

SAY CHEESE! ARTISANAL TASTING AND PAIRING AT THE COOP

February 10, 2026



The Park Slope Food Coop Cooking Squad Presents

SAY CHEESE!

Tastings and pairings from the Coop's own cheese buyer, Yuri Weber

Learn about cheese sourcing, seasonality, and selection.



Yuri Weber has been the coop cheese, olive, bulk, and fine foods buyer for 16 years. He enjoys cooking and singing (not always at the same time).



TO REGISTER:

foodcoopcooks.org/rsvp

IG: [foodcoopcooks](https://www.instagram.com/foodcoopcooks)



Note: In-person attendance is limited to 30 seats.

Feb 18th

7:30 pm EDT

upstairs at the Park Slope Food Coop
\$10 cash fee for
the in person class
(online is free!)

Courtesy of venue

Ever wonder how the Coop selects cheeses? Or, wish you knew how to shop the case like a pro? Join the PSFC Cooking Squad for **a practical, approachable cheese class** with our very own cheese buyer, **Yuri Weber**, on **Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 7:30 p.m. EST** as part of the Coop's monthly cooking series. This Cheese 101-style session offers a behind-the-scenes look at sourcing, seasonality and selection, along with practical advice for choosing cheeses for different occasions and budgets.

The class will focus on artisanal regional cheeses with an emphasis on standout producers from Wisconsin and Vermont. From understanding flavor profiles to creating thoughtful pairings with what's currently available, Yuri will share tips for building a seasonal cheese board and delve into the many practical facets of cheese—like which ones melt best and how to avoid quesadillas that drip!

DID YOU KNOW THE COOP SELLS OVER 5,000 POUNDS OF CHEESE EVERY WEEK?

Join us for an hour filled with practical advice from someone who knows the cheese case inside and out. Class will be **in-person at the Coop** and streamed **online via Zoom**. For in-person attendees, there is a \$10 cash-only fee taken at the door to help cover the cost of ingredients. Attendees will get to ask questions, meet Yuri and eat cheese! This class is perfect for anyone looking to elevate everyday snacking or hosting without overcomplicating things.

ABOUT THE CHEF

Yuri Weber has been the Coop's cheese, olive, bulk and fine foods buyer for 16 years. He enjoys cooking and singing (but not always at the same time). Yuri is also full of useful and interesting tips and facts about cheese! ***Did you know the Coop sells over 5,000 pounds of cheese every week?***

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 for more content, including shopping sessions with guest chefs!

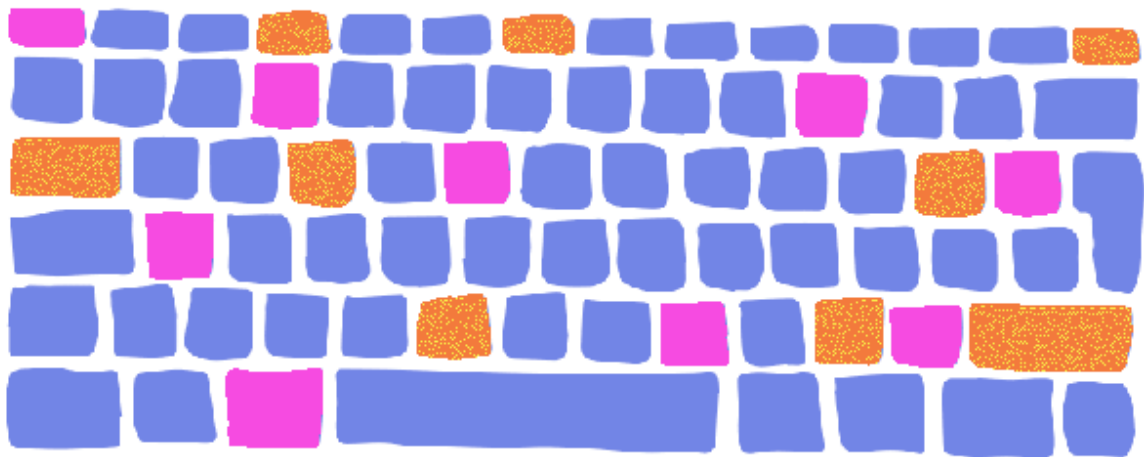
TEACH A CLASS

Though cooperation is at the heart of the Coop's mission, so is food! 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!

SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

February 10, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



JEEZ THE CHEESE IS TOO BIG

Hi Members,

I'm not necessarily a cheese enthusiast, but my partner and son are. They love cheese and love trying new cheeses. Years ago, this was easy to do, as the cheeses

cut were of various shapes and sizes.

For the past many years, however, cheeses tend to be about the same size, which discourages trying different types. I'd love to buy a piece of parmesan, but not a \$10 block of it. I'm hoping we can add a diversity of sizes to the cheeses being displayed which would reflect our members' various needs.

Here's to bringing back small and medium sizes of cheese—let's make cheese great again.

Thanks and hope to see the new sizes soon.

Respectfully in cooperation,
Jesse Farrell

RE: CRITIQUE OF JULY 2024 PROPOSAL ITEM

To the Members:

Three Coop area coordinators brought a proposal item to the July 2024 General Meeting (GM) on behalf of a group of 52 area coordinators. It was posted in the GM agenda notice as "Urgent Resubmission of Personnel Committee Proposal," and was a reworking of a similar proposal that was brought by the General Coordinators to the April 2024 GM and voted down. Both proposals sought to set policies concerning the powers of the Coop committee known as the Personnel Committee, as well as detailing the supervisory hierarchy of Coop staff. The version of the proposal brought to the July 2024 GM was approved by the members.

Both versions of the proposal included language that disenfranchises membership, which I find unnecessary and baffling.

One is the statement:

“The personnel policies of the Park Slope Food Coop shall be the responsibility of the General Manager, GC Team, and/or the Personnel Committee. Those entities have the sole authority to bring agenda items related to personnel policies to the General Meeting.”

Why can't a non-General Coordinator or non-Personnel Committee member bring an agenda item concerning personnel policies if that member thinks it's needed? Very perplexing.

Two is the statement:

“Once approved, the above motions shall replace all other GM-approved motions on matters in the areas specified above regarding employment policies and procedures for the General Coordinators and the General Manager.”

What is objectionable to me about this is that the GM was not provided with the specific policies and procedures being replaced. These documents could and should have been made available to members so they could be fully informed on the matter. Links to these documents could have been posted online or emailed to members before the meeting.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Tobier

RE: “THE COOP IS AT CAPACITY AND CROWDED: CAN ANYTHING BE DONE?”

Dear fellow members:

In reading this article I was struck by the mention of the Second Location Study Committee (SLSC), its rigorous investigation into the feasibility and the community benefits of a second location, and its simple rejection by a close margin of 74 votes to 64 votes. That's 138 of approximately 16,000 Coop members who participated in the vote. The article goes on to survey several other potential avenues for increasing capacity and improving efficiency within the walls of the current PSFC building, none of which sound promising or would benefit the greater Brooklyn community and sustainable vendors at large.

After reading this article, I went back to look at the PSFC's Mission Statement. There are two lines included that I believe support the ideas held within the SLSC's report. Support for that initiative had the potential to satisfy our Mission and would also ameliorate the problem of overcrowding at the PSFC.

Here are the two lines:

"We are a part of and support the cooperative movement."

"We strive to reduce the impact of our lifestyles on the world we share with other species and future generations."

I am familiar with SLSC's report and was one of the 138 voters. I am writing this letter with the hope of stimulating interest in the ideas and information gathered by the SLSC. My concern is that the participation of voting members was woefully small and a good idea was laid to rest prematurely.

A third line from our Mission statement speaks to this hope:

"We seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store."

Cheers!

Rebecca Stronger

REGARDING REFERENDA AND HYBRID MEETINGS

To the Editors,

With all the controversy about holding referenda and hybrid meetings, a few statistics I obtained from the office may shed some light on these subjects.

It turns out that the total number of members who participated in this year's Board of Directors election out of more than 15,000 members was around 3,800, and this was apparently atypically high, likely due to efforts to get BDS partisans onto the Board; the number of members who vote is usually around 1,000—a tiny fraction of the total.

As for virtual meetings, during the height of the pandemic, after an initial surge in attendance in the spring of 2020, the numbers dwindled and ultimately fell to under 100 by August 2023.

Even the unprecedented and very costly 2012 General Meeting, which required security presence to consider a referendum on joining BDS, attracted fewer than 2,000 members.

It's likely that referenda and hybrid meetings would produce similarly minimal participation since the vast majority of members simply want to do their work shifts and shop at the Coop in a congenial and welcoming atmosphere and aren't interested in subjects outside the Coop's fundamental mission of providing good food at low prices for working members.

Sylvia Lowenthal

BOYCOTT NEXT STEPS: A MODEST PROPOSAL

Dear fellow members,

I'd like to propose a simple, hopefully modest proposal as we look to individually express our views on a boycott of Israeli goods—in short, let us all vote with our wallets as we see fit.

To those that support a boycott: create a list of all products that you believe should not be purchased, publicize that list in a central location (perhaps on a social media page dedicated to the effort), and encourage those that agree with you to not buy those products.

Others who do not support the boycott can continue to purchase products as they see fit.

There is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution to complex issues, especially those as nuanced and emotionally charged as this, and pushing for an entire community to adopt a set of principles is divisive and unnecessary. Let us all be informed and take individual action that aligns with our own personal outlook.

In cooperation, even when we disagree,

Paul Blachar

GENERAL COORDINATORS (GCS) ANN HERPEL AND MATT HOAGLAND RESPOND TO STEPHEN KLEIN'S LETTER, "OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

OF FINDING WORK SHIFTS”:

Dear Stephen,

We offer these answers to help all Coop members understand how complex Coop operations are and the factors that must be considered before changing the labor system.

1. **Availability of Shifts**

As of Sept. 3, there were 12,037 members in the work pool. The six-week shift calendar had 2,184 shifts per week, projecting 13,104 shifts per cycle. The difference between these two figures (work pool and projected shifts over six weeks) is 1,067, leaving a weekly surplus of 177 shifts. In other words, there is at least one shift for every member to work in the six-week cycle, plus 1,067.

Members might feel that there is a dearth of shifts. But from an operational perspective, even with the surplus, the Coop often runs without optimal member-workers where work goes uncompleted or staff step in because the task has to be done.

2. **Expanded store hours are coming soon.** While the start date is TBD, the GCs have decided to expand the shopping hours to 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Sunday hours will remain 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Closing the Coop one hour later, six days per week, will add approximately 30 shifts, meeting at the end of the Coop day, per week.

3. **Reducing the shift length to two hours or increasing the shift cycle length:** Neither would affect shift size, nor reduce demand for popular shifts and start times.

The benefit of reducing the shift length would be to add one more shift-time daily at the END the day, something the expanded store hours will accomplish. However, unlike expanding hours, it would also be burdensome for the operations for many other reasons we can't explain in this brief response.

Increasing the cycle length beyond six weeks would require the Coop to grow around 2,000 members per additional week, far beyond our building's capacity to buy, receive, shelf, and sell groceries to the membership. The impact on the check-out line or queue to enter would be detrimental, to say the least.

4. **Limiting Shift Credits:** Only 3% of the members in the working-pool have 10 or more shifts in their shift bank. Many work on committees like the Gazette or Chair Committee or restricted shifts that need additional training unavailable to most members. Those that do use the shift calendar are more than balanced out by the shift surplus. In fact, the vast majority of members— over 95%—have shift credit banks ranging from -3 to +2 shifts. They are not accumulating enough shifts to crowd out other members from the shift calendar. Note there is currently a two-shift limit on scheduled shifts that helps to prevent shift hoarding.

ALL THE COOP'S A STAGE: HOW THE CHEESE SHIFT TURNED INTO A SLASHER SATIRE

February 10, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

By Zach Schiffman

August 14, 2024

Working a shift at the Coop can often feel inherently theatrical: the conversations of strangers that you overhear, the clattering and chaos in the aisles as shoppers jostle with stockers, the mysterious corners of the basement.

Madison Fiedler, a playwright and Coop member, picked up on that. Her experiences as a cheese shift regular inspired *Homofermenters, or The Park Slope Co-op Play*, which debuted in June at Ars Nova's Ant Fest in Manhattan.

The annual festival is dedicated to new work from emerging, adventurous artists. Alumnae of the festival include theatrical luminaries like Jeremy O. Harris, Michael Breslin and Patrick Foley, as well Bowen Yang of *Saturday Night Live*.

Fiedler's show follows six Coop members working the Friday 6 a.m. cheese shift. As each shift passes, conflict increasingly curdles. When a team leader suddenly dies, all hell breaks loose in the cold Coop basement.

Fiedler collaborated with director Francesca Sabel on the "satire-turned-slasher." Sex, murder and the merits of collaboration are all on the table, as well as cheese (which Sabel points out comes from rotting milk, "controlled death.")

After the show's debut at Ant Fest, I spoke with the pair about what inspired *Homofermenters*, what they discovered researching the Coop, and if there are future plans for the show. (Warning: Some of the discussion contains spoilers!)

Was there a defining moment during a shift at which you decided to write about the Coop?

Madison Fiedler: My very first shift I worked in stocking. I accidentally slashed open nine bags of flour. I was like, "I can never do this again. This is the most humiliating experience of my life, of course."

I was asking friends who were members what shifts they'd enjoyed the most. A friend of ours, Joan, told me about the cheese shift and was like, "It is so cold down there. My body sort of rejected it, but it is the most fun." It's a hard shift to get. You're just handling cheeses and learning about them and you're down in this kind of underbelly of the place.

It feels like a shift that is exemplary of a lot of the things that are funny and also silly about the Coop. Everyone's talking about how incredibly priced the cheeses are the whole time. Everyone's talking about how good it feels to work with their hands, which is mentioned in the show. You're cutting a small piece of cheese and you're doing it for 2 hours and 45 minutes.



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

Francesca, you directed this show without being a member. What is and was your impression of the Coop from the outside?

Francesca Sabel: I grew up in New York, so I feel like the Coop was always around. I went to Hunter College High School and there were a lot of Coop families there. I remember whenever I would go to a Brooklyn friend's house, it would be like, "Just so you know, this meal was made with groceries from the Coop."

So it's kind of sanctified in that way. Madison described it in this way that was so exciting, because it was like you were so aware of all the things that were a little bit

ridiculous about it and also so aware of all the things that are amazing about it.

And it felt like part of the tonal and thematic thing that this piece was always doing was offering those both at the same time and being like, “It is insane that there are people who take the size of the wedges so seriously.” But also, “Isn’t it cool that there are people who take the size of the wedges so seriously?” And that’s how this thing against all odds has survived for all these years.

Without spoiling details from the show, what do you think is parallel about the Upper West Side community and that of the Coop?

Sabel: My Upper West Side parents came to the show and they were very sort of hurt by the ending. I think that in both cases, you have people who have figured out a sort of approach to the city that feels different. You’re near parks, it’s New York with all the benefits of greenery. There are delicious restaurants and there’s a tremendous amount of privilege infused in every step you take in both the Upper West Side and Park Slope.

I think that is because those communities are pretty insular even though they’re in these big cities. I remember growing up and then getting to high school and college with people who had grown up in different parts of New York, thinking “This actually isn’t really New York. This is a bubble within it.”

The show is both a horror and a comedy, but it’s also very erotic. What about the cheese shift brought in those three different directions?

Fiedler: For one reason, I want more horny art for lesbians. We started working on this show with one of our actors, who ended up getting Covid and not being able to do the show, but is this extraordinary actor Moe Angelos who is in the Five Lesbian Brothers, this iconic downtown lesbian theater group that did a lot of work in the ’90s.

We’ve collaborated with her before and I knew I wanted to write a part for her. She

played all of these really ridiculous horny parts and did them so well back in the '80s and '90s. And I wanted to write a semi-retired lesbian lothario kind of part for her. I am so interested in the history of Park Slope as this historically lesbian neighborhood, and the role of lesbians in its gentrification.

When I am at the Coop, I feel like I see older queer people more than I do other places. It's an amazing thing, to see all these old lesbians stocking soy crackers.



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

What inspired the murder mystery elements?

Fiedler: I thought the environment lent itself well to that. The nature of the Coop is this Sisyphean repeating effort. The stakes are built in, because people care so much and that's what also keeps it alive and keeps it going. There are all these rules that can feel ridiculous, but are also the thing that keep it intact. It is constantly straining against itself, full of these internal collisions and contradictions. Doing some research for the show, I went to a general meeting, and conflict bubbles up in a very theatrical

way.

Sabel: We wanted to feel that in the show, too. Our sound designer, Michael Rogerson, took a trip to the Coop with Madison and recorded ambient sounds which became our transition sounds. You could hear real Coop boxes being lifted, with strings underneath to sound ominous.

I was obsessed with Emmaline's (the uptight shift leader who dies) monologue. It pulls from the history of the Coop, but also feels like a political stump speech. What went into writing that?

Fiedler: All of the characters have interludes that provide some kind of access to their interiority, in an otherwise ensemble, plot-heavy show. Emmaline's speech is about the history of the Coop and kind of where she sees herself in its lineage.

I read a lot of old *Linewaiters' Gazette* articles, and did my own research. There was this amazing book, *Stirrings: How Activist New Yorkers Ignited a Movement for Food Justice*, about food activist movements in New York. There's a whole chapter in the Coop. It's an amazing read. This book quotes this Coop member in the *Gazette*.

The member, Rich Richardson, wrote in the *Gazette*: "I believe that in this decaying society there will be formed enclaves like monasteries, which nourish progressive ideas in dark ages. Park Slope can be such an enclave. Formal political organization has waned, but a living political organism (our Coop) has become bigger in size and in meaning. Voting with our feet (or with a moving van) we cast a ballot for a people's cooperative and against an individual fortress."

Sabel: I remember being really struck by the amazing things that were happening when the Coop was formed. *Roe v. Wade* was being decided. The Twin Towers were going up. There was this sort of progressive movement, and now *Roe v. Wade* and the Twin Towers aren't things that exist anymore. The Coop was founded in a lot of hope and optimism; if we trace how all of these things come into our present mo-

ment, that hope and optimism gets complicated. I think Madison's script is really thoughtful about how the Coop aligns with the history of gentrification in Park Slope.

It's bittersweet. The show is satirizing what the Coop is now, while honoring what it once was.

Fiedler: One hundred percent. The Coop is this attempt at utopia in a grocery store, that's building a microcosm of the world you want to inhabit. I feel a strong resurgence of a want for that. Young people feel like they are living in the end times. It struck me that the Coop was founded by six friends who were anti-war organizers and had all of this motivation toward making change and creating a better world.

But when the Vietnam War ended, they were like, "What do we do with this?" I think the Coop is a miraculous thing or it wouldn't be worth poking fun at. I'll be honest. I mean also I am aware of the ways that I am a textbook young, white, gay leftist Coop member. I am not so different from these kinds of ridiculous characters.

Was there anything in your research that didn't make it into the show, but stuck with you?

Sabel: This isn't exactly research, but I do think one of the things that we kept feeling like we were running out of time for was there are just so many fun potential murder weapons in the cheese section. Sure, cheese knives. This actually got cut off in the production, because of limited tech time, but we wanted our final gesture to be someone stretching a cheese wire. You see someone get clobbered with a 40 pound wheel of Parmesan.

Fiedler: I worked my first shift since the show the other day, and I kept texting cast members. I was operating the back lift to bring a U-boat down to the bulk section in the basement. And I was like, "Fuck. This could have been a way for them to get the body upstairs." There was also a lot of research on the history of cheese that could not make its way in there. Even the title *Homofermenters*, I didn't get to explain what

that means, and what the role of homofermenters in cheese-making is, but that's a fun little secret for us to get to keep.

While thinking about what didn't make it in, are there plans for the show again? What can *Gazette* readers look forward to?

Sabel: In a really beautiful way, Madison and I work together a lot. I'm very sort of obsessed with Madison. We have been working on a different show that is very precise and quiet. We were sort of like, "What is the opposite of that?" So we did *Homofermenters* for Ant Fest, which is one night only, 70 minutes or less. I think it was designed to be in an ephemeral, batshit context too.

But if somebody was like, "You know what, if the Park Slope Coop wants to host a *Homofermenters*, we will definitely do a site specific *Homofermenters*."

CONVERSATIONS WITH COOP AUTHORS

February 10, 2026



By Juliet Kleber

July 23, 2024

It should come as no surprise to readers of the *Linewriters' Gazette* that the Coop is home to a great number of writers of all kinds—from celebrated newspaper journalists to children's book authors and writers of literary fiction. The *Gazette* interviewed three of these member-authors recently: Eileen Kelly, author of the novel *Small Wonder*, an introspective and suspenseful story of a young single mother living and teaching in Park Slope; Lauren Mechling, *Gazette* editor and co-author of the “comedic time travel novel” *The Memo*; and Stephen Savage, *Gazette* illustrator and author of *Rescue Cat*, an illustrated story for young readers in which the titular character takes her turn as rescuer.

The *Gazette* spoke to each author about their recently published or soon-to-be-released books, their experiences at the Coop and the creative community that exists

here.

The following interviews have been edited for clarity and brevity.

Eileen Kelly, author of *Small Wonder*—out August 6 from Flexible Press

How long have you been a Coop member?

My husband, Anthony Richter, and I joined the Coop in 2003, when our children were five and three years old. Now both of them are Coop members.

Tell us a little about your novel.

It's about a single parent with a poorly-paying teaching job who is facing some economic crises, including losing her housing, and encounters a widower whose child is in her class and whose other child is a friend of her son's. They have a flirtation and she is tempted by the idea of saving herself by attaching herself to this man. He is very charming, but his children are behaving badly, becoming more and more aggressive. At the same time she's trying to figure out what happened to his wife, who died kind of mysteriously. It's a bit thriller-ish. But it's also about a very civilized place where people have very high standards for how they treat other people, and the challenge of dealing with children who do not follow those rules.

Your novel is set in Park Slope; do you think there are any features of life in the neighborhood that Coop members would recognize?

In my 20s, I was moving around to lots of different places. In my 30s, I settled in Park Slope, and it was a different experience of life—covering the same ground, the same blocks back and forth. That can be monotonous, but it can also be building a deeper connection to where you live. I wanted to give a sense of this woman walking from her house to work, from her house to school, from school to her house. And even in a big city, in a community like this you can have a very small-town experience of life.

I draw from my decade working as a classroom teacher at Beansprouts preschool. It's been around since 1984. It occupies from 10th Street to 7th Street on 6th Avenue in Brooklyn, so right up the road from the Coop. [In the novel] I make up the school and invent the characters, but I try to re-create from my experience the relationships and experience of teachers, parents and younger children growing up in this area.

What aspects of that experience feel especially particular to this neighborhood?

Everything happens on foot. Private moments happen in public spaces. And I think people who've lived here a long time have a sense of privacy that they sort of carry with them as they move through a place crowded with people.

Also, this particular family likes to go walking down by the Gowanus Canal. It's set a little earlier in the past, so it isn't developed, and they like looking at the excavators and the machines and the big cement-processing plant down by the Gowanus and under the BQE. I hope to capture the experience of children growing up in a city, too. They're playing in parks, they don't have a yard, so all their play takes place in public.

Do you think the Coop is kind of a microcosm of that familiar-but-public type space?

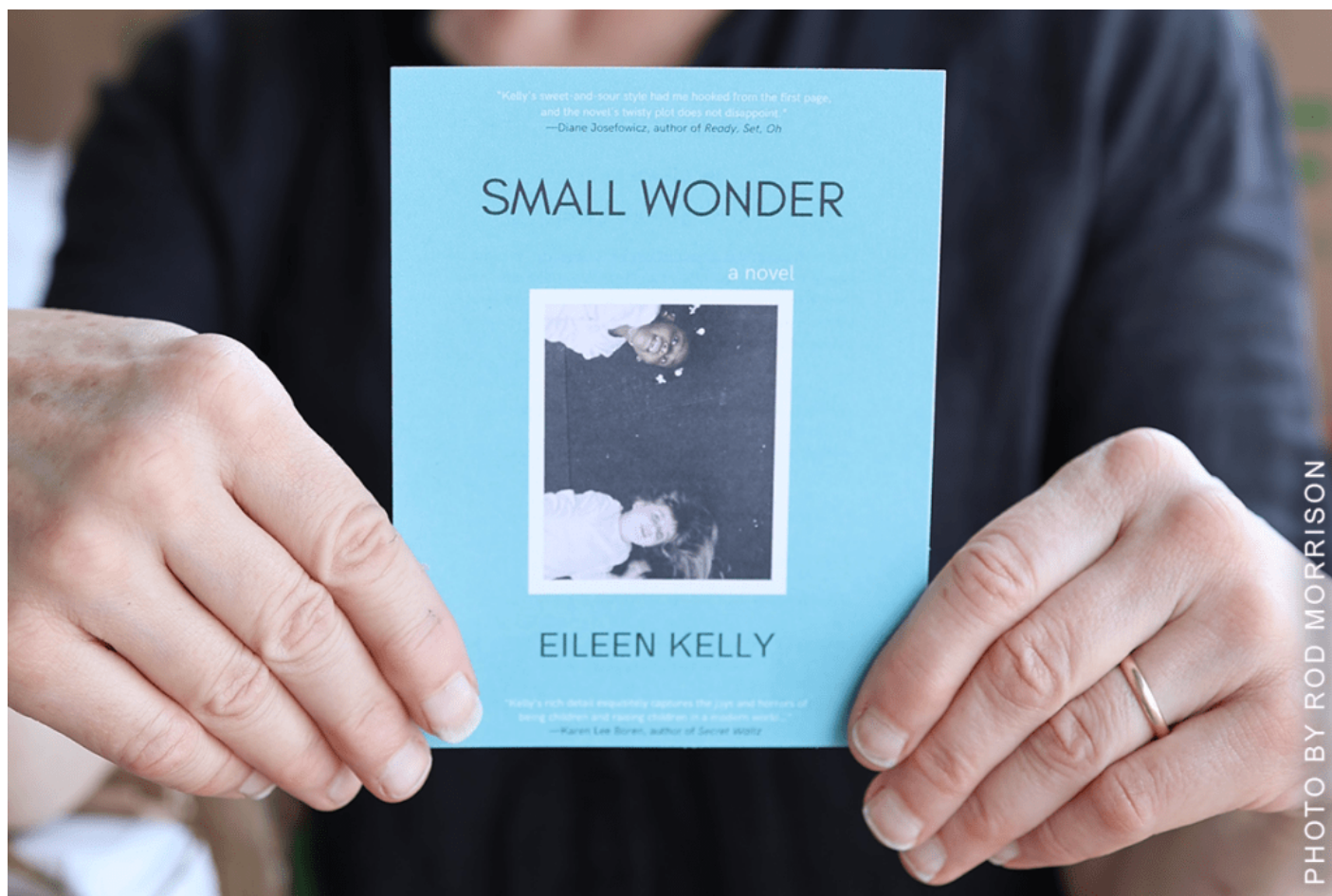


Going into the milk cooler is a metaphor for Eileen's life as she tends to work in private. But with her book coming out, she's determined to step outside the milk cooler. That's very true. When they had child care pre-COVID, I would work up there, and it was sort of that same thing. But like many writers, I'm an introvert, and I found the best place for introverts to work their Coop shift is the dairy cooler. I would just go in, put on my big heavy coat and my gloves, and space out entirely unbothered. Whereas my husband, who is a super social guy, would be in places where you're all wrapping the cheese together and you can talk. Every time he goes, he comes back with another person he found who he knows from work connections or school. So there is a place for everybody, and people form their little communities and alliances and probably there are feuds I don't know of.

We're definitely overdue for a novel or a TV series like *Parks and Recreation* set in a food coop.

I LEFT COLLEGE THINKING, “HERE COMES MY LIFE. I’M GOING TO BE A NOVELIST.”

A portion of the proceeds from *Small Wonder* go to the Center for Popular Democracy—can you tell us about their work and how you came to that decision?



Flexible Press will publish *Small Wonder*. Eileen plans to donate some of the proceeds to the Center for Popular Democracy.

Flexible Press asks all of their authors to choose a nonprofit to share proceeds with. This was my choice.

I got connected to them from Trump-era activism. Their model is to build local power to work toward national change. They work with independent groups across the US

like Make the Road Nevada or Lucha in Arizona. And they really listen to and support the goals of the local group, meeting the needs of that community. In national elections, they work with those groups to elect candidates that they think will meet progressive goals. But the idea mainly is helping people who tend to be without economic or political power build local power so that they can shape their communities.

This is your first published novel and you've described yourself as a "second-act author." Could you talk a little bit about that and how you got where you are now?

I first had a novel represented by a well-connected and pretty powerful literary agent in 1984, when I was a senior in college. I left college thinking, "Here comes my life. I'm going to be a novelist." But she didn't sell it, and then she didn't want the next thing I wrote. And I got another agent who could not sell that book, and then another. I've written five adult novels and come so close so many times to being published, but it never happened. Then 40 years go by, and I stopped telling people I was a writer. It was almost like an embarrassing secret.

There was a period of time where I felt very frustrated, and very much as though I'd failed, and then at some point, I just decided: "This is your only life. You've just got to live this, whatever it is." So I got married, I had a family, and I kept writing, but I let it be less important to me in some ways and got more out of other things. I've also been very politically active and that's very rewarding to me.

Then I finished this novel. I had an agent, she couldn't sell it, and she said, "Well that's it, we're done." And I thought, "No, no, no—not this time." I started sending it out to small presses. Coming at this point in my life it doesn't mean as much as it would have when I was 21, but in some ways I have less at stake, so I can enjoy it more.

I think a lot of people—I'm sure so many Coop members—set out into adulthood saying, "I'm an actor, I'm a playwright, I'm a singer, I'm a painter," and the world is so

economically not built for that and punishing and exclusionary. If I were to do it again, I think I would not be so quick to say, “I’m not a writer because I’m not a published writer.” That was a mistake I made in my thinking. People have rich lives that are not dependent on their employment, and definitely the Coop is an example of that. So few people there are working there for their job. But they write for the Coop, they make art, they do music, they do performances. This is an example of how people’s lives are defined by far more than their paycheck.

Have you found any kind of creative community at the Coop?



Eileen found the best place for introverts to work their Coop shift is the dairy cooler. People say, “You’re a debut author,” and this is kind of a debut in that I’ve been almost a secret author. Going into the milk cooler is such a metaphor for my life. I’m very connected to people, family and close friends, but I really worked in private. I’m now making new connections to people because the book is coming out. So if there is a group of writers at the Coop I don’t know of, I am now determined to step outside the milk cooler and make some friends.

Lauren Mechling, author of *The Memo* (with Rachel Dode)—released by Harper Perennial on June 18.

How long have you been a member of the Coop?

Maybe 20 years. I joined when I was single and very young. Then I got engaged to my then-boyfriend and one of the conditions of marriage was that he join the Coop, so I moved in with him and we now live in Gowanus.

Tell us a little about *The Memo*.



PHOTO BY ROD MORRISON

The Memo is a novel and a comedy about a woman who gets to go back over the past 10 years and do things over.

In very short... I think of it as a magic carpet ride—it's a time-travel story, but not in the way that most people think of time-travel stories, because it doesn't go back to the Victorian times or when-have-you. It's kind of a sliding-doors tale of a woman who gets to go back over the last 10 years of her life and do things over.

Is there a moment in your life that you would “blitz track” (to use the terminology of the novel) if you could?

There are a million. One thing that keeps coming to mind is that I've started doing more and more humor writing lately and I wish that in college I had not doubted myself on that front. I wish I could blitz track to college and join the humor magazine and give that my all. I'm 46, so the idea of having had the last 25 years to really hone those skills... it's something I'll never get back.

You wrote this book in collaboration with another author, Rachel Dodes. Can you tell me about how that came to be and what the process was like on a granular level?

Rachel and I were reporters together at the *Wall Street Journal* when we were in our 20s. We sat near each other, but it was the kind of office where you put your head down and worked hard. Then five years ago, I wrote a novel called *How Could She*, and Rachel received an early copy and loved it and invited me on her podcast. We discovered in this conversation that there was so much more to the two of us than we had ever realized when we were both in Midtown in this corporate setting. We made each other laugh a lot. I think she's incredibly kooky and ingenious. We kept making each other laugh on Twitter, and she wrote me a message one day and said, “Is there any chance you would want to work on something together? I think we'd be really good collaborators.”

I was very excited about that idea because I had been writing things by myself, which

can be lonely. So we started hanging out. We were both unemployed, and we were coming up with different ideas and mapping them out on white boards.

We initially thought we were going to do a scripted podcast, but we kept having meetings with different executives and nothing was happening. And then there was a pandemic, and it became incredibly clear that we don't need to wait for some guy who runs Spotify to give us the green light. We can take one of these stories and we can write it as a novel.

We had a shared Google Doc and took turns every day reading over what the other person had written, rewriting or trying to tweak it to make it funnier, and then adding more. So by the end, we'd kind of established a third voice that's not hers or mine.

I think that's pretty unusual to do with the novel form. I was wondering what drew you to that and—I'm very sorry for what I'm about to say—if it is a kind of cooperative impulse?

It's definitely cooperative in the sense that Rachel and I share all the money half and half. If you're more of a capitalist, I think you would probably say, "No way—I'm going to do this all by myself and keep everything for myself." And like the Coop, I think you just have to kind of love the charms of the place even when it's a little herky-jerky or crowded. You have to be more accepting. There were times that Rachel or I would take out things we didn't love, but others when you have to go, "Alright if you really feel strongly about that—I love you and I trust you."

Food has a pretty important role in the novel—I was wondering if you could speak to the symbolic and personal function that it plays in the story.



Lauren and her co-author, Rachel Dodes, are foodies. Their book features a character that loves baking.

Jenny, the main character, graduated from a prestigious college and majored in economics, but she really just loved baking. That's a huge part of the story—because of the sliding door, there's her life as a “loser” and then her life as a “winner” and in both stories food is how she expresses herself.

In the first draft of the book, food was not a big part of it. But one of the notes we got from a reader was that it was lacking. Rachel and I both love food, and it just seemed like the most obvious, easy and exciting way to rework the story. Initially she was a sound artist, and then we said, “What if she loves baking?”

Even between the two versions of the character’s life, the relationships to food are very different and very representative.

Yeah, she is indulgent in her regular life. She loves eating and going to the farmer’s market and getting pierogies and baking. Then in her alternate life, where she’s supposed to be her “optimized self,” food is a big part of how she is supposed to live but it’s a rather joyless version of how to eat and how to nourish yourself, with lots of disgusting smoothies that taste like dirt. But she has a bikini bod.

You’re an editor on the *Gazette*—how long have you been doing that?

Maybe three years. I had been trying for 20 years and then during COVID when suddenly a bunch of journalists left the city, I got on. I started out on the cheese squad, which used to be in the basement and was really fun. It was the same group of people on Friday afternoons and I just loved having these regular catch-ups with the same cast of characters. Then I moved over to an amazing squad at the soup kitchen, but I got kicked off because they needed fewer people and I was the last one who joined. Then I was an exit worker.

I TEND TO GET A WALKER TO GO HOME, AND I ALWAYS TALK TO MY WALKERS AND ASK THEM A MILLION QUESTIONS. THEY’RE ALMOST ALWAYS ARTICLE-WORTHY.

Has working on the *Gazette* changed your Coop experience?

I keep my eyes open more. Now that I oversee a team of writers, I'm always noticing tiny things, like "We suddenly have all these non-alcoholic cocktails—is that a story?" "What about the new blinking sign where you come in?"



Lauren, oversees a team of writers on the *Gazette*. She always talks to her “walkers” asking them a million questions which are often article-worthy.

I tend to get a walker to go home, and I always talk to my walkers and ask them a million questions. They're almost always article-worthy. I'll ask them how their day was and by the end, I learn that they're the wardrobe designer for *The Bear* or run the exhibition wing at the Brooklyn Museum. Then I'll tell my team maybe someone should write about them, because I'm excited about the community that we have here.

Have you found any kind of creative community at the Coop?

It seems like half of the time when I talk to my walkers, they're also writers. It's exciting that there's this little gem in the neighborhood where I'm surrounded by so many

fellow writers of all different genres. There are some famous writers at the Coop, but even more extraordinary to me, a lot of people who are not famous but still at it and living in Brooklyn. That's so hard to do. We are very writer-rich.

Stephen Savage, author of *Rescue Cat* — out July 23 from Roaring Brook Press

How long have you been a Coop member?

I think about a year and a half. It's very new and exciting. In your 50s, what can you radically do to renovate your life? Well, joining the Coop has been one of those things.

And what's your shopping routine like?



Shopping has always been Steve Savage's job. He gets an electric CitiBike and heads to the Coop with one bag on each of the handlebars.

Shopping has always been a job in my life; when I was a kid I used to go grocery shopping to help my parents. Now I do it for our family. Being in that space is a very comfortable home-like space for me. It doesn't change—I feel like I'm 7 years old again.

But we have a teenage daughter so one challenge is always just getting [nutritious] food that she'll eat. I go probably twice a week with small bags. I feel like if I get more than two bags, then we end up not eating some of it. I get an electric Citi Bike and put one bag on each of the handlebars.

Tell me a little about your work.

My books are on the younger side of the already young picture book demographic—pre-K to six-year-olds. I like that audience a lot: I relate to it, I like going into kindergarten classes and I feel like I have lots of ideas for that group of readers.

Could you tell us a bit about this book in your own words?

It's a story about a cat that sees a little lion cub on a nature show and wants to go and rescue the cub. It's kind of a story about a portal or an alternate universe or your imagination.

How did you land on this idea?

I've done a lot of vehicle books. So I was trying to think of something new, and I thought it might be fun to do an animal book.

Having worked as an editorial illustrator, I think it's nice when there's a little concept or hook, so I came up with this idea of a cat that goes into the TV and has an adventure. And then the trick was making it a story that feels emotional and has a satisfying arc for the reader. It becomes like a two-year process to create these things—you start with a little kernel of an idea and then you just keep revising it, and in the end it becomes something a little bit different. I'll come up with another idea for a book that

I'll think is just as cool as *Rescue Cat* and then it won't go anywhere—it'll just die after a couple of weeks or months. Good ideas tend to keep you interested and stay alive over time.

I saw in your author bio that you have dogs—why make the main character for this book a cat?

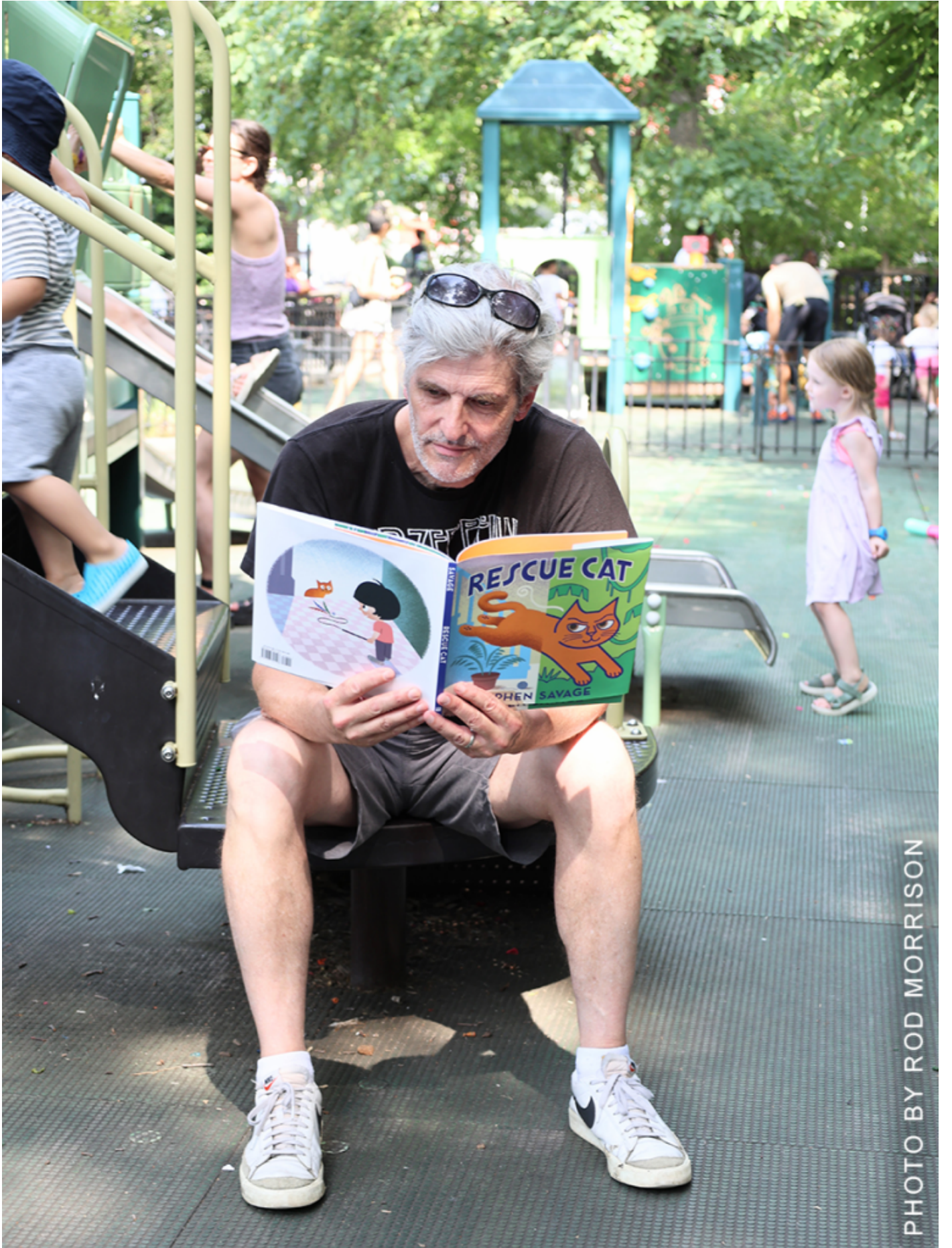


PHOTO BY ROD MORRISON

Steve mostly writes and illustrates books for pre-K through six-year-olds. His current book is about a cat with magical powers.

The story actually started with a dog—the kernel for the idea came from my in-laws telling us that they couldn't put on certain movies because one of their dogs would freak out and get really aggressive when he saw an animal [on the TV]. That got me thinking—does the dog really believe that's like a window they're looking through?

So the original story was a dog seeing a Lassie-type character on a show and going to rescue Lassie. We shifted to a cat, but it wasn't because of my preference for animals—I was just thinking of what character would work better. And for the story, I think the idea of taking in a stray cat is a little bit easier as a starting point because you don't see dogs on the street.

BUT THE FUNNY THING IS, I ACTUALLY REALLY ENJOY GOING IN AND WRAPPING CHEESE JUST AS MUCH AS DOING THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

How did you end up as an illustrator for the *Gazette*? And what has that experience been like?

We have a neighbor who said that there might be an opening on the *Gazette*, and it was an easy way [to work a shift] where I wouldn't have to get my hands dirty. But the funny thing is, I actually really enjoy going in and wrapping cheese just as much as doing the illustrations.

But for many years, I primarily did newspaper illustrations. And I like doing the *Gazette* illustrations because I don't do much of that work anymore, I do this longer-form illustration with the picture books that takes a long time. With something like the *Gazette*, you spend three hours or four hours and it's over and you get to see the results very quickly.

Have you found any creative community at the Coop?



PHOTO BY ROD MORRISON

Steve, seen here at the J.J. Byrne Playground on 5th Avenue, commented that Park Slope is a mecca for children's book illustrators.

Park Slope is kind of an artist enclave. I did an article years ago for *The Horn Book* about all the illustrators that are in the neighborhood. It's like a mecca for children's book illustrators. I've bumped into a few people [at the Coop]. I'm sure there are others who I haven't asked if they're a member, but secretly you know they have their Coop card in their wallet.

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

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE CHEESE CASE

February 10, 2026

THE FIRST YEARS OF THE COOP, IT WAS ONE OF THE KEY ITEMS THAT MEMBERS COULD EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS ON.

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

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



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

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

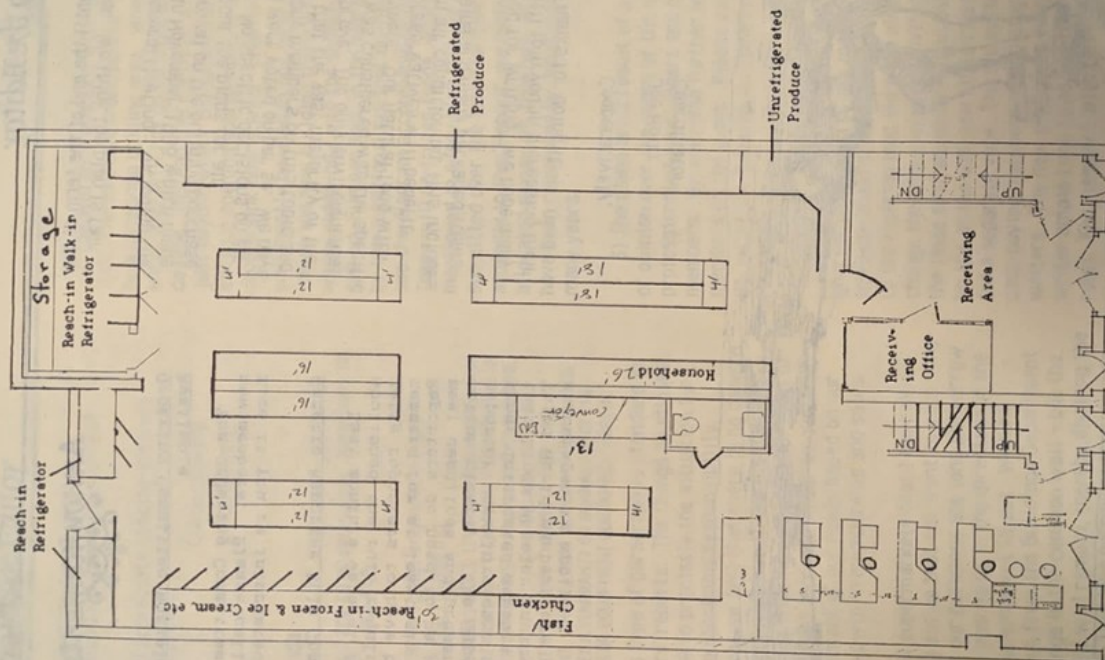
Members would pause on entry, discuss the cheeses available with the cheese workers, place their cheese order, and then begin the rest of their shopping. While the member shopped, the cheese workers would diligently prepare their custom cheese order. Finally, the member would pick up their cheese parcel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

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

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

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

Tentative Store Layout



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The cheese case cooling coils. Photography by Michael Berman.

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

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

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



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

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

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



A cheese worker preparing cheese. Photography by Michael Berman.

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

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

A CHEESY REUNION WITH PSFC'S FRENCH SIBLING COOPERATORS

February 10, 2026



By Hayley Gorenberg

“Created by a group of crazy people in Brooklyn in 1973, the Park Slope Food Coop has inspired dozens of similar experiments in the United States and elsewhere,” the French *Le Journal Minimal* remarked in October 2020. One of those experiments, La Louve food cooperative, thrives in the 18th Arrondissement in Paris, after the Park Slope Food Coop (PSFC) helped its founders launch in 2016.

Having written about La Louve while situated in the PSFC’s native Brooklyn, I made sure to seek out our sibling food cooperative when I had the good fortune to visit Paris this summer. Its founders happily connected me with Jean-François Herry, who

welcomed me on a Sunday before La Louve's inventory. Proudly self-identifying as La Louve's "first salary"—its initial staff member—Jean-François guided me through La Louve.

La Louve cooperative operates on a membership model similar to PSFC's. Members invest in the coop by purchasing a share and are required to contribute their time by working in the store.

"All you have to do is become a cooperator, that is to say participate in the financing, governance and operation of La Louve," the coop advertises, welcoming Parisians to join in focusing on providing fresh, locally sourced and sustainable products to members.

LIKE THE PSFC, MEMBER PARTICIPATION IS A FUNDAMENTAL ASPECT OF LA LOUVE. MEMBERS ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE DAILY OPERATIONS OF THE STORE, WHICH HELPS KEEP COSTS LOWER AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY.

It offers a variety of food items, household products and more. Like the PSFC, member participation is a fundamental aspect of La Louve. Members are actively involved in the daily operations of the store, which helps keep costs lower and promote community. Like its American counterpart, La Louve engages in community-building activities and education, as well as promoting a sustainable and socially responsible approach to food.

With early closing for coop-wide inventory just hours away, the store was purposely relatively low on produce. Jean-François showed me a storeroom with remaining crates of Valencia oranges, bright kumquats and roly-poly mini-watermelons.

THE MEMBERS WORKING TO SLICE AND PACKAGE WEDGES AND BLOCKS OF

CHEESE PEERED OVER THEIR MASKS AND UNDER THEIR HAIR NETS, A TABLEAU VIRTUALLY INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE ONE OUR MEMBERS RENDER IN BROOKLYN.

His tour was tinged with unnecessary apologies for the understandably low pre-inventory stock, and he became downright emotional when we encountered the coop's cheese area, seemingly reflecting a French person's cultural and culinary proclivity and pride.

The members working to slice and package wedges and blocks of cheese peered over their masks and under their hair nets, a tableau virtually indistinguishable from the one our members render in Brooklyn. But the cheese storage room itself elicited by far the strongest expressions from my host.

We stood amidst boxed and labeled Dutch cheese, a massive quarter-wheel of hard-rinded cheese bumping up against a plank mazed with picturesque holes, a trio of soft-rinded cheeses, trays of tanned and twisted cheese knobs and a fleet of wood-cased Camembert.

Cheese blocks proclaimed they hailed from Bergers du Larzac, a group of "20 producers from Larzac and the Levezou mountains [who] have come together to create a range of sheep cheeses with character!" The Larzac cooperative's members mature their cheeses in four levels of natural underground cellars, imparting "a unique taste and floral crust" to 26 cheeses, including nine organic cheeses.

LA LOUVE'S CHEESE ROOM PROVIDED A PORTAL INTO FRANCE'S CENTURIES OF CHEESE HISTORY, WITH PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES DEVELOPED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY BY MONKS AND FARMERS ALIKE.

I spied boxed Soignon goat cheeses and learned later that the brand dates to 1895, when it was founded in the Poitou-Charentes region of France. Soignon is noted for logs of thick, smooth-textured cheese with an “aroma that complements its fresh creaminess,” often packaged in delightful chestnut-leaf wrappings.

The Parisian coop stocked hundred-gram packages of Vrai fresh, organic sheep’s milk cheese advertised as “made in the traditional way, hand-molded and just drained,” yielding a cheese that is “light, soft and melting in the mouth,” alone or cooked, mixed into spreads or gratins. In short, the La Louve cheese room provided a portal into France’s centuries of cheese history, with production techniques developed throughout the country by monks and farmers alike, yielding more than 1,000 different types of French cheese.

But Jean-François radiated unease in this space. Shifting his weight, he confessed himself deeply “uncomfortable” at the day’s relatively low stock of cheese. The coop’s inventory processes were about to start, and it was time to go. I heaped effusive Brooklynite appreciations on my sibling cooperator for his hospitality, deployed my most heartfelt “merci!” and bid him a practiced “au revoir!”

Hayley Gorenberg has worked in environmental justice and trained this spring with the Climate Reality Project.