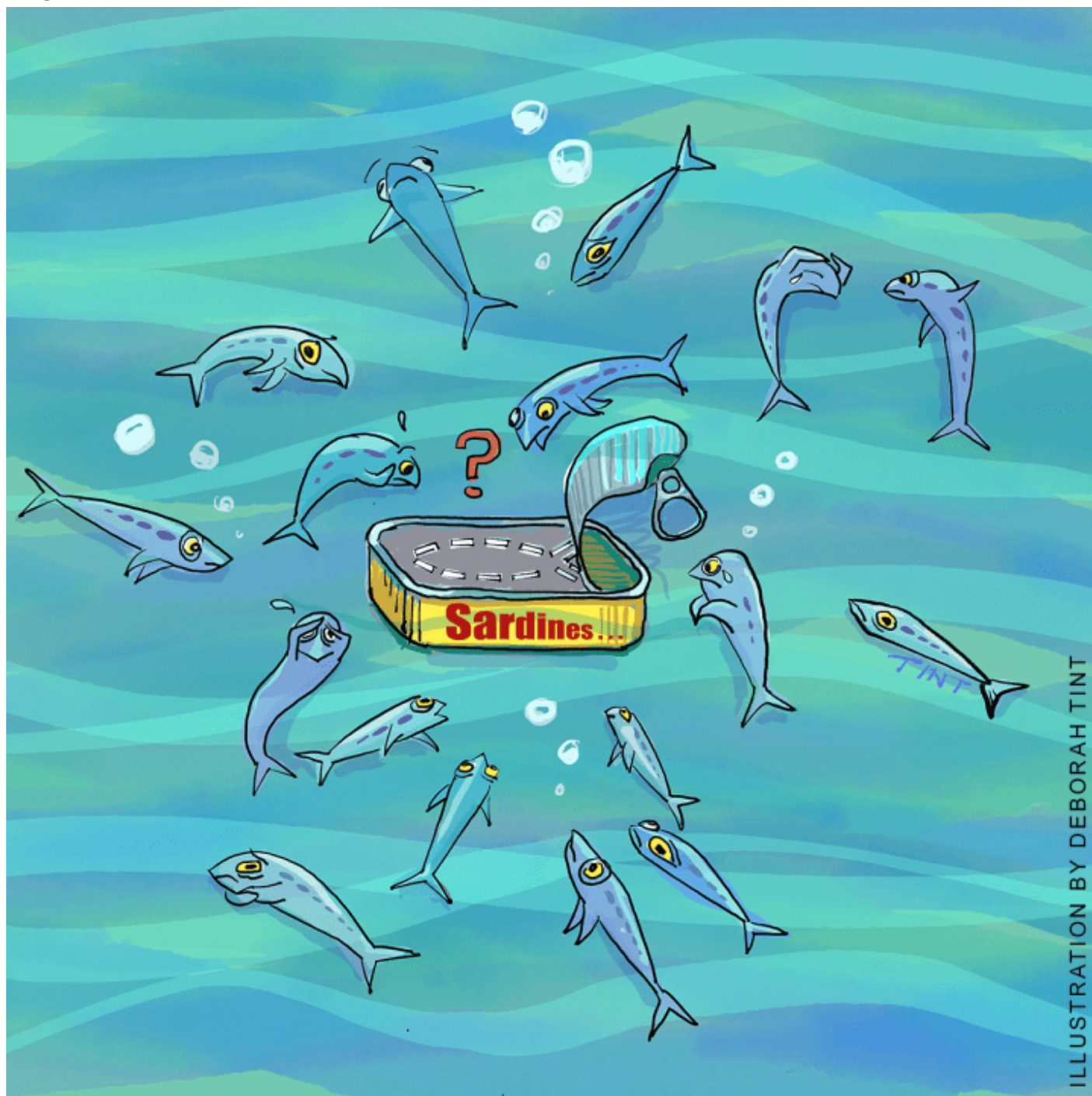


THE SARDINE SHORTAGE REACHES THE COOP

August 18, 2026



August 18, 2026

By Lora Kelley

Sardines are having a moment. All over TikTok, posters embrace “sardinemaxxing” and “sardine girl summer,” raving about the nutritional benefits of the tasty and relatively sustainable snack. In 2022, *Vogue* wrote of “the tinned fish mania that has gripped the world.” Earlier this year, Wirecutter suggested that “Sardine’s PR team has been working overtime recently.”

But Coop members hoping to enjoy a sardine-fueled summer may be disappointed: The sardine supply has been hit by a global shortage.

Gillian Chi, one of the Coop’s buying and receiving coordinators, has observed demand for sardines rising among members over the past few years. As she told the *Linewaiters’ Gazette*, however, she first started noticing the effects of the shortage around late May and early June. Her team acted quickly to keep sardines on shelves—including by placing a special order with a supplier the Coop rarely works with. They also stocked up on shopper favorites while they could. “I stockpiled one hundred cases of Matiz and 75 cases of FishSnax, and dozens of cases of others,” Chi wrote in an email.

Based on conversations with vendors and news reports, Chi believes that the shortage owes to surging demand, overfishing, climate change and Morocco’s restrictions on exports. In January of this year, Morocco, one of the world’s key suppliers of sardines, announced that it would halt exports of frozen sardines; it did not say how long the pause would continue. Zakia Driouich, Morocco’s Secretary of State at the Ministry of Agriculture and the cabinet member in charge of its fisheries, announced the change to members of Morocco’s parliament, citing a “noticeable drop in supply.” Citing official data, Reuters reported that landings of sardines in Morocco dropped 46% in 2024, to 525,000 metric tons.

“OUR STANDARD MARKUP DOES NOT FLUCTUATE BASED ON SUPPLY NOR DE-

MAND (NOR ANYTHING ELSE).”

RECEIVING COORDINATOR GILLIAN CHI

Coop suppliers have also explained the dearth of their product to shoppers. Fish Tales, for example, announced in June that its sardines were temporarily out of stock, noting that due to “changes in the ocean, such as rising water temperatures, the plankton in the sea also changes, and that is precisely the food sardines live on. If there is less food, sardines grow more slowly and simply fewer swim around.” The post reminded readers that the “special thing about fish is that it still comes from nature. It is one of the last products we do not ‘make’ ourselves, but which we harvest from the sea. And that comes with a caveat: sometimes the ocean simply gives less. At Sea Tales, that means only one thing: We never catch more than is responsible. Not even if the demand for sardines grows.”

As the sardine ban and the related shortage drag on, the Coop has seen some brands become unavailable, and has added some new brands. Bela, Bar Harbor, Crown Prince Brisling and King Oscar are not available, Chi said. Wild Planet has been in and out, and Mina, the most popular brand among Coop members, has slowly started to come back in stock. The new options added to shelves this summer include Matiz, Sea Tales, Season and FishSnax, the tinned fish line from José Andrés. Cento’s sardines were briefly available, and Safe Catch was put on Coop shelves before its stock, too, was depleted, Chi added.

Chi emphasized that, in spite of the dip in supply, the Coop would not alter the way it prices sardines—or any other goods—for shoppers. “Our standard markup does not fluctuate based on supply nor demand (nor anything else),” she noted. “Whatever we pay for a product, the markup is 25 percent.”

Indeed, part of the appeal of sardines is the range of price points: On a recent Wednesday, a single shelf of the Coop’s fish section featured colorful cans of Fishwife sar-

dines for \$6.49; tins of Crown Prince sardines in hot sauce for \$1.52; and glass jars of Ortiz sardines for \$11.03.

Though sardines have been hit especially hard lately, other popular types of fish have also seen challenges. Anchovies—which play a critical role in the global supply chain because they are a key ingredient in the fishmeal used in the \$500 billion fish farming industry—are in short supply, too. The culprit for that shortage can reportedly be traced to warming waters in Peru due to El Niño. Bloomberg.com noted that, in the past year, prices for fishmeal have gone up by some 80% as production has decreased by as much as 40%. These fish food disruptions could trigger higher prices for other varieties of fish down the line.

For now, sardines are the most pressing tinned seafood concern for the Coop. But Chi said that her team is now keeping its eye on the global supply of another aqua creature: mackerel.

Lora Kelley is a freelance journalist in Brooklyn.

VENDOR PROFILE: OUR MUESLI MAKERS

August 18, 2026

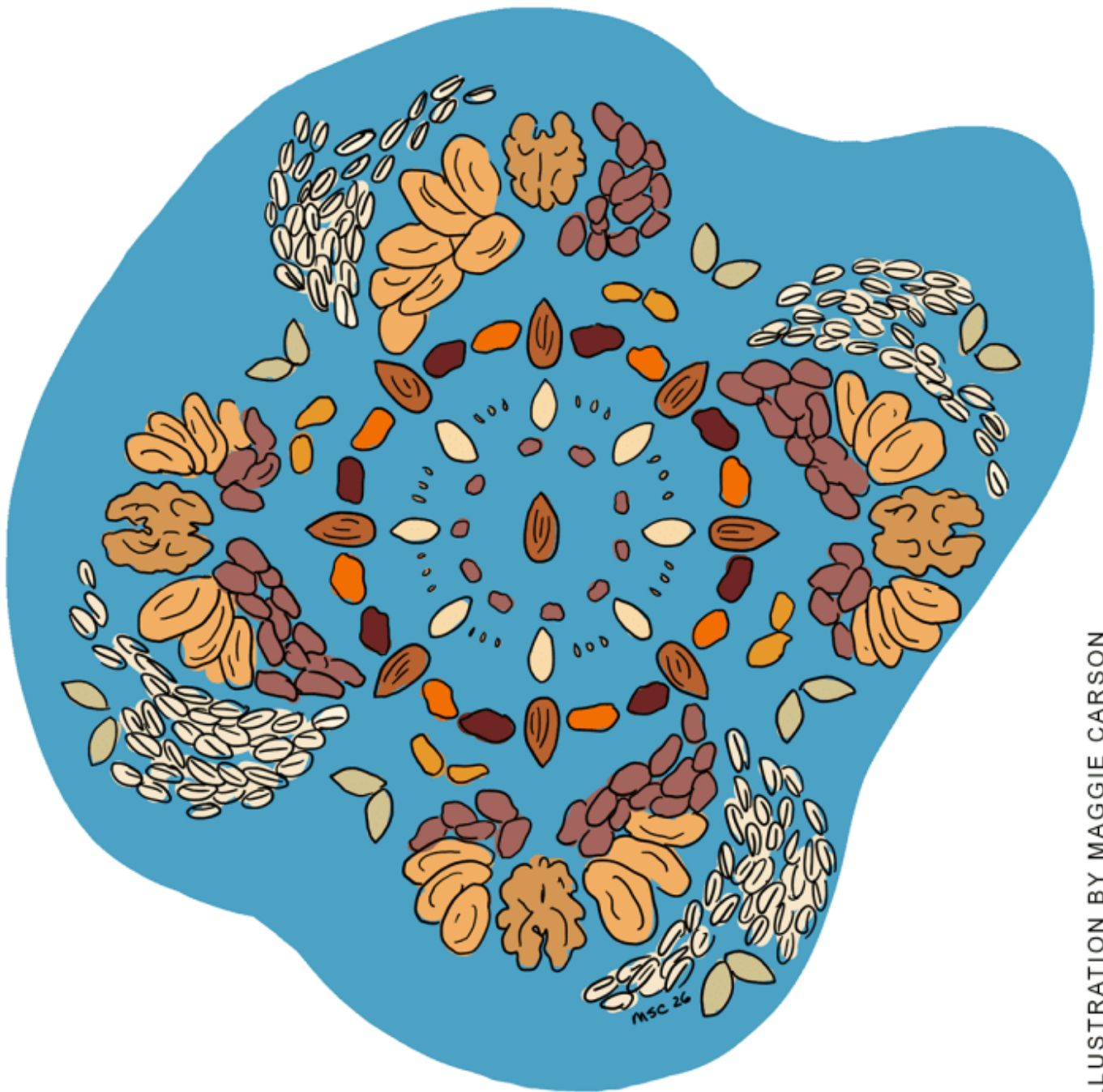


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

August 18, 2026

By Kim Velsey

When Mike Shuster and Lisa Zaccaglini, the founders of Mu Mu Muesli, moved upstate to Sharon Springs in 2001, they never imagined that in a decade they'd be mak-

ing more than a thousand pounds of muesli a week. The couple, who'd met in an MFA program at Stanford years earlier, loved muesli—an uncooked blend of oats, nuts, and dried fruits typically eaten for breakfast with yogurt—which they'd first tasted on a trip to Switzerland when Shuster was studying abroad. But they hadn't had any decent muesli since then. "We tried buying some here and it was just terrible," says Shuster. "It had all this sugar and other additives."

They'd been living in Greenpoint, trying to paint when they could and paying their bills with artistic carpentry and mosaic work on high-end residential projects. But they were nearing 50 and had recently adopted an elderly Akita from a local animal shelter. When they saw a real estate listing for 88 acres and a decrepit house near Cooperstown, NY, it felt like the right time to make a change.



The company began selling at farmer's markets. Handing out 2oz samples was key to their early success

Shuster and Zaccaglini started making their own muesli after learning about acrylamide, a potentially harmful organic compound that's created when grains are cooked at high temperatures. (Acrylamide has been linked to cancer in animals.) They settled on a raw blend of all-organic oats, wheat flakes, brown flax seeds, almonds, dates, raisin and cranberries sweetened with apple juice. The couple enjoyed eating and making it so much that in 2008 they decided to try selling it at the farmers market in Schenectady. After all, they knew that there were no compelling alternatives on the market. (Dorset, a muesli brand from then-Prince Charles' model village made a brief debut in the U.S. market around the same time, then disappeared. King Charles is known to be a muesli lover.) The couple designed the logo, a cow wearing a mu mu (moo moo and mu mu), themselves.



Shuster and Zaccaglini, unable to buy healthy European-style muesli, started to make their own

“What’s cool about a farmers’ market is it’s so democratic. You get your own stall, and it’s up to you to sell your stuff,” says Shuster. After success in Schenectady, they started selling at the Syracuse Regional Market. Because many people were unfamiliar with muesli, he and Zaccaglini would hand out 2-ounce paper soufflé cups of muesli and yogurt with wooden spoons. Shuster emphasized the health benefits: raw,

organic, no added sugars, oil or sulfates. “If you think about the ingredients of granola today, it’s basically cookie recipes,” he says. They’d often sell 100 bags by 10 a.m.

Although cereal was created as a health food in the 1800s, over the years, most grocery store brands have abandoned any attempt at healthfulness, turning out a highly processed product whose oats and flakes are laden with corn syrup and other unhealthy additives. (Even Quaker Oats does a brisk trade in sugary instant oatmeal these days.) It seemed fitting to Shuster and Zaccaglini that Sharon Springs had once been a 19th-century resort spa, an echo of muesli’s European resort spa roots.

“IF YOU THINK ABOUT THE INGREDIENTS OF GRANOLA TODAY, IT’S BASICALLY COOKIE RECIPES.”

MIKE SHUSTER, CO-FOUNDER OF MU MU MUESLI

One day, a Whole Foods executive came to the farmers’ market. Soon, Mu Mu Muesli was on Whole Foods shelves throughout the Northeast region. Shuster and Zaccaglini ramped up production and got a distributor who landed them in the Park Slope Food Coop.



Coop staffer Gustavo Lopez in bulk aisle with a 25-pound box of muesli

Shuster said there was talk of going national, but they realized that they wanted to scale back, not up. Besides at Whole Foods, they were selling 600 bags a week via their distributor, and online orders were way up because of the visibility of Whole Foods. "It got to be too much," says Shuster. "It was overwhelming." They were in their sixties and Zaccaglini was making two 240-pound mixes some days. They had no employees and didn't want them (they'd tried but realized they hated managing other people and enjoyed working alone). Moreover, they had other interests they wanted to devote time to. A friend runs a mustang sanctuary in the area and they ended up adopting two mustangs. They have also built fairly extensive gardens and walking trails on their property that require tending—last year, they harvested 80 pounds of blueberries. Plus, after their first rescue Akita died, they adopted another

and have cats and chickens as well.

The couple decided to leave Whole Foods in 2019. Then their distributor sold his business to another company, which they decided to leave after about a year. But this meant they had to leave the Coop as well if they didn't find a new distributor. "One of the Coop's basic requirements is that products be sold through distributors, since ordering directly from a single brand is time-consuming and adds significant operational work," says Buying and Receiving Coordinator Gillian Chi. "While we do make exceptions, we have to be mindful about how often we do so."

But, says Chi, "I started to realize that Mu Mu might be a Coop favorite." She brought it back by ordering from Mu Mu directly. Soon, the Coop began to sell 50 to 70 bags a week. After a few years, Coop buyers decided to add it in bulk, and it could be found in both the retail and bulk aisles for nine months. However, Chi and her team finally decided to sell Mu Mu only in bulk because of its lower price. (As it happens, bulk turned out to be easier for Shuster and Zaccaglini, too.) Today, sales per pound are higher than ever, at more than 100 pounds per week. "We decided to make an exception, and I'm very glad we did," says Chi. "The only thing I miss about the retail bags is seeing the cow in a mu mu every day."

Kim Velsey has been a Coop member since 2020. When she's not writing for the Gazette, she's a staff writer at New York magazine.

BACK TO THE COOP FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUPPLIES

August 18, 2026



August 18, 2026

By Rosie Nisanyan

According to the Coop's Equity, Access and Community Committee 2025 Demographic Survey, about one quarter of survey respondents have children living with them. For these families, the end of summer means one thing: BTS! No, not the K-Pop band's World Tour, but back-to-school preparation and all that it requires.

While back-to-school supplies most often include notebooks, calculators and pencils, a big area of expense and consideration is groceries. Fortunately, shoppers can expect both types of Coop goods to ease their children's transition back to class.

A CHANGING GROCERY LIST

With children out of school during the summer, families find themselves with more time—to spend with friends, play sports and actually eat a nutritious breakfast. New Coop member Nicole Zeiss says, “We buy more fun food and snacks [during the summer] because the kids are home more and have friends over. Much more fruit and breakfast food, because they have more time in the morning and fruit is so much better in the summer. Yogurt, cereal, breakfast burritos, eggs, croissants, banana bread, bagels, cream cheese, chips, cheese and lots of canned seltzer.” Member Nancy Benoist, whose kids are heading into seventh and ninth grade this fall, says, “In the summer, I lean more on snacks that can be easily grabbed from the kitchen. This summer we are buying a lot of grapes, watermelon, lemons for lemonade, and taco fixings to have on hand.”

But when summer ends, things change.

“I BUY MORE BULK SNACKS AND PACKAGED ITEMS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR, THINGS THAT CAN BE TOSSED INTO A LUNCH BAG.”

NANCY BENOIST

A recent survey found that 61% of consumers say their daily routine becomes more structured as fall begins. Between school, work and extracurricular activities, families have less time to prepare meals and instead rely more on easy, on-the-go foods that provide the nutrition needed to keep their kids full and their energy up. According to Numerator, during the school year households spend more on packaged snacks and meals, with the highest increases going to products like canned fruit (+23%), dried fruit and fruit snacks (+22%) and nutrition and wholesome bars (+20%).

The same is true for Coop members.

Benoist says, “I buy more bulk snacks and packaged items during the school year, things that can be tossed into a lunch bag.” According to Zeiss, her high schoolers “have no time in the morning and HATE school lunch, so they are starving when they get home. They both refuse to pack lunches, so we are at the mercy of savory things they can eat right when they get home so they don’t ruin dinner, which in our house is late. Grape leaves, breakfast burritos, protein bars, salami, olives, cheese etc.”

EASING BACK-TO-SCHOOL STRESS

While it’s common for students to experience first-day jitters, parents may also experience some back-to-school anxiety. Recent trends like “lunch shaming” and viral lunch packing videos can make parents feel intimidated and even more stressed when trying to plan for their children’s school lunches. At the risk of embarrassing their child, they might feel the need to over-pack or splurge on aesthetic lunchboxes.

According to a survey from Hello Fresh, 56% of parents stress over expensive groceries, especially when school is in session. Meanwhile, Coop members are “grateful for the prices year-round.”

In addition to saving money on groceries this school year, Zeiss is also excited about “knowing that everything at the Coop is sourced well and probably low chemical, if not organic.” Much of the Coop’s fresh produce comes from local suppliers like Lancaster Farm Fresh Co-Op and Gotham Greens. The Coop’s commitment to sourcing “local and little” therefore pays off for back-to-school shoppers in more ways than one.

MAINTAINING COOP SHIFTS

As families change their schedules and shopping habits from season to season, the Coop remains largely consistent.

General Coordinator of Membership Operations Matt Hoagland says, “Each summer we see a drop in sales, which points to a drop in demand for products; shift sizes drop

in kind...Overall we have a very stable system in place that doesn't vary much per season. Member labor is very consistent as we are typically getting over 90% of the work we want scheduled and completed."

Even with sleepaway camps and family vacations, Coop members still find time to work their shifts during the summer (only special events seem to keep them away!). According to Hoagland, the data show that about 70% of working members are in the range of plus-or-minus one work credit, regardless of the season: "We have been averaging around 680 members on leave during the year, which increases during the summer. We expect to hit around 1,200+ for the second half of July into August. The numbers will steadily decline back to the average towards the end of September. The rough increase of around 540 members, however, is not a significant increase overall."

The summer heat doesn't keep Coop members indoors either. When it comes to the kinds of shifts that get filled, "Cart Return gets filled all times of year, including the summer. In 2024 it was 99.75% filled, in 2025 it was 99.87% filled. Lifting filled much more last summer than the rest of the year when it's colder and darker and more needed."

Therefore, an ask of members from Hoagland as we head into a new school year and new routines: "For those who are able/up for it *who don't typically do it*, working at least one Lifting shift outside of the summer would be a great support to the morning staff and those who work morning Lifting shifts regularly."

Meanwhile, buyers are ordering larger quantities of school supplies this month, ensuring that Coop kids start school with everything they need, be it notebooks and index cards or healthy snacks.

Rosie Nisanyan has been a Coop member since 2024 and is the Arts & Culture Multimedia Correspondent for The Armenian Weekly.

HOW CAN YOU HELP VENEZUELA?

August 18, 2026



August 18, 2026

By Sonia Alio

July 24 marked one month since the devastating double earthquake struck

Venezuela. As our hearts remain with those who are no longer with us, survivors are now facing the difficult task of rebuilding their lives. I wanted to share the names of a few organizations for those who may wish to support the ongoing recovery efforts. Direct donations to reputable nonprofits can make a meaningful difference.

HelpThemDirectly.org centralizes and verifies fundraising campaigns for earthquake victims, creating a trusted platform where people around the world can support affected families directly. More than 100 families are currently listed, and their stories are heartbreaking. Each fundraiser is carefully verified, giving donors confidence that their support will reach those in need. No donation is too small. Contributions help cover search efforts, burial expenses, hospital bills and basic needs and help families begin rebuilding their lives.

Global Empowerment Mission/Venezuela Earthquake has been an exceptionally effective disaster relief organization, with a strong boots-on-the-ground presence delivering aid directly to those affected by the earthquake. From coordinating the collection of donations to warehousing, shipping and distributing essential supplies, the organization has demonstrated remarkable efficiency and commitment at every stage of the relief effort.

World Central Kitchen/Chefs for Venezuela. Preparing more than 10,000 meals each day, World Central Kitchen (WCK) recently marked one month of operations by serving more than one million fresh, nutritious meals to earthquake survivors and rescue teams. WCK has been a shining example of compassion and efficiency throughout this crisis, and its teams remain on the ground providing critical support to those in need. I encourage you to visit WCK's Instagram page to gain a better appreciation of the scale of their operation and the extraordinary impact they continue to make.

Fundacion Juan Pablo 2 Santos is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping in-

dividuals in need of prosthetic limbs regain their mobility and independence. Working in partnership with the Hospital Ortopédico Infantil, the foundation provides hope and life-changing support to those whose lives have been affected by injury or limb loss.

I encourage you to visit the foundation's Instagram page to learn more about its work. To support its mission, click on "Donaciones" to access the PayPal donation link.

RAC: Red de Apoyo Canino is one of the many organizations leading animal rescue efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake. Their team has been at the core of the affected areas, providing assistance to animals who have lost their families, become separated from their owners or were already living on the streets. Their networks mobilized all of their programs, including pet food bank, basic veterinary care and surgeries, foster home network and adoption programs.

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to read this article. I encourage you to consider making a direct donation to one of these verified, independent and nonpolitical organizations. If donating is not possible, simply sharing this information with others can also make a meaningful difference.

Thank you for your kindness, compassion, and support.

Sonia Alio has been a Coop member since 2002. Born in Venezuela, she has lived in Brooklyn since 1994. She has family and friends in Venezuela who lived through the recent double earthquake and its consequences. Through them, she can attest that the situation is dire. Much of the assistance has come through personal initiatives and organizations that provide direct aid or have developed the experience and networks needed to deliver effective relief despite the country's challenging political and economic conditions. Sonia works as a set designer for film, television, and corporate events, and teaches as a guest in two NYC high schools.

AUGUST 18, 2026

August 18, 2026

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

OUR BATTLE AGAINST PLASTIC

To the Editor,

It's good to see the increased use of compostable produce bags at the Coop. However, I have noticed an increase in prepackaged items taking over the produce aisle like a slow-moving cancer.

The plastic bags and clamshells used for prepackaging are difficult, if not impossible to recycle. Also, the prepackaged products are usually priced three to four times higher than their un-prepackaged counterparts.

In addition to being more costly, and environmentally damaging, the prepackaged produce is much more likely to harbor food-borne pathogens. So, where's the logic? Is it some perverse sociopathic logic of consumer marketing that we use to make our purchasing decisions?

Plastic in our bodies, food borne illness and environmental destruction-what does it matter? Produce in plastic clamshells and bags stack so nicely on the shelves.

My logic says ban the plastic clamshells and bags from the produce aisle.

*In cooperation,
John Korber*

A PRODUCE COORDINATOR RESPONDS

Dear John,

Thanks for the letter. We appreciate the feedback.

We're always trying to balance a lot of different priorities, including price, quality, local sourcing, organic options, convenience, and environmental impact. But above all, we pay close attention to what members actually buy—and that data directly shapes our purchasing decisions.

The packaged produce we carry reflects genuine member demand. For example, we offer both loose and packaged spinach side by side, and members choose the packaged spinach by about 3 to 1. That purchasing pattern tells us what our members prioritize. We stock to meet those real needs while minimizing waste, not the other way around.

This member-driven approach also shapes our sourcing. A good portion of our packaged produce comes from small regional farms we've built relationships with, not just large industrial suppliers. We've chosen these partners specifically because our members' purchasing patterns show they value local sourcing and quality, even when packaged.

On pricing, while some packaged items do cost more than their loose counterparts, that isn't true across the board. The price depends on the product, supplier, and packaging. We're guided by what members will buy and what helps us maintain the quality standards our members expect.

You're also right that much of the plastic packaging labeled recyclable isn't actually accepted through New York City's recycling system, and that's frustrating. We share that concern.

Regarding food safety, the picture is more complicated. Packaging can reduce contamination from repeated handling in open displays, but it also creates environmental costs that have to be considered—and that's a trade-off our members help us navigate through their choices.

We'll continue looking for opportunities to reduce plastic packaging and to offer low- or no-plastic options whenever we can. That's important to us as buyers, and it matters to our members, too. We think it's important to give members real choice, and where we can avoid plastic altogether without compromising quality or creating unnecessary waste, we'll do so. And if members shopping patterns change to reflect less demand for packaged produce, we will adjust our purchasing accordingly.

Thanks again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

John Horsman

WHY WE ARE LEAVING THE PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP

Dear Coop members:

By the time you read this letter, I am afraid it will be too late, as we will already be “former members.” We have decided to leave the Park Slope Food Coop under deeply regrettable circumstances; this is *not* a decision we took lightly, nor is it the decision we wanted to make.

We joined the Coop in 2021 because of its commitment to affordable food, sustainability, cooperation and community alignment. Since then, the increasingly politicized and divisive environment surrounding the BDS campaign—and, ultimately, the Coop’s formal decision to boycott Israeli products—has fundamentally changed what this organization means to our family.

This is not about denying other members the right to hold political views that we disagree with! On the contrary, we believe everyone is entitled to hold their views with purpose and conviction. This decision is about the Coop adopting and implementing an institutional political position that directly conflicts with our values, and more so, leaves us feeling both alienated and unwelcome. We cannot, in good conscience, continue contributing our labor, time, or financial support to an organization that has chosen this course.

We are sharing this because fellow members should understand that this decision has

a real human cost. The Coop has made its institutional choice, and we must now make ours.

*Sincerely,
Roni and David Feller*

ronianddave@gmail.com

THE BOYCOTT DEBATE HAS AN AFTERLIFE

Dear Coop members:

Pro-Israel letters are trying to discredit the pro-boycott initiative's solid 2/3rd majority, the largest vote in Coop history. Among their complaints was that there was no pre-vote debate, allegedly meant to silence the pro-Israel side. The reality is that the meeting had a late start, and proceeded glacially slowly. This debate had dominated the *Gazette's* pages for over a decade, and continuously the last two years. No shortage of opinions existed, and opinions were surely solidified. A debate would've mattered little, if at all. Had a debate been held, the meeting could easily have dragged into the early hours; suspending debate made eminent sense.

There was a mention of historical Arab domination of Jews and Christians in the Middle East. It's true that minority populations frequently suffer disadvantages, but the reality is that Jews and Christians fared relatively well among majority Muslim populations, being idealized as "people of the book," i.e., adherents to its earlier revelations. In fact, the development of antisemitism is grounded in European history, marked by the Inquisition and pogroms, and culminating in the Holocaust. It was not until the colonizing thrust of Zionism that real antagonisms arose in the Middle East.

The dominant anti-boycott theme throughout was its appeals to "inclusion" and "uni-

ty”; that otherwise, Jews would “feel unwelcome.” Considering that a fair number of Jews were among the adherents to the pro-boycott position, one wonders how serious are such notions. The “unity” narrative was always a debating point lacking substance. The Coop’s guiding principle is Cooperation, not “unity.” Opinions will differ regardless!

We can expect critical letters to continue, but that doesn’t change or obscure the reality of Israel’s ongoing behavior, which needs no explanation, and for which there’s no valid apology! A boycott is eminently suitable.

David Barouh

DEFEAT OF JOE HOLTZ

Dear Coop members:

I am an old Coop member who knew and worked with Joe Holtz in earlier days. I was really shocked to read of his defeat for a seat on the board of directors—I think he deserves more appreciation and respect than that. Generations change, and this is a sharp reminder of that.

*Sincerely,
Bill Miller*

ETHICAL PURCHASING

Dear Coop Members,

We are PSFC members who voted to remove Israeli products from our shelves in re-

sponse to the Palestinian-led call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS). Many of us have taken the time to study the history, principles, and goals of the BDS movement and believe that supporting the boycott is consistent with the Coop's longstanding commitment to justice and ethical purchasing.

At the same time, we continue to see arguments against the boycott that misrepresent what BDS is intended to accomplish. Most recently, we have seen two recurring misunderstandings.

First, calls for dialogue between Zionists and supporters of BDS confuse two different issues. BDS does not seek to regulate or discourage conversations between individuals. Rather, it calls on institutions to take an ethical stand against systems of oppression through nonviolent economic action. Dialogue and institutional accountability are not mutually exclusive.

Second, highlighting Israeli businesses that bring Jewish and Arab citizens together misunderstands the purpose of the boycott. BDS is not a judgment of individual entrepreneurs or personal relationships. It is a strategy of institutional pressure based on the principle that coexistence without justice cannot produce a just and lasting peace. As the movement has long maintained, genuine peace requires equal rights, freedom, and accountability.

BDS is grounded in international law and in universal principles of human rights. It calls for ending the denial of Palestinians' fundamental rights through nonviolent means. We are proud that our Coop chose to act in solidarity with this movement, and we encourage members who have questions or concerns to learn more about the legal, ethical, historical, and moral foundations of BDS before drawing conclusions about its purpose.

*With compassion,
Christine Schmidt, Larisa Shaterian, Yana Kuchirko, Janna Beckler*

TOWARDS REAL JUSTICE IN PALESTINE

Fellow Coop members,

I write in response to Ramon Maislen's July letter. His focus on the reaction of specific producers to our boycott is a distraction from the bigger picture: the urgency of opposing the genocide in Gaza, the ongoing violence and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, and the discriminatory nature of the Israel state.

Over 73,000 people have been killed in Gaza since October 7, 2023. The moving concrete blocks of the "yellow line" push residents into an ever smaller area, even as the Israeli military bombards and murders civilians during a so-called ceasefire. In the West Bank, settler terrorist attacks have risen to a rate of 3 per day. The boycott is an absolute necessity, the least we can do to repudiate Israel's criminal actions.

Sindyanna's model of collaborative labor between Jewish and Arab women might seem admirable, but means little when the second-tier status of non-Jews has been explicitly codified into law (via the "Nation-State Law") since 2018: "The realization of the right to national self determination in the State of Israel is exclusive to the Jewish People." In adopting a boycott that covers all products produced in Israel, we do not aim to reward or penalize anyone based on identity, but rather to signal that the system itself is broken.

BDS is a Palestinian-led movement for justice, in line with our mission statement commitment to "avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others", and in line with our BLM-era statement that we support "the dismantling of all systems that propagate and empower systemic racism." As a Black coop member, I hope that those words were not a hollow declaration, written and voted on with a sense of urgency during the acute crisis of 2020 but without a commitment to their deeper and broader meaning.

*In cooperation,
Matt Miller*

GRATITUDE, CALL TO ACTION, AND HOPE

Fellow Members,

I'm so grateful and proud to be a 47-year member of the Park Slope Food Coop, grateful for our mission, for our continuing history of food and social justice activism, grateful for the opportunity to participate in governance, grateful that hybrid meetings have dramatically expanded opportunities to participate in our coop, and now, after years of collective effort, I am so very grateful that our coop has, with the boycott of Israeli goods, returned to the right side of history.

Let our boycott be a catalyst for more action, more involvement in more activism on behalf of Palestinians and all oppressed people. There are so many ways to be involved—by donating to groups like Doctors Without Borders or Palestine Children's Relief Fund or local mutual aid groups. Working with Palestinian Youth Movement on the Architecture of Genocide exhibit reinforced the idea that cultural production is resistance. There are also many smaller local mutual aid groups; ask around.

You can offer support and learn more while reading, listening and watching: local events, on the ground reporting from the West Bank and films. While our taxes are still paying for genocide and mass destruction, we can mobilize to vote for representatives who are determined to stop this. Let's be motivated by the recent congressional primaries in Brooklyn and Manhattan. We can join together to protest, to challenge and to stop the illegal sale of Palestinian land, right here in NYC. On the local front you can also find groups defending neighbors against ICE, helping provide food aid, and offering immigration and tenant support.

We have so much and we can do so much more.

*In Cooperation,
Alyce Barr*

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

To the editor:

Listening to the Environmental Committee's presentation at the July 28 General Meeting, I found myself wishing that committee members be required to read past minutes and other material pertaining to issues the committee is concerned with. So much of what they said sounded like something a past committee has said before, and a past meeting has listened to before.

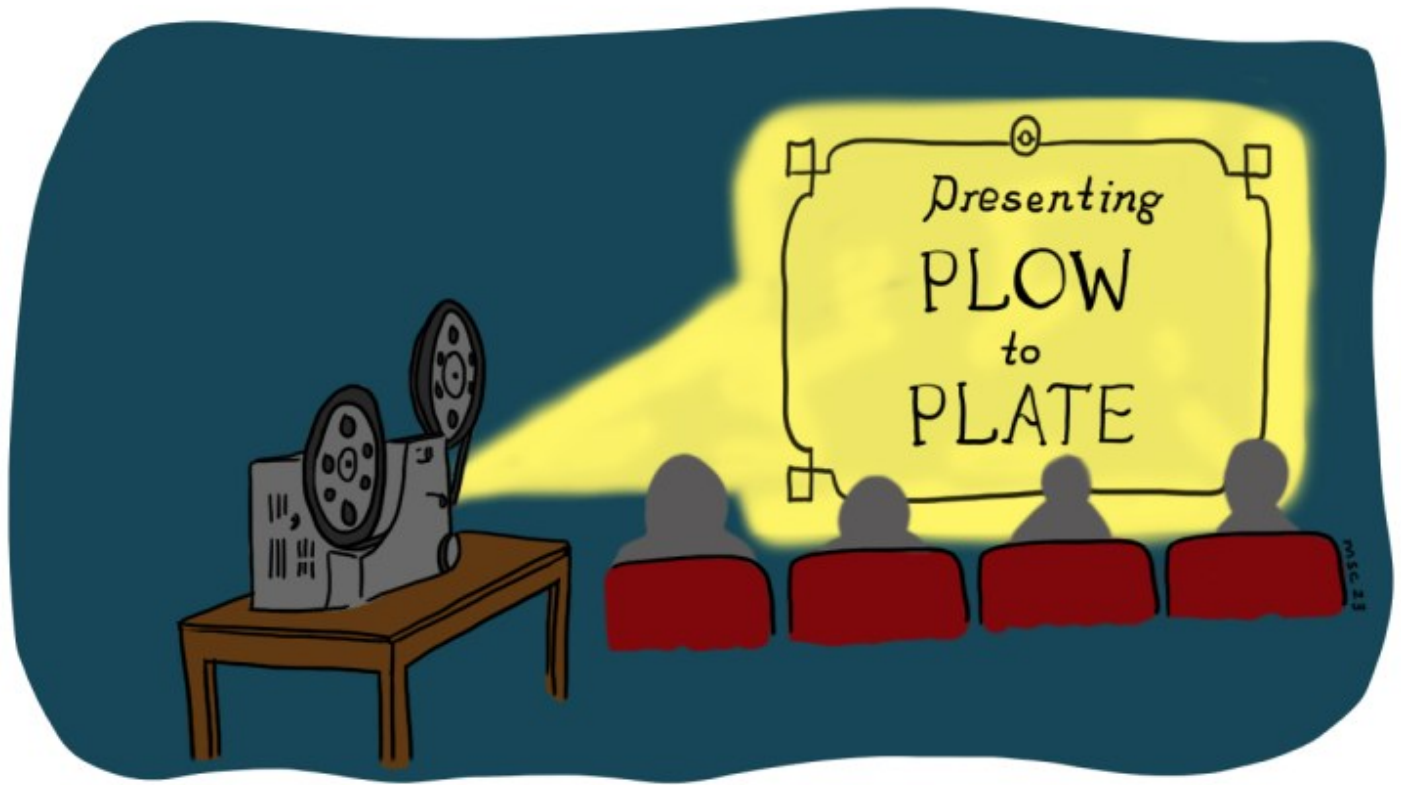
Thanks for letting me vent!

*Sincerely,
Kathy Hieatt*

Editor's note: The above letter mistakenly calls out the Environmental Committee at the July General Meeting but it was actually the Plastic Recycling Committee who made the presentation, not the Environmental Committee.

DELI MAN: THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN DELI

August 18, 2026



August 18, 2026

By Adam Rabiner

What type of restaurant began in New York City in the mid-19th century and peaked in the 1930s with thousands of locations scattered across the five boroughs, of which today only a handful survive? If you answered, “What is the delicatessen?” congratulations, audition for *Jeopardy*. The 2015 documentary, *Deli Man*, covers this culinary and Jewish cultural history in an amusing, often funny way, but its real focus is the men who dedicate their lives to running these establishments.

Deli Man is peppered with Yiddishisms, often spoken by old Jewish men who spent countless hours eating at the counters or tables of their favorite delis—comedians, actors and other celebrities like Jerry Stiller, Larry King, Alan Dershowitz, Freddie Roman and Fyvush Finkel. One of them recounts an anecdote about a stubborn waiter who only served him chicken, even though he always ordered the pot roast. Yet the typical

deli customer can be just as difficult and demanding. One elderly lady told a waiter that the matzah ball soup was too salty. “But you haven’t even tried it yet,” he protested. “Yes, but I can tell by looking at it.” Stories like this, expertly and wryly delivered, pepper the movie from start to finish.

That customers put up with surly waiters and waitresses, and vice versa, is a testament to the vibrant communities that formed in these eating establishments, second homes to many. Quite a few of the deli men featured in the film were second- or third-generation, taking over from their parents and grandparents. While *Deli Man* features the owners of many delis throughout the United States, its heart and soul is David “Ziggy” Gruber of Houston’s Kenny and Ziggy’s New York Delicatessen. Ziggy’s grandfather started the business, and while his brother J. Mackye Gruber and his cousin Ross Elliot decided early on that they were not cut out for that life, Ziggy took to it from a young age, donning a white chef’s apron and cap while helping in the kitchen. He was devastated at 15 when his grandfather passed away, so to distract him from his grief, his mother traveled with him to England, where she grew up. There, he visited a well-known culinary academy, arranged an interview with the headmaster, and, despite lacking credentials, got himself admitted by implying that his family would make a generous offer to the scholarship fund.

Ziggy went on to prepare fancy food for the Queen of England, but something was missing. He decided to continue the family tradition but took it up a notch. The Jewish community of Houston, which Ziggy describes as a shtetl, where everyone knows everyone else, was always eager to patronize any new deli. But invariably, after a few weeks the enthusiasm waned, and the crowds thinned. But for Kenny and Ziggy’s they remained. This was the real thing.

Deli Man follows Ziggy as he walks among his patrons, telling stories and kibbitzing with the regulars as if they were family members. He’s equally at home and affectionate with his loyal and mostly Hispanic staff. Like all deli men, Ziggy is a workaholic and constantly stressed out. He’s overweight and out of shape. Despite friends and family trying to set him up on dates over the years, he’s been unlucky in love. He

says he is married to his business. Yet at some point, he meets and begins dating Mary McCaughey, who was born Catholic but is Jewish-curious. An acupuncturist who takes Ziggy on as a patient, she complements him like mustard on pastrami and tries to get him to take better care of himself.

Like Ziggy and Mary, *Deli Man* is a love story, a tribute to delicatessens, patrons and owners who love their jobs passionately despite long, exhausting hours and many challenges. Who else but a meshuggeneh would dedicate his life to an all-consuming business with rising food and labor costs, sky-high rents, changing demographics, evolving food tastes and preferences and increasing health concerns? It is not surprising that, in the decade since the film was made, several more featured establishments closed. Though one can hope that Ziggy has slowed down, decompressed, hit the gym and lost some weight. That, at least, would be a somewhat happy and appropriate coda to a bittersweet ending.

Deli Man: Tuesday, September 8, 2026

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

ABOUT US

“Plow to Plate,” presented by the Safe Food Committee of the Park Slope Food Coop, is a film series focused on food. Its goal is to educate the community about food-related topics and issues, such as how food is sustainably cultivated, harvested, distributed, as well as prepared and served. All screenings are FREE and open to the public.