almost one-of-a-kind standing drew the attention of filmmaker Thomas Boothe who profiled our beloved shopping haven in his 2016 film, *Food Coop*.

Food Coop’s quirky, informal, spontaneous and familiar tone and personality often reflects its subject. Little of the film is formally scripted. The movie’s verisimilitude will immediately be obvious to members intimately acquainted with the sights and sounds of 782 Union Street: the traffic noise and sirens, the beeping machines, the crowded aisles and the long checkout lines.

Tom Boothe highlights the unique volunteer culture by walking around and asking workers, “Can I ask you a question, what do you do for a living?” A stocker teaches pre-school, a guy breaking down boxes in the basement is an animator, another at checkout is in social services. There’s a psychoanalyst and a pair of filmmakers. Some of these faces, like founder Joe Holtz, may even be familiar to you.

Food Coop is also very much a Brooklyn film. A worker with a walker shift, the head of the Working Families Party, is interviewed heading into equally recognizable territory down Union Street to 7th Avenue then towards Flatbush Avenue. In another scene, a bicyclist, disappointed by his local deli and Key Food, pedals to his home in nearby Gowanus recounting how the Coop helped him meet fellow foodies. A food activist takes us to Bedford Stuyvesant, a food desert, where she contrasts the Coop’s merchandise and prices with those of a local bodega where a moldy lemon costs \$.50. A couple welcomes us into their home in what appears to be Windsor Terrace or Kensington, displaying their week’s shopping and contrasting how much less each item is than at Whole Foods.

FOOD COOP DEPICTS A UNIQUE INSTITUTION WHOSE MESSINESS AND DIVERSITY HAVE INSPIRED A PASSIONATE AND DEDICATED COMMUNITY

The camera also ventures into the Coop’s more hidden spaces, offering discoveries for members only familiar with the shopping floor. We visit a cheese packing squad in the basement grooving to the mix, *Music to Process Food By—Volume 43*. We spend time with a worker in the frigid and claustrophobic dairy cooler. We also learn some surprising things, for example, long-time apple supplier Amy Hepworth does not put a dollar amount on her invoices but leaves it to a General Coordinator to be fair or that organic chocolate does not necessarily mean better quality.

Food Coop jumps around, alighting upon things familiar to members. It features interviews with bulk and cheese buyers, office staff, childcare workers and a couple who

do composting. We see new members being briefed at their orientation and choosing which squad to work on. The film examines the workings of the Disciplinary Committee, the Environmental Committee's campaign to eliminate plastic bags and the Coordinators' resistance to this proposal. It tags along with Dan, a squad leader, and his beleaguered team during a closing shift at the height of the holiday season on Christmas Eve. We follow a shopper heading home by subway and bus, a nearly two-hour trip, undertaken, understandably, only once a month.

What kind of crazy person schlepps bulky grocery bags halfway across New York City by public transportation, even if only ten to twelve times a year? *Food Coop* depicts a unique institution whose messiness and diversity have inspired a passionate and dedicated community willing to go to just those great lengths.

Food Coop

Tuesday, June 10, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m.

Screening link: <https://plowtoplatefilms.weebly.com/upcoming-events.html>

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

Adam Rabiner lives in Ditmas Park with his wife, Dina, and child Ana.

Author's Note: A slightly lengthier version of this review appeared in the January 31, 2019, issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. *Food Coop* was originally screened as Part of the *Plow to Plate* series on February 12, 2019.

FIVE YEARS ON: HOW COVID TRANSFORMED THE COOP

June 4, 2025



May 13, 2025

By Susannah Jacob

It's been half a decade since the Covid-19 pandemic shut down New York City and sent the world—and the Coop—off its axis. On March 23, 2020, for the first time in its history, the Coop suspended its member-labor work requirement. But the staff still had to find a way to keep the doors open—selling affordable and fresh food had hardly ever been so important.

The *Gazette* spoke with staff and members who steered the Coop through that trying

and fearful era, and who have shepherded it into recent times. They spoke of their exhaustion, learning the extent of their own mettle and strength and also their powers of imagination and innovation.

When Covid struck, General Coordinator Ann Herpel had been at the Coop for two decades, and on staff since April 2002. Herpel says her immediate memory of March 2020 is of a great deal of confusion and a lack of direction. “We were this retail operation that people needed to get food from,” Herpel says.

During one week in March, the Coop sold more food than it did any week before—or since. But when city and state regulations limited in-person work to essential workers, Herpel says, “we took that to mean we could not ask people who were not paid employees to work.” The staff had to find a way to stay open after the suspension of member labor. They tackled a deluge of problems, one at a time: hiring and on-boarding part-time and full-time workers to run check-out lines and do other jobs historically worked by members, setting the new occupancy limit to 30 shoppers at a time, building plexiglass barriers at checkout stations, enforcing a mask mandate, social distancing and cleaning protocols, providing food and space for workers who needed to eat lunch while clocking long shifts and, of course, following the news.



Pandemic checkout worker behind plexiglass

"The phones rang off the hook, we worked 16-hour days, and our employees were afraid to come to work," Herpel says. Ultimately, the Coop hired and onboarded 130 temporary and paid employees. "We had people who thought they could do this and quit after the first day—they couldn't handle the stress," Herpel says. What carried them through, though, was the knowledge that "in such a terrifying time for every-

one, this is where members wanted to come. We knew there were members who really rely on us, who had trust in us.”

Herpel says that she learned that “I and a bunch of other people were a lot more resilient than I thought, that we could be calm in the face of a terrifying situation...there was a sense of working together to solve problems because the circumstances were forced upon us...and we did it.”

“WE HAD EACH OTHER. NOT A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE HAD THAT.”

GENERAL COORDINATOR ANN HERPEL

Herpel points to other silver linings that emerged as a result of the pandemic. There was the birth of Member Services—an online system that members found more helpful to manage their memberships than anything on offer in pre-Covid times.

And while the fear of contracting illness was profound, the staff of the Coop “did not live a life of isolation,” Herpel recalls. “We had each other. Not a lot of other people had that.”



During Covid the produce aisle had one-way entry.

Membership Coordinator Mae Frankeberger was a working member who joined the staff during the pandemic shutdown as a temporary pandemic worker—and ended up joining the staff two years later.

She became a member of the Coop originally in January 2018, in search of a sense of community. Frankeberger remembers the weeks leading up to the shutdown, “people were frantically calling to try and go on leave, people were leaving town because they were scared.” Working as a member in the office, she filled out their paperwork.

In March 2020, she saw a job posting for temporary workers on the Coop’s Instagram, and applied to work checkout. “I needed the social interaction at that point,” she says. She remembers a frequent shopper who she checked out and chatted with often. Later, after the pandemic, the pair ran into each other at the Coop, and the mem-

ber thanked Frankeberger for their chats when she interacted with few people outside her household. “You saved me in the pandemic,” Frankeberger remembers.

Frankeberger worked checkout during lockdown for a little over a year. She felt a sense of safety working at the Coop because of the many precautions undertaken, as well as a sense of camaraderie. “I understood that people in the same job as me were being treated much more poorly in other stores, and I appreciated the care the Coop staff took.”

“We all started off at \$15 an hour—a few of us sought higher wages given the risk. It was hard given the [financial] constraints on the Coop, but it was also hard on us, some of us worked 30 hours or more a week.” She was also grateful to qualify for an early Covid-19 vaccine as a frontline worker.

Like Herpel, Frankeberger sees the rollout of Member Services necessitated by lockdown as a silver lining. That said, she does miss the sense of community she experienced working a regular shift.

When she walks into the Coop during mandatory mask days, “I definitely get some not-fun flashbacks.”

“THE COOP IS THE BEST AND CLOSEST PLACE FOR ME. IT’S ALWAYS BEEN MY HAPPY PLACE.”

MEMBER RIMMA ASHKINADZE

Rimma Ashkinadze has been a Coop member for 25 years. She shopped at the Coop throughout, including during lockdown. “It was never a decision,” she says. She lives three blocks away from the Coop, and “the Coop is the best and closest place for me. It’s always been my happy place,” she says.

Her Covid memories are of waiting to shop in a line that stretched around the block, checking Instagram to learn if the line was long or short, and plotting her grocery list according to a map of the Coop's aisles. "We needed to shop quickly and get out of there, so my partner and I split up the store and met when we were done—for a long time, I never saw the other aisles. To this day we split the labor the same way."

Like Frankeberger, Ashkinadze is wistful for her squad before Covid. "I used to be a squad leader for 20 years in receiving, the community of being on a squad together doesn't exist anymore," she says, "even if you make a friend you may never see them again." What she doesn't miss, she says, "is people texting me one hour after the shift ended and I am already home to ask, "Hey, can you only give me one make-up?"

Susannah Jacob is a history PhD student. She takes pride in her proficient operation of the slotted, plastic bag-taper machine in the bulk department.

OH SHOOT! IT'S GARLIC SCAPE SEASON

June 4, 2025



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SPRING'S 'IT' ALLIUM

May 13, 2025

By Anita Bushell

One of the great joys of shopping at the Coop is having access to fleetingly seasonal foods.

Large supermarkets don't tend to place a premium on fruits and vegetables that have vanishingly narrow windows of availability. The trouble of tracking them down can outweigh the profits. What's more, many American consumers prefer consistency.

Shopping at the Coop, on the other hand, is like being a purveyor at a fine restaurant, one whose chef wanders the stalls at Union Square farmers market or the back roads

of Marin County looking for what's delicious today—and not for much longer.

“AMONG THE MANY REASONS I LIKE SPRING IS SEEING GARLIC SCAPES PEEKING OUT FROM THE MIST OF THE PRODUCE COOLER.”

PRODUCE MANAGER JOHN HORSMAN

In wintertime, my partner will gleefully bring home from the Coop a few Buddha's hands, the citrons whose striking fingered shapes call to mind little yellow octopi, and make marmalade for the few weeks they are available. Among the many reasons I like spring is seeing garlic scapes peeking out from the mist of the produce cooler. The sight is as much a sign of renewal as the appearance of daffodils on the city streets. Like Proust's madeleines, garlic scapes connect me with delicious meals of the past, and give me hope for the future.

Garlic scapes are edible green shoots that grow from the garlic root. The long and curly green stems, which look like wild onions, sprout in late spring. Their taste is sweet and musky, and they can be the base of gorgeous pestos and soups, among other dishes.



Garlic scape photo by Lisa Guido

To find out more I spoke with Produce Manager John Horsman to get his take on the lesser-known member of the garlic family. Below the interview you'll find my two favorite garlic scape recipes.

John, what exactly are garlic scapes?

They are the long, curly flower stalks that grow from hard neck garlic once the plants start maturing.

Do they grow at the same time as garlic?

Garlic scapes are usually removed from the plant to encourage the garlic bulbs to grow larger. After the scapes are cut, the plant redirects its energy into forming the

garlic bulbs, which are harvested in mid-to-late summer.

When does the Coop start selling them?

We usually start getting them at the end of May or beginning of June. We tend to have them on hand for about eight weeks.

What do they taste like?

They have a mild, fresh garlic flavor.

How can you use them?

They are usually sautéed, grilled or roasted but can also be eaten raw in salads.

Where does the Coop get garlic scapes from?

We have been getting them from Lancaster Farm Fresh Co-op the past few seasons.

How do they sell?

They sell very well during the short growing period. We go through about 10 cases a week.

TWO DELICIOUS GARLIC SCAPE RECIPES:

GARLIC SCAPE PESTO

Adapted from seriouseats.com

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup coarsely chopped garlic scapes
- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice plus 1 teaspoon grated zest (from 1 lemon)
- 1/4 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 1/4 cup washed basil leaves, with water still clinging to the leaves
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup pistachio oil
- salt
- black pepper

Directions:

Combine scapes, pine nuts, lemon juice and zest, and season with salt. Add to a food processor and process for about one minute. Add cheese and process for about 30 seconds. Add basil and pulse until finely minced, about ten one-second pulses.

Transfer to a bowl. Slowly pour oils into a bowl while stirring mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

GARLIC SCAPE AND BACON STIR FRY

Adapted from bonappetit.com

Ingredients:

- 3 thick-cut slices of bacon or a similar amount of pancetta
- 1/2 pound garlic scapes, chopped into roughly 2" pieces
- Soy sauce

Directions:

1. Roughly chop bacon or pancetta.
2. Add to a wok or cast-iron pan over medium to high heat. Cook until browned. There should be enough rendered fat for the garlic scapes to sizzle in. (If the pan looks dry add a little neutral oil.)
3. Throw in garlic scapes and stir-fry for three to four minutes, until scapes are tender but still have a crunch. Sprinkle with soy sauce to taste, then remove from heat.

Anita Bushell is a freelance writer who has been published in Friends Journal, Ford Foundation Report, and Uncensored: American Experiences with Poverty and Homelessness. She just published her debut novel, One Way to Whitefish. anitabushell.com

YOUR CLOTHES HAVE A LITTLE WEAR AND TEAR? SHE'LL REPAIR!

June 4, 2025



MEET SUSTAINABILITY SEAMSTRESS LIBBY FEARNLEY

May 13, 2025

By Liz Welch

I was cooking dinner when it happened—a big splotch of oil leapt from the pan onto my brand new sweatshirt. One that I love—for its fit and feel! Also, my first hemp clothing purchase! (Jungmaven for those who want to know.) To say I was bummed would be an understatement. I did not want to throw it away (even though it was biodegradable), and I certainly did not want to donate a stained top to Goodwill.

And then I had a thought: The splotch was smack dab in the middle of my chest. What if I found a way to turn into an even cooler sweatshirt? I went onto Etsy and found an embroidered patch that looked like a black and white version of the

Cheshire Cat from Alice in Wonderland. I texted my friend and fellow Coop member since 2010 (food processing shift, to be exact), Libby Fearnley, who takes sustainable fashion to a whole new (literally and figuratively) level.

I have a job for you!

Libby started her Instagram account @TheBigKeep in June 2023. Her first post was an image of her sewing machine and the caption, “Keeping is part of who I am. It’s not hoarding. It’s not clinging. It’s a respect for the life and energy embedded into every fiber of our lives.”



PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

Seamstress Libby Fearnley

The first example of what she meant by “keeping” was a tunic that was given to her by a friend who no longer wore it. It was the perfect style for Libby’s then postpartum body. She shared two images: the knee length, sleeveless button up pale gray chambray tunic, then the chic crop top she turned it into. The Instagram caption reads: “I removed about six inches from the midsection, added a waist seam, taking in the excess at the center front placket and adding a center back seam, because I like the curved hem.”

With her spitfire imagination and years-long commitment to fighting everyday waste, Libby has made it her mission to reincarnate beloved items—as well as those that have been spilled on, munched on by moths, worn through, or worse.

This is not your typical tailor drop off: Libby brings life to beloved items. Another few items that she has lovingly repaired: her husband’s favorite jeans, whose back pocket was rendered nearly nonexistent by his wallet; her baby’s worn out romper, retrofitted. (She removed the scratchy collar, fixed the crumpled applique and replaced the spent elastic in order to give it to a relative’s newborn.)

Libby was out for a run one day when she dreamed up Keep. The mother of three boys, and a former fashion designer for labels including Aeropostale, Express and Jones New York, Libby was looking for a way to marry her expertise and her passion for sustainability.

WITH HER SPITFIRE IMAGINATION AND YEARS-LONG COMMITMENT TO FIGHTING EVERYDAY WASTE, LIBBY HAS MADE IT HER MISSION TO REINCARNATE BELOVED ITEMS.

After graduating from Syracuse University with a degree in fashion, Libby got a job designing women’s sportswear and sleepwear for the May Department stores in St

Louis. That gig had her crisscrossing the globe, to Hong Kong, Korea and India working with partners in each place to make samples. She moved to New York with May, and there found a new job at a smaller leather company called Bernardo. For this role, she visited the factories where the clothing was made. “I remember going to one in mainland China in December, and it was freezing cold,” she says. “Everyone had their puffer coats on—I could not imagine working these industrial sewing machines with frigid fingers.”

Eventually, she began working as a freelance designer in the world of fast fashion, which she found depressing.

“Old men were discussing what 14-year-old girls should be wearing,” she recalls. “It was gross. They had no interest in my input.”

At one job, she was called a diva for not wanting to move into a new department, when she was eight-months pregnant with her first child. “My boss said, who do you think you are? J.Lo?”



It was during her maternity leave when she began to reconsider her career.

“There was so much stress around making something that was not having a positive impact on the world,” she explains. Plus, the pressure-cooker life was not conducive to new motherhood. Working with factories in Asia, where their morning was her evening, often meant returning home at midnight.

The final straw was when a woman she was working for said: “Libby, I think you’re forgetting that our customers are followers. We’re designing for the follower, not the leader.”

Instead of returning to that thankless world, Fearnley stayed home and had another son. When her husband, a professor of organic chemistry at CUNY, took a sabbatical, the family went to Cambridge, England for a year. “I wasn’t working,” she recalls, “and so instead of buying new clothes, I bought a needle and thread.”

A seed was planted.

Fearnley first learned to sew in a middle school home economics class—and then honed her practice in college. During her junior year abroad in London, she interned for the designer Sonia Nuttyal. “I sewed lots of buttons, hooks-and-eyes by hand sewing,” she recalls. “And lots of hems, too!” Being back in England with her family all those years later reminded her of her love of hand sewing—this time, she was mending her family’s clothing instead of designer clothes.

And then, when she returned to New York, she received a mailer for “Sustainable Fashion Entrepreneurship” classes at FIT. Six three-hour classes for \$115 each lead to her certificate in sustainable design. “It was 2013, so the term was still new,” she says. “The more I read about it, the more I thought, this makes so much sense!”

One of her biggest struggles in the corporate world of fashion was the practice of over-sampling. “I’d design one style, and they’d sample it from four or five different factories in four or five different colors,” she says. “That meant 25 samples for one style. And if you did a long-sleeve version, that meant 50.” In order to save on paying duty taxes, the samples were “mutilated”—either by ripping, or cutting the item before being shipped overseas. “It was painful,” Fearnley recalls. “After we were done, we had to throw them all out.”



At FIT, she submerged herself in this growing field that focused on making clothing not just more environmentally conscious, whether by recycling textiles, or making fibers out of bacteria. She also learned about workers' rights. "There are factories that hold on to migrant workers' passports—so they're trapped because they don't have the documentation to leave," she explains. "Some places use forced child labor. It's hideous."

The more she learned, the more impassioned she became, and even began teaching a course in the Sustainable Fashion curriculum called "Current Events and Innovations in Sustainable Fashion" as the field was evolving so rapidly, there was always a new technology to report on. By this point, she was raising three children on her husband's income in a one-bedroom apartment, supplementing with teaching and a few writing jobs.

All the while, her sister was passing along hand-me-downs from her two boys, for Libby's to wear next. "I learned how to mend out of need, not out of desire—and I found

it to be really satisfying.”

Fast forward to the fateful run in Prospect Park in the spring of 2023. Libby was wondering how she could make more money in the field she loved. “While I market myself as a sustainability expert in fashion, finding work in corporate sustainability requires a Master’s degree,” she explains. “I’ve probably applied for over 100 jobs over the past five years—and have had two interviews and not made it past that point. The universe was sending me a signal.”



PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

Reporter Liz Welch holding her “patched” sweatshirt

As she was wondering what else she could do, she ran past a sign that read KEEP RIGHT—and had an epiphany.

“‘Keep’ has so many meanings,” she says. “To hold on to something. Or, ‘how are you keeping?’ Like, ‘how are you doing?’ Also, the company you keep is key. There was something about that word that resonated.” On that run and many others, she continued to meditate on this idea as it related to sustainable fashion. “I’d be running and would stop to take notes on my phone,” she says. She kept coming back to the idea that she wanted her next venture to be about more than fixing clothes.

“Tailors can hem and mend things,” she explains. “This felt bigger to me. It’s about taking the time to figure out what material things are important to us. What is worth putting energy into? Fixing the broken things that matter.”

Like my hemp sweatshirt! The one that I brought to Libby and she turned it into my now favorite top—and made a terrific reel about the process with the caption, “This keeper didn’t give up on this cozy @jungmaven sweatshirt when it got stained! Instead, they asked me to sew this rad cat patch over the stain. Consider it kept!”

“I WASN’T WORKING, AND SO INSTEAD OF BUYING NEW CLOTHES, I BOUGHT A NEEDLE AND THREAD.”

LIBBY FEARNLEY

I was so pleased—with the item, the concept and the video—that I shared the reel with a bunch of friends. Word has gotten out that Libby will repair your favorite moth eaten cardigan, or patch your beloved blue jeans. She gets a lot of puffer coats with annoying tears, as well as baby blankets. She can also do more elaborate repairs—

like a pair of tapestry slacks.



PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

Cheshire Cat patch

She often makes reels of her repairs, and last December, one of them went viral. It happened to star another keeper: her father.

"I tried to order my dad a replacement of his favorite Scottish flat cap and learned that it was going to take 16 weeks, which was not enough time before his 80th birthday," she says. "So I found a pattern online but still couldn't get our family tartan fabric in ample time." Instead, she used her kids' tartan ties they had outgrown. As she was disassembling them, she discovered that they were moth eaten.

"I threw them in the freezer for a few days, then took them apart and patchworked together the flat cap," she says. It was sentimental as she remembered her dad buying that cap when she was studying abroad in London. "We made a trip to Inverness,

where our people hail from,” she recalls. It was on that trip that he bought his beloved hat, which he wore for more than a decade before absentmindedly leaving it on top of his car and then driving off.”

Libby’s video entails her process—starting with her son’s tartan ties—and then ends it with her dad opening her gift. When he realizes she made it for him, he gets emotional. He puts it on and smiles wide, “I love it! I love it!” he says. “What’s lost has been found!”

Libby has recently launched a workshop series so she can share her skills. So far, she has taught a basic mending class, a denim workshop and another about sock darning. A visible mending workshop is upcoming.

For more information about Keep and upcoming workshops, go to: www.keepmending.com.

Liz Welch is a writer and book collaborator. She worked with designer Prabal Gurung on his new memoir Walk Like A Girl.

COORDINATORS’ CORNER: A CALL FOR ALL MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE UPCOMING BOARD ELECTION

June 4, 2025

COORDINATORS' CORNER

May 13, 2025

By the General Coordinator Team

As General Coordinators (GCs), we are urging all Coop members to vote in this year's especially important Board of Directors election. Your participation is crucial to the future health of our Coop. Below, we share why the GCs are endorsing four specific candidates who we believe will best preserve our member-driven democracy and serve the Coop as a whole.

WHAT HAPPENED LAST YEAR

In 2024, a group called Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine (PMP) mobilized over 2,500 members to elect two Board candidates: Tess Brown-Lavoie and Keyian Vafai. These candidates did not disclose any affiliation with PMP in their candidate statements. Meanwhile, PMP encouraged its supporters—through direct emails and other internal communications—to vote “yes” on their slate and “no” on others. Many members were unaware that a coordinated campaign was underway.

This type of organized bloc voting—where an internal group works behind the scenes to influence the outcome—is unprecedented in Coop history. And it’s happening again this year.

WHAT’S AT STAKE THIS YEAR

There are eight candidates running for two open seats on the Board. PMP has again endorsed two candidates, and Coop 4 Unity, a group formed in response to PMP’s organizing, has endorsed two others. These endorsements reflect the presence of voting blocs within the Coop, with each group supporting candidates aligned with their interests.

Based on candidate statements, remarks at the March General Meeting, letters to the Gazette and other communications, it’s clear that several candidates hold strong views aligned with one group or the other. Yet, not all have disclosed those affiliations. Of the four candidates endorsed by these groups, only two—both backed by Coop 4 Unity—have acknowledged the endorsement. The others remain silent, even as PMP, the group supporting them, works behind the scenes to mobilize voters. Members deserve full transparency when evaluating candidates, especially when endorsements may reflect a stronger allegiance to group interests than to the Coop’s governance as a whole.

Below, we outline candidates’ known affiliations:

Name	Coop 4 Unity	PSFC Members for Palestine	No Known Affiliation
Brandon West			X
Dan Kaminsky		X	
Elizabeth Tobier			X
Lynn Husum			X

Name	Coop 4 Unity	PSFC Members for Palestine	No Known Affiliation
Noah Potter	X		
Ralph Yozzo	X		
Serko Artinian			X
Taylor Pate		X	

WHY WE'RE SPEAKING UP NOW

The Coop's Board does not, and never has, initiated policy changes at the Coop. Rather, its core function is to ratify decisions made by the membership at General Meetings (GMs), not to advance personal views or the platform of any internal or external group. That core responsibility—upholding the democratic will of the membership at GMs—is set aside only in rare cases, when following the membership's GM vote would expose the Coop to legal or serious operational risk.

Unfortunately, that traditional role of the Board is being tested. We're seeing increasingly organized efforts by ideologically-driven member groups to capture seats on the Board. When Board members come in with fixed agendas or loyalty to a single-issue platform, they may be less inclined to uphold GM decisions they disagree with—even if those decisions reflect the will of the membership. That shift would undermine our system of direct democracy and destabilize the governance model that has helped the Coop survive and thrive for more than 50 years.

WE NEED KEEPERS OF THE FLAME

We must protect the Coop's 52-year tradition of direct democracy. That means electing Board members who understand and respect our bylaws, and who are committed to reflecting the will of the membership—not advancing one issue or ideology.

We are calling on members to vote for independent candidates—those not affiliated

with any internal group. Those that are not running as part of a slate or with the backing of any group. They've made clear that their focus is on the Coop as a whole.

The Coop has an unusual voting structure. Members can vote yes and no for all candidates. We strongly encourage members to vote **YES** for independent candidates. You may vote for as many candidates as you wish.

LET'S NOT LOSE WHAT MAKES THE COOP WORK

This election is not just about two board seats. It's about protecting a governance model that reflects the voice of all members—not just the most organized or vocal.

The Coop's Board of Directors has just six seats. If a majority are held by individuals whose priorities are shaped more by personal views, or by the views of the groups endorsing them, than by a commitment to the Coop as a whole, it will create a serious imbalance and influence how decisions are made going forward. We believe this is a crucial moment and are urging all members to participate in this election.

Please cast your proxy vote when the email with a unique link arrives by the end of May. And please encourage your Coop friends to do the same. This election matters.

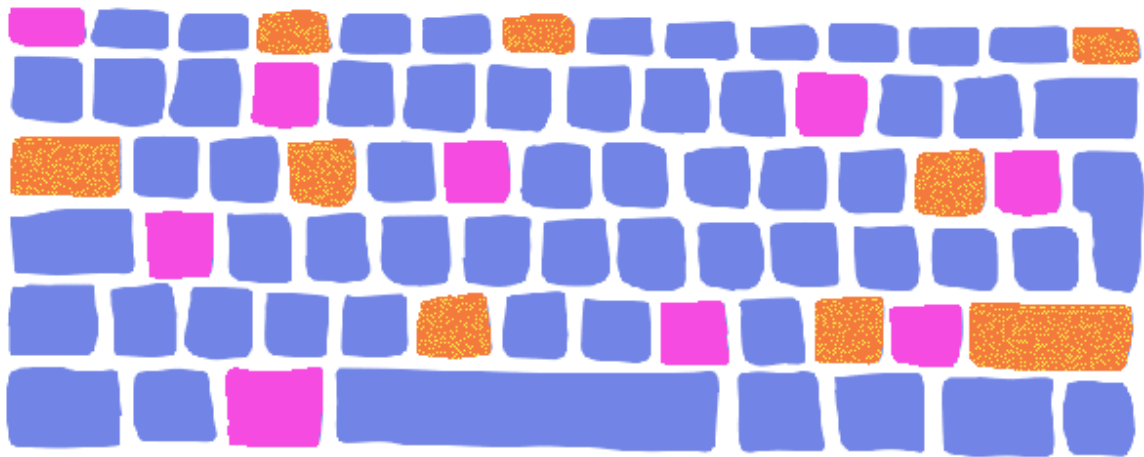
The email ballots will be combined with votes cast in person at the Coop's Annual Meeting on June 24, when results will be announced.

The GCs have a long history of endorsing Board candidates—dating back to the 1990s—at the request of members. While we've stepped back from doing so in recent years, this year we believe it's necessary to return to that practice.

MAY 13, 2025

June 4, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



SEARCH FOR OPEN WORK SHIFTS IN YOUR CALENDAR APPLICATION!

Fellow members,

Everyone is familiar with the work shift system. You sign up for a labor shift every six weeks or so for the privilege of shopping at the Coop.

With the freelance system, there's a small calculus involved to determine whether you should sign up for a shift: are you actually free to work at that time?

I have a convenient solution for this problem! I created a calendar that mirrors the Coop's open shifts and you can add it to your favorite calendar application like Google Calendar, Microsoft Outlook or Apple Calendar.

Primarily, you can now view open work shifts against your personal calendar for assurance of your availability at the work shift time.

You can also do other intuitive stuff like keyword search for shifts, copy shifts to your calendar, and navigate to the shift sign up page on the Coop website to confirm the shift on your Coop account.

Hopefully, this eases your work shift planning. I pray you are never labor suspended at the Coop ever again.

You can find the links to add the open work shift calendar to calendar application here: <https://github.com/rexledesma/foodcoop-shift-calendar>.

In solidarity,

Rex Ledesma

NAOMI GATHERING!

Dear Coop Members,

Is your name Naomi? You are invited to a Naomi-only gathering to discuss Naomi Klein's book, *Doppelganger*. *Doppelganger* is about, among other things, being repeatedly confused with another Naomi.

- When: May 31, 2025 at 2:00 pm (rain date June 7, 2025 at 2:00pm)
- Where: Prospect Park Long Meadow, as north as you can get before hitting the paths (about a five minute walk from Grand Army Plaza)
- Why: For fun!

You're welcome to come if your name is Naomi. If your name is Naomy, Nomi, Noemi, or something similar, please join us as well. Bring a blanket and a snack to share, or not, and your copy of *Doppelganger*. (We will try to get Naomi Klein to show up, but no promises.) Tell all the Naomis in your life!

Sincerely,

Naomi Becker, One of the Coop Naomis

THE MYTH OF PLASTIC RECYCLING

Dear Coop members:

I read with interest the detailed and accurate environmental committee report by Stephanie Wilson about the items that NYC collects: "Recycling is Easier Than You Think" in the March 11 issue of the *Gazette*.

It is important to know what happens to all the plastic we put into those bins.

Plastics were invented in 1907. Since then, virtually ALL plastic items manufactured are still on this planet—either in landfills, as litter, in the oceans and virtually everywhere—microplastics have been found at astounding levels in every organ of our bodies! The only exceptions are plastics that have been incinerated—a process that releases microplastics and many highly toxic compounds into the air.

Plastic recycling is a myth created by petrochemical companies and chemical companies who frack ethane gas and manufacture plastics. They fear loss of market for their fossil fuel products due to increased efficiency of automobiles and green power alternatives. Therefore, plastics have become their growth industry. These companies invest a fortune in marketing touting recycling so that consumers will feel good about using plastics.

At best, only five to six percent of plastics actually get recycled (mostly in the few states with bottle bills)—and even those are mostly downcycled.

Plastic waste not only comprises a major source of deadly pollution; the extraction of starting materials and the manufacturing processes are major sources of greenhouse gases, thus climate change. Furthermore, toxic ethane cracking plants are located near poor and marginalized communities in which cancer and disease rates soar above the national average.

An excellent source of information is www.beyondplastics.org

I believe the Coop should do everything possible to reduce plastics on our shelves and inform our members about the many ruses such as bioplastics and so-called “green products” that are actually full of plastics.

Sincerely,

Will Boorstein

WHAT DOES THE COOP STAND FOR?

Greetings:

I have been a member of the Coop since 2008 and value its continued existence as a not-for-profit cooperative that provides affordable and healthy food. Cooperatives are political entities by default, because they present an alternative to undemocratic top-down for-profit organizational structures. However, there are those who want the Coop to be “apolitical” and remain silent while a country, whose defense we fund with our taxes, commits genocide.

I have been ashamed of the Coop’s inaction on the violence being carried out by Israel’s far right government in Gaza and the West Bank. At this point, I can only attribute inaction as a sign of indifference to Palestinian life and hostility towards Coop members like myself who believe in universal human rights, oppose genocide and expect the Coop to live up to its values.

In its inaction, the Coop is standing with those who demand the unconditional support of an ethno-nationalist and racist regime aligned with the Trump administration.

As the child of a torture survivor from Chile, I proudly told the story of the PSFC boycotting Chilean products during the Pinochet regime. Now, I’m ashamed to even call myself a member.

Sincerely,

Joao M. Da Silva

REPREHENSIBLE BEHAVIOR ON ALL SIDES

Dear Coop Members:

The Members for Palestine announced that the April 29 meeting at City Tech was cancelled because of a letter from an external activist group.

I read the letter sent to City Tech and found it morally disgusting: it has inaccurate statements about past general meetings, accusations based on flimsy speculation and bigoted innuendos about the Palestine Members. The group that sent the letter should be ashamed of themselves.

But the letter has kernels of truth. It is true both that the Palestine Members want the Coop to join the external Boycott, Divest, Sanction Israel (BDS) movement and that changing the bylaws to enable hybrid meetings is part one in their three-part strategy to do so (as they repeatedly state in their emails). It is also true that their effort to get members to vote for their hybrid proposal is not transparent: when they leaflet outside the Coop, they don't advertise their real motivation for hybrid (to align the Coop with BDS ideology) or why they are in such a hurry (they are eager for a BDS win).

I also read the Members for Palestine's email to their listserv sent after the meeting was cancelled. They refer to a group of their fellow Coop members as "Zionists"—not to describe those members' political affiliation, but as a dehumanizing label. It's dehumanizing because the Members for Palestine refuse to engage in any dialogue to learn about the diverse opinions of the members opposed to their BDS ideology, not one of whom supports "genocide" or "killing innocent families," and all of whom value coexistence. Instead of sincere efforts to communicate, the Members for Palestine prefer using "Zionist" as a slur to justify excluding their fellow members from the "equality," "diversity" and "cooperation" principles they claim to uphold. I find that morally disgusting, too.

Sincerely,

Zara Watkins

A VENUE FOR THE “HYBRID MEETINGS” GM VOTE

Dear fellow members:

Finding a venue for the hybrid meetings vote has proven difficult. Hybrid meetings are attractive, providing opportunity for wider participation, but some Coop members and General Coordinators have resisted them. Zionist members, by definition pro-Israel, have threatened leaving the Coop given subsequently successful hybrid and boycott votes. And Coordinators seem acutely concerned with the possibility of such an exiting of Zionist members.

(Why refer to “Zionists” rather than “Jews”? Zionism is the secular movement that established the “Jewish State,”—despite a substantial non-Jewish minority—and continues its half-century-plus occupation of Palestine. Many pro-boycott and anti-Zionism members are themselves Jews. The ultra-orthodox Williamsburg Hasidim are anti-Zionism and pro-boycott, supporting virtually every pro-Palestinian rally! Alternatively, there are far more fanatically pro-Israel Christian Zionists than Jewish ones! Clearly, both Jews and non-Jews are pro- and anti-Zionism.)

Anti-BDS letters have claimed that a boycott “will alienate a number of Coop members,” citing the Coop’s mission statement, which describes being “welcoming and accessible to all” and which “respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every members.” “Welcoming all” will obviously continue, regardless. Respecting “opinions, needs and concerns” doesn’t mean abjectly submitting to them. We cannot control how people “feel,” but foregoing a GM vote to satisfy such claims rewards what is little more than emotional blackmail. And it’s certainly not respectful of the opinions and concerns of

those calling for hybrid meetings.

Hybrid meetings—and when needed, virtual meetings—can work. No chance for disruptions like the one that occurred at the April 2015 GM, where Zionist members took over the stage, plunging the meeting into turmoil. Nothing in the bylaws prevents meetings from being held virtually, as were all the GMs during the Covid era. Those GMs did not require anything other than necessity. And neither should this proposal be denied a vote for spurious reasons.

Sincerely,

David Barouh

THE CASE FOR A MEMBER BYLAW AMENDMENT

To my fellow Coop members,

I was scheduled to present item 910 on the original agenda for the April GM.

Agenda item 910 is titled “Amending Coop bylaws, policies and procedures to ensure the Coop’s survival and success.” Given the late change in location of the April meeting, I unfortunately will not be able to present my item.

Time has passed since my submission a few short weeks ago and I’ve had time to reflect based on communications from other members from last month’s *Linewaiters’ Gazette* as well as online via various social media accounts. Now, I believe that item 910 is timelier than ever given many voices pushing towards more democracy within the Coop.

What does democracy look like within the Coop and how do we abide by its princi-

ples?

During my presentation, I planned to discuss:

1. Educating GM attendees on their individual approval and adherence to both the Rochdale Principles of Cooperation and—more importantly—commitment to the International Cooperative Alliance's (ICA) guidelines
2. Reinforcement of ICA's 2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control, which clearly outlines how democratic process is defined within a cooperative organization plus management of a cooperative's democratic governance
3. Highlight why the Coop needs to instill a bylaw amendment study committee to evaluate the existing bylaws and to ensure that, as the Coop evolves, processes to amend the bylaws will mitigate any biases through pillars of objectivity, consistency and transparency.

We are moving away from unity and members are currently being both verbally and electronically harassed for their identities, which is not acceptable. A sound, formal review group will mitigate any bias in voting and—hopefully—will ensure that we're upholding the foundational principles that we all signed up to follow.

In solidarity,

Zachary Zaban

CITY TECH NEEDED ONLY ONE REASON.

Dear Coop:

City Tech cancelled the PSFC General Meeting for April 29 and the usual single-issue boycott crew here are screaming conspiracy and racism and we-wuz-robbed. Yawn.

What they refuse to acknowledge is that the cancellation was justified. City Tech Theatre was sent a letter with a screenshot of an openly published Mailchimp announcement. Attributed to the boycott crew, it advertised the GM as a way to push forward what hundreds of millions of others worldwide see as the hateful boycotting of Israel. This announcement lay in stark contrast to the deceptively bland billing ("PSFC General Meeting" and "Hybrid Voting") sold to City Tech. Those are the facts. Read the Mailchimp announcement, then put yourself in the chair of any theatre or institutional administrator comparing these conflicting documents on their desk. I wager the eager presenters were judged as two-faced on their own merits, and cancelled like any other duplicitous customer.

This GM was an underhanded attempt to ram a hateful boycott through the court of public opinion. Those who created the GM proposal need to explain themselves, no one else. Selling wildly differing stories even in the name of human rights is still called lying. Rejection is called accountability.

What thousands of other lies and omissions has this group told us under the guise of free speech and human rights? When will our committees finally ban this cancerous, officially unrecognized, faction from our Cooperative?

Best,

Jesse Rosenfeld

THE COST TO THE COOP OF FIGHTING ONE ANOTHER

Greetings:

The controversy at Columbia University over student protests related to the war in Gaza has developed into a full-blown confrontation and quickly subsumed the institution into a chaotic spin. The same kind of thing can happen to the Coop, if we permit it. Grappling with a hot political issue offers no benefit to the store and can do it real damage.

The nation is in turmoil now, the right and left glaring at each other across a no person's land. I suggest that we suspend decisions that can foul the feelings of members toward each other.

There is always a way without violence. The Coop must keep clear of supporting either side and advocate for a settlement that ends hostility. Taking sides only perpetuates it.

Sincerely,

Rodger Parsons

HYBRID MEETINGS: WE CAN DO THIS

Greetings:

As a sponsor of the proposal to make General Meetings hybrid, I have to say that the fear of this commonsense step feels overblown. Here's a link to our proposal, including recommendations for implementation, developed alongside fellow members with professional expertise producing hybrid events.

Members express concerns that hybrid meetings will cost too much. We found the cost for what the Coop needs is low. Necessary equipment is largely covered by the Picnic House and the Coop, with additional needs being a camera and tripod, one--

time costs of \$300-\$400.

The Zoom tier the Coop currently subscribes to accommodates 300 participants, and scales up at \$0.16-0.50 per participant, depending on meeting size: for example, Webinars for 1,000 members cost \$340/month, or \$0.34/participant.

SimplyVoting, which we've used for several votes, costs \$200/ballot, accommodating 200 voters; that price also scales depending on the participant-count. Voting for 1,000 members costs \$500, bringing the cost for 1,000-person meetings to \$840, alongside the Zoom upgrade. Our rental at City Tech to vote on this proposal—had it taken place—would have cost us \$7,000+.

People also worry about privacy in hybrid meetings. I share this concern, but want to point out Zoom's safety features, which the Chair Committee utilized during Lock-down. Zoom offers watermark features to identify recordings' origins: screen recordings superimpose your email, and audio recordings are encoded with inaudible information that allows Zoom to identify the accounts from which recordings are made. If virtual participants can only register using emails on file with the Coop, we can identify anyone who might make and share a recording.

Of course, this is a big change, and we should be thoughtful about how we move forward. But hybrid meetings shouldn't scare us! We can do this.

In cooperation,

Morgan Võ

WHY DOES NOBODY SAY: THIS ENDS HERE

Dear Agenda Committee:

April 13, 2025—Cody Allen Balmer set fire to the Pennsylvania Governor's Residence in Harrisburg while the governor, a Jew, and his family were inside—for Palestine.

August 10, 2024—Kingston Avenue, Crown Heights. Vincent Sumpter stabbed a Jewish man, missing his heart by centimeters—for Palestine.

May 29, 2024—An East Flatbush yeshiva. Asghar Ali drove his car onto the sidewalk, attempting to strike a group of Orthodox Jewish students and rabbis—for Palestine.

January 26, 2025—The Park Slope restaurant *Miriam*. At 3 AM, three masked individuals defaced the storefront with red paint—for Palestine.

May 31, 2024—The Brooklyn Museum. Demonstrators graffitied the OY/YO sculpture, causing \$100,000 in damage—for Palestine.

Acts against Jewish individuals and business are indefensible. They do not ease the suffering in Gaza nor do they influence Israeli policy. They serve only one purpose: to deprive Jews of the most basic civil right—the right to safety in the public space.

In New York City, there have been more than 500 confirmed hate crimes targeting Jews since October 7, 2023.

The BDS movement rhetoric, which recasts the Jewish state as uniquely evil and Jews as imposters, inspires, encourages and incites this violence.

The Members for Palestine are attempting to amend the Coop's by-laws for the sole purpose of enabling a vote to endorse BDS.

Even if a BDS motion is defeated, simply entertaining the possibility of supporting BDS at the Coop will further normalize this false, toxic narrative—and further endanger Jews.

How is this even under consideration in a Coop that claims to be devoted to equality and inclusion?

Why is no one saying: this ends here?

Sincerely,

Barbara Mazor

IS THE COOP FASCISM ADJACENT?

Dear Coop community:

I am outraged that the vote on hybrid GM scheduled for April 29 was cancelled without any explanation. I have since learned that the cancellation was engineered by a pro-Zionist group called End Jew Hate and it isn't clear how that group got involved with PSFC's business. What is clear is that the Coop for Unity group has opposed the boycott of products from Israel since BDS was proposed years ago and their extreme rhetoric about PSFC4Pal set the stage for what occurred with City Tech.

Meanwhile the genocide perpetuated by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people continues, along with the ongoing occupation and apartheid state. The total destruction of homes, hospitals, schools across Gaza and the West Bank, the ruthless killing and starving of fellow humans is an unfathomable horror and a disgrace. By purchasing products from Israel we are complicit in these atrocities.

I joined PSFC 40 years ago and for most of those years was proud to be part of an organization that had integrity and stood for the values I believe in. I trusted that the leaders were ethical, representing our membership, choosing products that were healthy, local, humanely raised, etc. I shared in the work and enjoyed being part of a

strong collective. The bitter division and behind the scenes manipulation by the board and GCs over BDS have soured me to the coop and I am disgusted by this latest sham.

We, as a coop based on fairness and justice, should be in the forefront of the fight against fascism. Instead we are facing the same blind self righteousness dividing our country. The same fear and loathing that justifies deporting people for speaking out, or for no reason at all, is preventing a democratic vote from happening at PSFC.

Every member of our Coop deserves to be heard and vote in a hybrid GM on the question of boycotting Israel.

Sincerely,

Sarah Safford, member since 1985

STOP STYMYING THE SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP

Dear Coop Members:

A small group of extremists have once again delayed a vote on hybrid General Meetings, scheduled for April 29, through a coordinated campaign of harassment and threats against the venue set to host: last year at Brooklyn College, this year at CUNY.

To state the obvious: pressure groups use these anti-democratic tactics because they know their positions are unpopular. I agree with them on the facts: when there is a vote on continuing hybrid general meetings, it will pass easily. When there is a vote on the BDS proposal, polling suggests that it will also pass easily.

The question remains why the overly credulous General Coordinators keep folding under the pressure. Specific individuals are repeatedly preventing the smooth democratic functioning of the Coop, and the same individuals are repeatedly published in the *Gazette* trying to normalize and justify their radical positions. Why not vote?

Sincerely,

Mac Simonson

ABOUT OUR MEETINGS

Dear Fellow Members:

If we're blocked from having a large in-person meeting, we should have a plan B and use the secure online vote that we have in place for board elections and coop-wide polls and referenda. Whatever the reasons, we have been prevented from renting an appropriately sized venue at least twice.

It's the height of "uncooperative behavior" to threaten venues. Those members should face the disciplinary committee for attempting to block our GM governance and wasting everybody's time.

I'm in favor of hybrid meetings because monthly physical attendance for three hours at the Picnic House on a Tuesday night is clearly too big a burden for participation in Coop governance. People with children, mobility issues, medical concerns or work commitments all deserve a say. The pandemic prompted us to figure out other tools that we can use. This is an opportunity to fix and update Coop governance.

Sincerely,

EVIDENCE THAT HYBRID GMS ARE A GOOD IDEA

Dear Coop members:

I write to address Elizabeth Tobier's letter, which deems hybrid General Meetings a "bad idea." Tobier suggests hybrid meetings would not draw many attendees. However, I believe all Coop members deserve equal access to democracy at every meeting.

Joe Holtz estimates 150 people as the average attendance at in-person GMs. Running the numbers provided by Tobier, average online attendance was 169. Even excluding the outliers of several meetings with higher attendance, such as the May and June 2020 meetings with 500 or 600 participants each, the average is 135.

One hundred and thirty-five attendees for online GMs is not far from 150 attendees in person. And of course, hybrid meetings will combine in-person and online attendance.

Importantly, there's currently no way to accommodate more than a fraction of our 16,000 person membership in the Picnic House, whose maximum capacity is 255. Case in point: our proposal was flagged by the GCs as necessitating a larger venue of 800-1,000. It's been in the Agenda Committee's queue since December 2023, but the GCs still haven't found a way for members to vote, in spite of the significant response it's received. Our current set-up means that the proposals that are the most interesting or important to members are the least likely to be heard.

Ultimately, our proposal to make GMs hybrid is not about numbers. It's about providing access to participate in democracy. If hybrid meetings increase access for even one Coop member who's disabled, a parent or caregiver or can't make it to the Picnic House on a Tuesday night, that's worth it. More likely, this will increase access for

many members and make our Coop more truly democratic. I invite you to read our full proposal, and to advocate for it to be brought to a vote. It's a good idea!

Best,

CJ Glackin

COOK WITH THE COOP!

June 4, 2025

THE PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP
COOKING SQUAD PRESENTS
PLANT-BASED INDIAN COOKING

Wednesday, May 21st

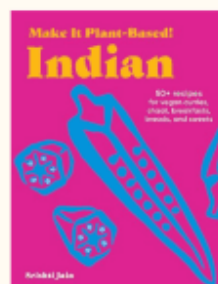
7:30 pm EDT

WITH
SRISHTI JAIN



Srishti is a Californian-Indian food writer, recipe-developer, and vegetarian chef. She is known for her supper clubs and pop-ups in San Francisco, New York, London, and beyond as well as her work as a chef at various Brooklyn restaurants. Srishti also writes a newsletter inspiring home chefs to build their own menus and host more dinner parties. In this class, she'll be making **Lemon Rice** from her cookbook Make It Plant Based Indian, which will be released this May. You can find her on Instagram @srishti.jpg

Sign up here!



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May 13, 2025

Cooked white rice, crunchy fried peanuts and fresh lemon juice are all you need to make this iteration of what Guest Chef and Coop Member Srishti Jain likes to call “Indian fried rice.” Join Jain and the Coop Cooking Squad for *Plant-Based Indian Cooking* on Wednesday, May 21, at 7:30 p.m. EDT on Zoom as part of the Coop’s monthly cooking series. Jain is a Californian-Indian food writer, recipe-developer, and vegetarian chef.

ABOUT THE CHEF

Srishti Jain, who grew up in the Bay area, fuses Western produce and Eastern cuisine. Her creativity with vegetables and pastry skills has expanded throughout her career, working as a chef and hosting supper clubs and pop-ups in San Francisco, New York, London, and beyond. She also writes a newsletter, inspiring home chefs to build their own menus and host more dinner parties. She currently resides in Brooklyn with her cat, Clam. Find her work on Instagram @srishti.jpg and her upcoming cookbook here: *Make It Plant Based*.

RSVP, PARTICIPATE, AND FOLLOW

Sign up for classes, download recipes and find shopping lists to cook along from home at foodcoopcooks.org. As classes are added, they will show up on the Squad’s home page. Check back regularly for updates! Follow the Cooking Squad on Instagram at [instagram.com/foodcoopcooks](https://www.instagram.com/foodcoopcooks) for more content including shopping sessions with guest chefs!

TEACH A CLASS

The Cooking Committee is looking for guest chefs to share their food expertise, traditions, and special treats. Members receive FTOP credit for preparing and delivering classes. Tell us what you want to teach at foodcoopcooks.org/contact.