

SALUTING JOE HOLTZ, AN ICONIC FIGURE IN THE COOP'S HISTORY

July 15, 2025



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ

July 15, 2025

By Zach Schiffman

How do you honor the 50-year legacy of the Coop's longtime General Coordinator, Joe Holtz? On June 1 at the Prospect Park Picnic House, the Coop community saluted Holtz, an iconic figure in the Coop's history, with three waves of guests, over multiple snack stations, musical performances, interactive exhibits, pre-recorded tributes and painted portraits.



The event was organized by three Coop staff members, with food and drinks almost exclusively sourced from the Coop. Catering support was provided by Winner, which was founded by a former Coop member.

The celebration was structured into three sections, each lasting around 90 minutes. The first 50 minutes allowed attendees to mingle, enjoy snacks and refreshments, explore a multimedia showcase and photo archive, sign Holtz's guestbook and have portraits taken.

Each wave then concluded with a speaker, a video featuring Holtz's pre-recorded speech touching on his history at the Coop and a personal appearance and remarks from Holtz himself, most of which involved anecdotes about scrubbing the Coop floors and stocking the milk fridge. The finale was a group portrait on the lawn orchestrated by a documentary team that captured the event.



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ

A celebration of
JOSEPH HOLTZ
JUNE 1ST, 2025



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



The first wave featured Gillian Chi, a longtime staff member who served as the event's MC despite initial nervousness. "I've never emceed anything before, maybe spoken into a microphone twice in my life," she confessed.

Chi, like everyone at the event, said, "It's hard to imagine the Coop without him." Musical entertainment during this wave was provided by the James Shipp Band, which is made of entirely of Coop members. Member John Webber presented a portrait of Holtz made with MetroCards by artist Juan Carlos Pinto, along with a painting of the iconic PSFC Neon sign by member Erik Schurink.

The second wave featured Jess Robinson, a member and former staffer, as the speaker. Musical entertainment was provided by Coop member band Krissie & the Kranks. Staff member Yuri Weber performed "Hey Mr. Tangerine Man," an adaptation by

former staffer Allen Zimmerman, adding a playful, nostalgic element.

The final wave featured staff member Jana Cunningham as the speaker. “The On-Alert String Band,” also composed of Coop members, provided entertainment. A highlight of this wave was the presentation of a custom event T-shirt to Holtz—an original design reading “Holtz 73”—which staff and members proudly wore throughout the event.

Throughout the day, attendees shared heartfelt reflections.







PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



Sherry Showell and John Decker, members since 1996, described Holtz’s support for the compost squad. Showell noted Holtz’s unwavering support helped their group grow significantly.

Reflecting on his retirement, Sherry admitted feeling overwhelmed, asking, “Who do I go to now?” Newer members Meredith and Lucy, who assisted with food and drinks, shared their impressions. Lucy remarked, “It’s amazing to see all the history—different generations coming together to celebrate.”

Meredith, reflecting on the Coop’s enduring values, added, “So many of the themes that spurred them to start it are the same things that we’re experiencing today. It’s a really kind of reassuring feeling in this time, just to know that we have an institution that has lasted longer than me.”

Kathy, Holtz's wife, sat quietly off to the side and described the celebration as "very moving," expressing how great it was to see how much people love him and respect him. She warmly shared her belief that Holtz, being "a gregarious person," was truly enjoying the recognition and interaction, adding, "I think he's really liking it a lot."

Longtime member Scott Klein characterized the moment as "the end of an era," while emphasizing the Coop's enduring strength. He said he enjoyed reconnecting with other members, noting simply that "just seeing people" was his favorite aspect.



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



Coop Exterior Through the Decades



Park Slope Food Coop 1980's



Clem's Dry Cleaners prior to the Coop's expansion in 2001



Delivery of rooftop equipment in 1990's



2001 January-June
Renovation of Coop in 19th Edition to build a new culture building



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



PHOTO BY STEFAN RUIZ



Abigail Dunn, who received work credit to staff the event, described it as “vintage Coop,” and appreciated the chance to meet both new and longtime members. She complimented organizer Silvia Ennes Cabrera for the event logistics.

Cabrera brought her 15 years of event-planning experience prior to working full-time at the Coop to the celebration.

“My mind always goes to food,” she said. “What is the Coop known for? What do you think about when you think of the Coop? And I think about the cheese, bulk, produce and bagels.”

Each table had creative combinations of cheese, dried fruit and crudité. Ultimately, she had to skip the bagels—“We eighty-sixed the bagels because it was just too

hard.” Not only were the snacks a hit, but they were elegantly displayed. “I had a lot of fun getting together stuff to build a little display in the center of each of the tables.” Her earliest memory of Holtz? “He had a belly and a red beard, if you can believe that.”

Elly Dittmar, one of the membership coordinators who helped organize the event, took on the task of curating the photo archive.

“I basically just combed through our archival folders, which, none of them are named—just a massive file of all these random photos,” she said. “Surprisingly enough, it’s extremely hard to find pictures of Joe. In all of these 50 years of archives, there were very few pictures of Joe.”

She eventually had Holtz look through the selections and add his own blurbs. What stood out most to her about the event was how many members were involved: “All the band members, all of the people working today are members. One of the people who helped us prep the food is a member, and the person who owns [the restaurant] is actually a former Coop member. It just feels really nice to be able to pull this all off entirely with people that are part of the Coop.”

Staff member Jason Weiner, handling multimedia presentations, which were displayed on iPads hung in the back of the Picnic House, found joy assembling tributes from international coops, especially from France. “It was really, really endearing,” he said, emphasizing Holtz’s global impact. “The evolution of this place...couldn’t have happened without the work of Joe and other people. It’s nice to celebrate that.”

When the guest of honor was asked how he felt at the expansive event, Holtz told me, “I’m feeling great.”

Zach Schiffman is a social editor and writer at New York magazine, comedian, and Park Slope local.

HOW EQUAL EXCHANGE CONNECTS FARMER COOPS TO OUR COOP

July 15, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

July 15, 2025

By Dan Bergsagel

Coop members can learn about the source of their food from labels or from the produce and bulk information on the Coop website. However, we only occasionally hear about intermediaries—the distributors who buy food from farms and sell it to the Coop. They come to our attention when something new happens, such as the expansion of Field Day products on our shelves, or when something goes wrong, including the June 2025 cyberattack on UNFI, which led to temporary shortages on the Coop’s shelves, as UNFI accounts for 32 percent of the Coop’s purchasing.

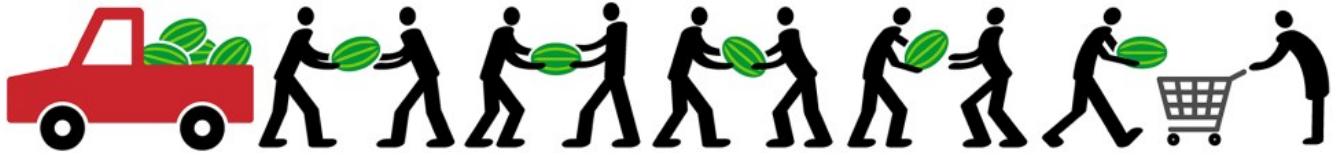


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

Intermediaries are the unsung heroes of the Coop’s supply chain. They make it possible for the Coop to sell a wide range of produce. “Distributors are extremely important,” said Britt Henriksson, one of two receiving coordinators and buyers for bulk and specialty foods at the Coop. “Working directly with suppliers is not common, as each supplier has an invoice and the paperwork can quickly add up to take a lot of a buyer’s time. More distributors also means more deliveries to be coordinated.”

Many of these important distributors are fellow travelers—cooperative organizations themselves with clear mission statements, guiding principles and a parallel trajectory which complements the Coop’s. Equal Exchange is one of the most important and closely aligned with the Coop.

You may recognize Equal Exchange’s logo—two red arrows joined together—on labels on your bananas or bulk coffee. What does not fit on their label is their mission statement:

“...to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just and environmentally sound, to foster mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and consumers

and to demonstrate, through our success, the contribution of worker co-operatives and Fair Trade to a more equitable, democratic and sustainable world.”

Equal Exchange was founded in Massachusetts in 1986, importing coffee from Nicaragua in defiance of a Reagan administration trade embargo. Equal Exchange later expanded to sourcing coffee from farmer groups across Latin America and Africa, and tea from India, Sri Lanka and South Africa. Today, it distributes chocolate, bananas, nuts, dried fruits and olive oils, all sourced from small farmer cooperatives.

The groups and cooperatives all view themselves as democratically organized.

Leah Madsen, sales manager at Equal Exchange, explained: “We have set up governance and capital structures to mitigate some of the most oppressive forces of capitalism. We’re trying to feed people, support people who produce food and support ourselves. We prioritize people over profit.”

Equal Exchange and the Coop go back a long way. “Back in the 1980s, we were excited about the founding of Equal Exchange. I am certain that we were buying their products in their first year,” said Joe Holtz, one of the founding members of the Coop, who just stepped down as general manager.

Since then, Equal Exchange has grown to become one of the Coop’s most important distributors. Madsen said the Coop is equally important to Equal Exchange. “PSFC is our largest single-store revenue partner for bulk coffee. Coffee represents more than half of our sales and an even higher percentage of our gross margin,” she remarked.

According to Madsen, over the past year the Coop sold 44,879 pounds of Equal Exchange coffee. (This is equivalent to covering the entire ground floor of the Coop with coffee beans two inches deep). The second largest mover of bulk coffee for Equal Exchange was a six-store chain that purchased 41,690 pounds of coffee. After that chain, the next largest single store sold less than half of the Coop’s annual volume.

This relationship holds sway beyond the hard numbers. “I love working with Park Slope,” Madsen said. “At an organizational level, the food coops we sell to are very important for Equal Exchange, and the Park Slope Food Coop is an important leader within the national food coop scene. PSFC is the only member labor cooperative still going, and it is a valuable example of anti-capitalism. It is valuable to have an ideological and philosophical partner.”

Equal Exchange and the Coop can have a real impact on small-scale farmers’ livelihoods. The bulk coffee bought by Coop members in the last year is approximately equivalent to the total coffee output of 22 family farms. The 729,520 bananas that Coop members purchased in 2024 paid \$125,660 directly to small-scale banana farmers in Ecuador and Peru.

There are also other, less tangible effects, Madsen explained. “There is so much global upheaval—state violence, militias, civil war, genocide—that we can support farmers operating in these areas to have some economic and social platform through trade and solidarity by bringing them resources. Money flows in, but the organizational impact of allied neighbors as part of civil society is also important.”

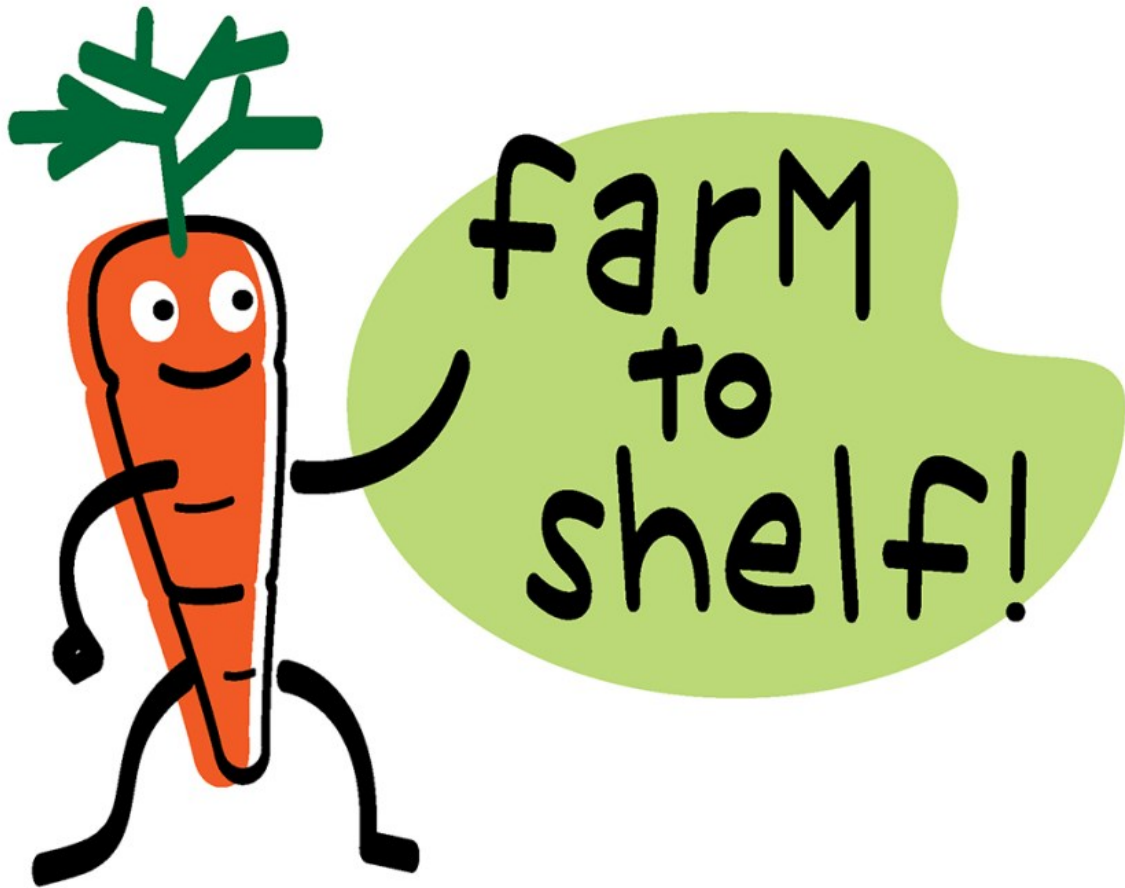


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

“Coops can be more of a positive organizational force than the state in some cases and have been a vehicle for peasant farmers to build political power,” she added. “Farmer cooperatives can use the dollars earned through fair trade premiums. The money we spend with our growers is used to build things like roads and health clinics. We provide access to capital that helps them avoid predatory interest rates.”

In 1994, Equal Exchange became a worker-owned cooperative. Today, each of the 110 to 120 worker-owners has an equal voting share and equal profit share, whether they work in senior management or at entry-level.

While the worker-owners can vote equally, not all decisions are voted on. Madsen explained that “much of the governance and general decision-making is delegated to management or different working groups and committees. Worker-owner votes primarily focus on board elections, bylaw changes, charitable contributions and major changes to operations.”

Equal Exchange initially focused on promoting fair trade in the global south through coffee, and the mission and guiding principles were easily interpreted. In many cases, this trade supports the transition from a commodities trade rooted in colonial histories, and seeks to increase solidarity and transparency when connecting producers and consumers.

Fair trade does not encompass products sourced from the U.S., yet conventional agricultural trade practices here can also be problematic, and small-scale farmers that implement best-practice growing procedures, such as almond farmers in California, need support.

As a result, Equal Exchange management now says that its mission is supporting “fair trade in the global south, and alternative trade in the global north.”

Decisions are not always universally popular. Equal Exchange went through a period of selling single-serve coffee pods (like the ubiquitous K-cup). There was debate among worker-owners about the quality and environmental impact, yet the decision was made by one of the sales teams to proceed. The team had autonomy to make that decision within the guiding principles, on the basis that if people insist on drinking single-serve coffee, then it would be best to drink fair trade higher-quality single-serve coffee.

While the guiding principles of Equal Exchange are often motivated to mitigate the impacts of broader societal challenges, the procurement strategy is much more granular and individualized. Equal Exchange visits its growers, building its network by vetting a farm’s structure and ability to reduce the negative impact of agriculture on the planet.

Equal Exchange sources olive oil from the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) in the West Bank and from Sindyanna of Galilee in Northern Israel. The suppliers of these oils were chosen not based on their political geography but for their alignment with democratic fair trade practices.

PARC promotes the sustainable economic development of 41 farmer cooperatives, improves water supply and critical infrastructure and provides social services for women, children and families in the West Bank. Sindyanna of Galilee is “a female-led non-profit that actively promotes the concepts of ‘business for peace’ and fair trade in Israel. The organization sells olive oil from Arab small farmers and then channels all of the profits back into Arab women’s education and other economic activities.” Both olive oils are sold at the Coop.

Closer to home, the Coop has sold pecans from New Communities Inc., a Black-owned small farmer collective in southern Georgia that operates a land trust which developed from the Civil Rights movement. Yet Coop members don’t always buy these high-quality products from mission-aligned organizations.

“We love their story and what they’re about,” recalled Receiving Coordinator Henriksen. “The problem here at the Coop is shelf space, and member dollar spends really dominate that. I loved the product, but the members weren’t buying enough of them.”

This suggests an information gap. “I wish members knew more about what is going on behind the scenes at this lovely grocery store,” Henriksson said. That may be the next challenge: offering the Coop’s buyers a way to share the motivating stories of where the food comes from with members in the aisles.

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

FOOD CLASS: BREAKFAST TACOS, TEXAS STYLE!

July 15, 2025

The Park Slope Food Coop Cooking Squad Presents

TACOS

Breakfast tacos, Texas style!

Make breakfast
tacos with Food
Studies scholar
and community
organizer,

Rebecca Gorena

@hardfeelingstacos



Rebecca shares
her passion for
food and
community-
building through
classes, dinner
parties, and
breakfast taco
pop ups!

foodcoopcooks.org/rsvp

IG: foodcoopcooks



July 30th

7:30 pm EDT

NOW in person
and online!



July 15, 2025

Join us with Chef **Rebecca Gorena** to make **Texas-style breakfast tacos** on **Wednesday, July 30, at 7:30 p.m. EDT** as part of the Coop's monthly cooking series. The class will be in person at the Coop and feature Austin-style Papa con Huevo breakfast tacos!

About the Chef

Rebecca Gorena grew up on the Texas-Mexico border, where breakfast tacos are a beloved part of everyday life. After 14 years in Austin, she moved to Brooklyn to pursue a master's degree in food studies at NYU and to share her passion for food knowledge and community-building through cooking classes, dinner parties and breakfast taco pop-ups around the city. With a background in culinary research and community organizing, Rebecca likes to explore the powerful connections between food, culture and identity. She loves helping others reconnect with their culinary roots while discovering new flavors and stories along the way. You can find her on Instagram: **@hardfeelingstacos**.

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 homepage. Check back regularly for updates! Follow the Cooking Squad on Instagram at **instagram.com/foodcoopcooks** 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 at foodcoopcooks.org/contact.

JULY 15, 2025

July 15, 2025

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

DON'T DISENFRANCHISE ME

Greetings:

Now that we know nearly two-thirds of member voters want remote access to the general meetings, and that we are free to have hybrid meetings without a change to the bylaws (legal advice received by senior staff after the referendum was happening), can we please reopen meeting access? Since it's not a boycott or a bylaw change, all we need is a simple majority to approve, if we even need a vote.

For reasons of work/childcare/medical/mobility and room capacity, we can't all participate otherwise.

*Sincerely,
Lisa Guido*

DEMOCRACY, GENERALLY COORDINATED

Greetings:

As recently noted by outgoing General Manager Joe Holtz, Coop members have the right under New York State law to participate in our democratic processes virtually. But our bid to enshrine that right into our bylaws has failed, winning 66.45% of a vote that required 66.67%. That slim margin is a testament to how critical the General Coordinators' fearmongering was in defeating a commonsense proposal rooted in a desire to expand access and maximize participation at the Coop.

The GCs will tout the PSFC's commitment to democracy and member input. They'll invite you to General Meetings where you can "have your voice heard." But after a year and a half of obstruction, obfuscation and the blatant misuse of their bully pulpit, I

speak from experience when I say they'll only let you participate if they think they'll still be in control at the end of the day.

*Sincerely,
Morgan Võ*

LOOKING FORWARD WITH OPTIMISM

Fellow Members,

This summer I will turn 70 and will have been a member of this Coop for more than two-thirds of my life.

As I move into the next decade, our Coop moves into a new phase of its life, with Joe Szladek in the role of General Manager. Welcome and congratulations, Joe.

As a clear-eyed optimist, I imagine the possibilities and work as hard as I can to achieve it. At this moment, I have great hope for what our Coop can achieve under the leadership of a forward-looking General Manager.

Like all Coop leaders, a GM needs to be even-handed and open, fair in their treatment of every Coop member and constituency. They can help us become a truly democratic organization that uses all available tools, so that 17,000 members have the best possible chance to engage in policy- and decision-making. At a moment when a literal majority of Coop members want the opportunity to attend General Meetings online (while the still undecided Hybrid Referendum leaves that up in the air), they can help us transition to hybrid, fully virtual or asynchronous decision-making.

This means leaving behind an overly nostalgic and often unhelpful “we’ve always done it this way” perspective, choosing instead a more analytical stance. It’s time to

review how well things actually worked before and consider what needs to change to meet the current moment.

During my 30-plus years working in NYC public education, I learned from and with every child I taught, every teacher and principal I coached and every parent who trusted their child with me. As Joe Szladek assumes his important new role, I look forward to his willingness to learn from and with all members and his commitment to our mission: food, social and environmental justice.

*In solidarity,
Alyce Barr*

THE COOP HAS CHANGED—EXCEPT FOR THE LEADERSHIP

Dear Coop members:

“The city has changed,” said NY-7 Rep Nydia Velázquez on Democratic Primary night. “Zohran knew it. The other candidates didn’t see it. And that is why we are here celebrating this beautiful moment.”

The Coop has changed. Everyone knows it, especially younger people, disabled people, members targeted by racism and Islamophobia, shift workers, supporters of Park Slope Food Coop for Palestine and so on. The Coop leadership doesn’t see it. And that is why it’s not hard to imagine the Coop’s eventual fade.

Kerry Carnahan

MORE DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP: ONWARD!

How disheartening to read that the referendum for hybrid meetings failed to pass. The odds were stacked against it though and I believe that the majority of members do care about greater access to the decision-making process. So...let's forge ahead!

My co-worker Jason Weiner drafted a robust proposal last year. Member Yejia Chen also came up with a solid plan this Spring. The original hybrid meeting proposal, from CJ Glackin & Morgan Võ, has good recommendations too.

I hope that the General Manager, the Agenda Committee, the General Coordinators and the Membership at large will agree to quickly usher these forward. There is always a lot to do, we are all pulled left and right, but this is urgent. With proper planning we can come up with proposals to vote on in the not so distant future. We have to be agile and steadfast about this. We also have to be transparent, accountable and stop the on-going back-stabbing, slandering and other shenanigans.

The above proposals and ideas could be fully discussed at the next GM; small committees of members and/or staff can be organized to generate ideas and research feasibility with regular reporting, clear timelines and deadlines. The Coop can perhaps postpone other projects to focus on this issue. This is not rocket science. It's a business decision related to priorities and allocation of resources.

I encourage all members to push for this in the coming months, and not let it be buried under other priorities or by institutional inertia, nay-sayers and pushback. If we don't stand behind reforming the system to allow greater participation, the Coop will only pay lip service to a core principle: "Democratic Member Control." And skeptical members will have a point: The Coop is just another "glorified buyers club" with performative democratic values.

In solidarity,

Delphine Selles-Alvarez

NEW DEMOCRACY 2.0

Dear Coop members:

We best serve the democratic process when we allow everyone to come to the table. Regardless of technology enhancements, our biggest accessibility limitation will always be time. If we continue to only allow members to participate in discussion and voting on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., we disenfranchise anyone unavailable then. Whether it's the inability to travel, log on or simply focus due to other constraints like family, location or just life, those members can't participate.

We need a system that won't require someone who lost the affordable connectivity program to be pressured by personal cost to participate. We need to give parents and people who work nights time to digest information and not be forced to divide their attention. We need ways that give members with different learning styles and accessibility needs the same info as those at the GM.

I believe it's important to recognize that nowhere in the principles of cooperation does it say that members must agree with each other. Cooperation is finding common ground. The Coop is not meant to be a cookie cutter of anyone's beliefs. That's what makes it beautiful, messy and home to us all. Conflict is inherent in this space. Discourse is a necessity to allow these different opinions a voice. Our current system does not give time or ability to receive, process and respond. It limits participation, it limits engagement, it limits understanding and most importantly it limits factual information and transparent communication.

It keeps us from properly hearing each other. It makes us react and not engage in the best ways. It keeps us from making as much progress as we could.

It's time for **a new Coop democracy**. Please attend the July General Meeting to discuss my agenda item.

Sincerely,

Jason Weiner

Membership Coordinator at the Coop

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR HOLTZ?

Dear Coop members:

In his June 6 email, Joe Holz says that "I'm speaking today only for myself and not on behalf of the staff or General Coordinator team."

If Holtz is speaking only for himself, as one member equal among many thousands of other PFSC members, how is it that he was authorized to send his email to all members on the PFSC email database? Are all members, speaking only for themselves, able to send emails to the entire PFSC email list when they wish?

Sincerely,

Erich Hahn

JOE HOLTZ'S ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

Dear member owners,

Joe Holtz's abuse of authority in using the Coop's mailing list to send a message to each of us about how to vote in the upcoming election is outrageous. I've been an ac-

tive member of our beloved Coop for more than two decades, so I have heard Joe's opinion on many things over all these years. But this is next level, to use our member directory to send a personal message about how to vote.

Joe Holtz's intervention is straight up election interference and an egregious abuse of his power and privilege. Not only is it outrageous that Joe did this himself, I would like to understand which General Coordinators allowed him this access and which General Coordinators knew about this email before it went out and didn't have the judgment to see this as an inflammatory smear campaign against our own members? Please explain.

*Sincerely,
Kathleen Sullivan*

IS THE COOP LOSING ITS PROGRESSIVE SPIRIT?

Folks,

I'd firstly like to congratulate and welcome Joe Szladek to his new role. It's tough taking on a leadership role from a set of founders, as I know from my experience advising many startups and nonprofits around the world.

I joined the Coop because good food is good politics—if not, why buy organic or biodynamic? But the recent developments at the Coop have left me feeling insulted, condescended to, and frankly, unwelcome. The spate of missives from the GCs was bad enough, but Joe Holtz's email decrying board candidates was the height of paternalistic hypocrisy. If the candidates aren't allowed a similar platform to rebut any smears against them, is this really a democracy?

The contrast with Brooklyn, and the rest of the city—in light of the mayoral primary—

couldn't be more stark. The recent elections have proven that the electorate has uplifted candidates such as Mamdani, Hanif, Lander and others who have espoused justice for Palestinians and a variety of progressive causes. This begs the question: Has the Coop become a conservative institution with a set of ossified principles and bound by inertia? What happened to the kind of spirit that led to Chilean products being boycotted (under Pinochet)? Are we going to be so out of step with the community around us?

Maybe I should give up expecting better and go somewhere else.

I was honestly expecting Joe Holtz to email us all urging us to vote for Cuomo. Perhaps he still will?

*Regards,
Jayanth Eranki*

SEEKING ANSWERS ABOUT ALL-MEMBER EMAIL

Dear Editors:

I'm confused—how and why was an overly political and biased email on the Board elections from Joe Holtz sent to all members using the Coop's official 'no-reply' mailing list? I do not consent to my email being used by the Coop in this manner for any political and/or campaign message, and have never received one until now.

Additionally, was Holtz's letter meant to coerce, convince and/or rationalize in some way that Coop members need to agree to carry even one single product, let alone several, from a country openly and defiantly committing genocide in front of the entire globe with full U.S. support of funding, intelligence and weapons? Again, confused and would like an explanation.

Sincerely,
A.L. Steiner

MOURNING FRIEND'S FAMILY, CALLING FOR BOYCOTT

To my fellow members,

I have a good friend who is Palestinian and grew up as a farmer in a village called Khuza'a, southern Gaza. I mentioned him in a letter early last year (a letter that was originally refused for publication by the Gazette).

In the last month, I learned from him that his entire village was completely erased by Israel (there is no other word for it). Over 50 of his relatives were killed. The fate of the rest of the over 15,000 residents is by and large unknown, a tragedy in itself.

Khuza'a's population was not that far off from the size of the Coop's membership.

Among false narratives from the General Coordinators that a mere boycott of Israeli goods would destroy the Coop—narratives then used to prevent discussion and demonize members—I make the same appeal as in my previous letter: Let's keep our focus on the real destruction happening in Palestine.

In cooperation and solidarity,
Abdi-Hakin Dirie

FROM TAIPEI TO PARK SLOPE: IN SUPPORT OF THE COOP'S VAL-

UES

To the Editor:

I've been a proud member of the Park Slope Food Coop for 15 years and have always valued its spirit of cooperation and commitment to providing high-quality, sustainable food to our community.

However, since the attacks in October 2023, I've been troubled by what feels like a shift in the Coop's atmosphere. A vocal minority has pushed rhetoric that feels out of step with the inclusive and cooperative spirit that has long defined this community.

As someone who grew up in Taiwan—a place where democracy and civil liberties were hard-won—I'm deeply unsettled by the selective moral outrage directed at Israel. Though imperfect like any democracy, Israel stands alone in the region in offering meaningful protections for women, minorities and LGBTQ individuals. Yet it is often the sole target of intense condemnation, while regimes like China, Russia and Egypt—whose human rights abuses are well-documented—escape similar scrutiny. Criticizing a government's policies is one thing; singling out an entire nation and its people as uniquely immoral is something else entirely.

Regardless of where one stands on this complex and emotional issue, it is crucial to preserve the Coop's core values: cooperation, inclusivity and a focus on good food and community. I greatly appreciate the dedication of our General Coordinators, whose hard work reassures me that the Coop's spirit can continue to thrive. I want to thank Joe Holtz for his decades of service to the Coop and for his recent letter—a voice of reason and moral clarity from someone who has long embodied the values of the Coop. As Joe steps back from his role, I believe his words serve as a timely reminder of what this community stands for: cooperation, respect and a shared commitment to the Coop's founding principles.

Sincerely,

Linda Wong

THE HEARING ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (HAC) IS SEEKING NEW MEMBERS

July 15, 2025



July 15, 2025

HAC's work is organizing the scheduling of hearings for the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) and Hearing Administration Committee (HAC). The DRC seeks the resolution of disputes among members by investigating and determining if a member has violated Coop rules. If so, HAC determines the consequence for that violation. Hearings are held if a member wishes to appeal this determination.

HAC only meets when a hearing needs to be scheduled, and this is somewhat rare, with a current average of about one (1) hearing per year. HAC conducts its work by

email and phone, and a member of HAC must be present at all hearings. Generally, HAC members will receive about 2-3 shifts for the scheduling of a hearing.

Prospective applicants should be:

- Members in good standing for at least a year before the pandemic
- Willing to work in a collaborative committee environment
- Interested in the ongoing business of the Coop

Please send statements of interest to psfchac@gmail.com. The Committee will interview applicants and then select candidates for election at the General Meeting. We are seeking an applicant pool that reflects the diversity of the Coop's membership.

CROSSWORD: BOWL CUT

July 15, 2025



**MARCH GENERAL MEETING: SPRING PRODUCTS, BOARD CANDIDATES
AND MORE**

July 15, 2025



April 22, 2025

By Zach Schiffman

As attendees entered the Picnic House on March 25, the sidewalk was flanked with members advocating for various causes, handing out info sheets about hybrid meetings or QR code slips introducing candidates up for election. On one side of the immediate entry, members offered “halvah from Israel,” while on the other, a table with a handful of food options featured literature with voices from Gaza. The competing efforts outside the Picnic House foreshadowed what would come in the well-attended meeting, with the issues spilling into nearly every aspect of the agenda.

OPEN FORUM



Members turned out for the March General Meeting.

The Open Forum began with a member asking the Chair Committee to clarify the policy around open forum rules, pointing out that past meetings have allowed topics unrelated to Coop operations, with speakers granted longer than one minute. Chair Committee member David Moss responded that the committee uses a document called the Park Slope Food Coop Guide to General and Annual Meetings, which does not limit topics to Coop operations. He added that the one-minute rule is interpreted flexibly, depending on the needs of a particular meeting.

While some brought up items of general interest to the membership—honoring the anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, increasing the amount of meetings eligible for work credit, a plea to stop members from eating while working the checkout shift—speakers continued to challenge the transparency of the general meetings.

Coop member Josh Geller flagged how he was not on the ballot for the evening's dispute resolution community, while member Noah Potter questioned how his agenda

item had not come up, despite requesting it to be expedited. “I’ve been ghosted. I think it’s inappropriate,” Potter said, in the first of many comments he would make throughout the meeting.

One member asked if the June 24 General meeting date could be moved to avoid conflicting with the New York State and City primary elections, but outgoing General Coordinator Joe Holtz said that wasn’t possible due to the timing of the annual financial audit.



Member Adam Tager asked the candidates some questions.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Holtz, who also serves as Treasurer, reported on the four-week period ending 3/2/25, with a presentation of the top-line details and a full report sent to members’ inboxes the previous week. The report compared the first four weeks of the current fiscal year

to the same period last year, noting that the previous fiscal year ended in January 2024. Holtz pointed out that last year's gross margin for this period was unrealistically high due to error, ("The first four weeks last year had an unreasonably high gross margin that was unrealistic. So I didn't bother to write it down because it sorted itself out by the eight-week statement.") but that this year's data was more reliable, with a positive swing in bottom-line income from negative \$35,000 to positive \$33,000. He noted a rosy outlook, with sales up 10.4 percent, and an increase of \$182,000 cash on hand, the most vital asset in the Coop's finances. The overall financial stability of the Coop is underscored by the increase in base markup from 24 percent to 25 percent.

As of February 25, 2024, total liabilities were \$5.22 million, while total member equity—including member investments, paid-in capital and retained earnings—was \$8.64 million. He explained that member equity includes all member investments and the Coop's retained earnings, and that donated investments are categorized as additional paid-in capital. He walked members through other financial statements, including a cash comparison from the beginning of the fiscal year.

The final portion of the report introduced a new feature: comparing projections for the year with the annualized actual results for the four-week period. Holtz noted that the Coop had projected \$62.8 million in annual sales, but if current trends continue, sales could exceed \$63.8 million. Expenses and gross margin were also slightly better than projected. He clarified that these annualized figures are theoretical and could shift. "The slow summer months are not yet included and therefore the projected variance could be overstated," he said. Holtz closed by explaining how annualization works mathematically. A member then raised a concern about whether the financial statement had been received by email (it had), and another asked about the backlog of new member applicants.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORTS

Joe Szladek, one of the general coordinators, began with a few announcements. He

shared that the April General Meeting will be held at a new location: The theater at City Tech, located at 275 Jay Street in Brooklyn. The venue change was made “to accommodate the anticipated larger audience” for the discussion and a vote on the hybrid general meeting proposal. Szladek also announced two staffing updates: Guillermo Rojas Hernandez has started as a developer/programmer, and Eric Alger, a receiving coordinator, has left Coop employment. Szladek reminded members that the Coop’s hours had been extended.



Produce Buyer Cecelia Rembert asked for feedback.

Cecelia Rembert, one of the Coop’s two produce buyers, shared seasonal highlights: “The citrus season is wrapping up, so if you have been enjoying the California citrus, do it now,” she said, highlighting the Oro Blancos and mandarins.

She mentioned that berries are “mostly out of Mexico except for some blueberries from Chile,” and while pricing deals aren’t yet available, “look forward to that in a month or two, maybe in April and going into May.” Apples are also winding down and

will be replaced by New Zealand apples in the summer. Rembert also gave a grape outlook: Grapes are currently out of South Africa right now but will soon move to Mexican grapes, with California grape season beginning in June. Local vegetables are just beginning to arrive, including “some little gem lettuce from Lancaster next week,” and “head lettuces coming the week after that.”

She highlighted California-grown Delta Queen asparagus and noted they are “on the lookout” for sustainably harvested ramps: “There aren’t that many farms that do that that we feel comfortable with.” Fiddlehead ferns have arrived as “a good sign of spring,” and she reminded members, “Make sure to cook them.”

Rembert also shared that the Coop has seeds in soil right now, and a new pallet of soil will arrive mostly on Thursdays over the next six or seven weekends. The Coop will also be running its small plant program through the spring, which she described as “really fun.” During the Q&A, member Serko Artinian raised concerns about the freshness of the raspberries. Rembert explained: “Raspberries have the highest sugar content, and they mold the fastest; sometimes, there’s more age on them than we would like.” Another member asked about reduced plastic packaging and lower-quality organic produce coming to the Coop. Rembert responded, “No, I haven’t noticed that,” regarding suppliers dumping poor-quality items at the Coop.

Dory Kornfield, a member of the Equity, Access and Community Committee (EACC), announced the upcoming launch of the Coop’s first-ever member demographic survey. The goal is to gather basic information about the Coop membership through a quick 15-question, five-minute survey. She emphasized that this is “not a household survey,” it’s an individual survey for people 18 and over. The questions will cover neighborhood, household composition, disabilities status, as well as some general demographic questions: age, race, gender and sexual orientation.

“The reason we are doing this is because the Coop doesn’t collect any of this information and we don’t know who we are or enough about ourselves to know if we are as diverse and welcoming as we say we are,” she said, noting that the data could help “in-

form and guide policy decisions, processes in the Coop.”

She cited childcare as an example: “Childcare has been a hot topic for a couple of years now, but we actually don’t know how many members have kids.”

Dan Weiss, a member of the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) since 2017, gave an overview of the committee’s role and process. “The Dispute Resolution Committee—our charge is to facilitate the resolution of disputes among members.” Weiss explained the committee handles “complaints of member misconduct,” including “conflict, goods, shopping for businesses, masking violations, violations of personal space, intimidation, harassment, incomplete work on shift.”

He described the work as consensus-based and guided by “GM-approved resolution procedures,” with two membership coordinators serving as liaisons. Weiss emphasized the committee’s standards: “Our members approach their work without prejudice. We set aside our political opinions to ensure the fair and equitable process for our membership.” He also addressed a recent development: “This month, we made a difficult decision to halt certain types of cases involving political issues at the Coop. We’re in the midst of legal proceedings related to these matters.”

Until a “reasonable framework” is developed, those cases will remain on hold, which he said has precedent: “We’ve had legal proceedings in the past involving civil rights issues, and we’ve had to pause on those cases.”

Bart DeCoursy from the International Trade Education Squad (ITES) reported that the group had signed on to a USMCA review organizational letter ahead of the mandatory six-year review of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. He outlined their hopes for renegotiation: “End the offshoring of good-paying jobs, raise wages, strengthen rural communities, stop abuses of big tech, make medicine more affordable.” DeCoursy also warned of the Trump administration’s announcement of “reciprocal tariffs” beginning April 2, including a “25 percent tariff on all goods from any country that imports Venezuelan oil.” He joked, “Almost by threatening one thing and walking it back, he

could manipulate the market, but who's to say—he also just might not know what he's doing.” He encouraged members to follow the squad on Bluesky to keep up on all things international trade.

A representative from the Personnel Committee gave a brief update, noting that the committee currently has only five members instead of the usual seven. They announced that in the April 1st Gazette, there will be an ad asking for more members, and encouraged anyone with experience in employment law, general management, staffing or conflict resolution to apply. The committee is also continuing the search for a new general coordinator to replace Joe Holtz: “Four people have been interviewed, and there's one or two more to be interviewed, and that's ongoing.”

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE ELECTION

Existing DRC committee member Christopher Cox presented two new members up for election, Dorothy Lund and Olivia Goldberg, and four members who are up for reelection: Deb Magocsi, Lee Bantle, Melinda Daniels and Grace Protos. Cox noted that the committee received dozens of applications for these spots, “definitely more than we could handle,” and emphasized that this was “just the first step in helping rebuild the committee to handle our caseload.”



Dispute Resolution Committee candidate Olivia Goldberg addressed the meeting. New candidate Olivia Goldberg shared her long-standing Coop connection: “My parents met at the Coop’s 16th anniversary party in 1989, so I might not actually exist without the Coop”—and cited her professional experience in early childhood education, the tree care industry and food service. Dorothy Lund, a law professor at Columbia University, touted her work studying how organizations manage conflict, saying her skills could help people “feel like they’ve been seen and heard.”

Returning members emphasized commitment, collaboration and deep Coop knowledge. Deborah Magocsi recalled joining when the committee’s name changed from “Disciplinary” to “Dispute Resolution” and said she strives to “listen with an open mind and an open heart.” Grace Protos said she valued being part of a process where “people feel as if they’re actually seen,” and noted that the work “comes in emails and phone calls and committee meetings” beyond standard shift hours. Melinda Daniels said she brings “patience, empathy and problem solving” and called it an hon-

or to continue the work. Helen Koh read a statement from Lee Bantle, who was absent, in which he said his goal was “to take down the temperature when members are in conflict.”

During the Q&A, members raised serious concerns about the committee’s recent decision to pause certain politically sensitive cases. One asked: “If a member punches me and said it’s because I’m calling for a boycott, will your committee decline to consider my complaint?” Other questions addressed transparency, the onboarding process, and whether incumbents disputed how only six candidates were advanced. In response, Magocsi explained: “We can only bring a couple of members on at a time because it is a lengthy onboarding process.” Current members of the committee emphasized their hope to grow the DRC to 16 members, doubling the current size. The vote followed, with all six unopposed candidates elected to the board.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES

The Board of Directors candidates all presented statements explaining why they should be elected. Dan Kaminsky submitted a video statement because he was attending “the biggest event in the pizza world... the Pizza Expo.” In his recorded statement, Kaminsky said he has been a Coop member since 2018 and is currently completing a master’s in social work: “Quite literally, my master’s degree is in the study and practice of Cooperation.” Other candidates introduced themselves in person, including Serko Artinian, who presented data from his informal poll of members, attempting to find out what percentage of people exclusively shop at the Coop and identifying pain points that members raised.



Board candidate Taylor Pate spoke at the meeting.

Lynn Husum, a Carroll Gardens resident who successfully sold her company last year, said she hoped to use her business acumen to serve the Coop. Taylor Pate highlighted her experience on nonprofit boards and at other food coops: “I believe that the solidarity economy and Cooperative movements are how we build community power.” Brandon West, the current board president, stressed his “institutional memory,” having the best record for GM attendance of any current members. He also hopes to make the Coop more democratic, easier to understand and less volatile. Ralph Yozzo advocated for term limits and listening to members. Noah Potter invoked our current president, saying he hopes to “Make the Coop Cooperative Again.” Elizabeth Tobier, the current Coop secretary, emphasized the importance of attendance at the General Meeting in her statement.

During the Q&A, candidates were asked to share what makes their platforms unique. Pate noted her “deep knowledge of supply chains” and experience with leadership

transitions (something the Coop currently faces with the departure of Joe Holtz), while Potter sought to facilitate “intramembership communication” and update bylaws. Artinian proposed “building coalitions with other coops” and using tech to bring the Coop into the future.

Candidates also discussed Coop challenges. Tobier said the hardest part is learning “how to communicate Cooperatively.” West cited structural tensions: “There are now differing ideas about what the board should do.” Several, including Yozzo, stressed the importance of preserving the Coop’s Cooperative spirit: “It means we cooperate, not rip ourselves apart.”

Members also raised concerns about candidate affiliations. One member asked the candidates to disclose endorsements, with Potter and Yozzo confirming they were endorsed by Coop for Unity. Another member asked if candidates aligned with Coop Members for Palestine, which Tonier dismissed as irrelevant, adding that it “has nothing to do with being a board member.” Finally, candidates responded to a question about hybrid meetings. Most supported the idea, while Tobier reiterated her view that board members should remain neutral on any upcoming votes or agenda items: “Our personal feelings as members would not come into play.”

A question about favorite Coop products offered a reprieve: For Serko Artinian, the heirloom organic oranges and for Ralph Yozzo, the gluten-free bread that’s not frozen—“Literally my family went up to Chatham, New York where they come from and we bought it there and it costs less at the Coop than right at the warehouse.”

Noah Potter refused to answer, “Just one? I don’t know if I can do that.” Lynn Husum shouted out the chickpea salad and the quiches that are no longer sold—“What happened to the quiches?” Taylor Pate said the White Mustache yogurt. West and Tobier both highlighted the beer selection.

Zach Schiffman is a social editor and writer at New York magazine, comedian and Park Slope local.

THE FUN COMMITTEE: BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH GATHERINGS AND JOY

July 15, 2025



April 22, 2025

By Liora Fishman

If you've been to a Coop cabaret, danced at a Coop-sponsored prom in a church basement, or made puppets with fellow members, you've probably experienced the work of the Fun Committee. These joyful events don't happen by accident—they're the product of a long Coop tradition, where member-driven activities have been part of

the culture since the early days.



PHOTO BY ZACHARY SCHULMAN

Thomas Oesau and Gabriella Di Piazza having fun in the Coop.

Returning once more after a COVID-prompted hiatus, the Coop's Fun Committee is responsible for organizing activities that strengthen community and keep members engaged beyond work shifts. While its current focus is on social gatherings and cultural events, the committee actually began with a straightforward mission: to help the Coop pay its rent. Originally called the "Fund-Raising Committee," it organized events like auctions to raise money during the Coop's early years.

One of the committee's early members, Martha Siegel, joined the Coop in 1973 and began contributing to community-building in 1983. "I started wanting to create a community through my passion: music," explained Siegel. Her passion quickly became a driving force behind the Fun Committee's evolution.

Siegel recalled that the then-Fund-Raising Committee was already active when she and Steve Browman launched the first Annual Food Coop Music Festival in 1984. "So we joined forces with that planning committee," she said, to plan a festival that could both raise funds and foster a greater sense of community through art and song. The festival was a major success, featuring over 100 musicians and drawing a crowd of 1,000 people—and continuing for several years. "I still have the programs from the first two years," Siegel said.

The Fun Committee through the years

Over time, the committee's role evolved to focus more on building community. Some past activities have included anniversary parties, rummage sales, Halloween gatherings and potluck suppers. There were music festivals modeled after Pete Seeger's Great Hudson River Revival, chamber music concerts, coffeehouse performances and even camping trips that drew up to 70 people.

Today, the Fun Committee continues that tradition by hosting events designed to bring Coop members together in ways that are joyful, inclusive and low-pressure.

The Fun Committee's next event is the 2nd Annual Potluck Picnic, on Saturday, June

14, in Prospect Park. All Coop members and their families are invited to bring a dish, a blanket and a spirit of sharing to this laid-back afternoon of food and connection. In case of rain, the event will be held the following Friday, June 21.

Thomas Oesau, a longtime Fun Committee member, said the committee is about more than fulfilling responsibilities. “Sometimes people think of the Coop as a place of rules and duties,” he said, “but there’s also this incredible creative spirit here. The Fun Committee exists to bring that out—to help members see each other as whole people, not just fellow workers or shoppers.”

He emphasized the continuity provided by longtime members. “It was great to have such a legacy of membership and tradition of activities,” Oesau said. “We had 16 annual Kids Variety Shows, lots of craft-based activities in the old community room and events at Old First Church and the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture.”

Siegel explained that the music festivals eventually evolved into annual Variety Shows. “We alternated years for audiences of adults and kids. Eventually, we only continued the Kids Variety Show because it attracted way more people,” she said. “They continued until Covid and even through it—in 2021 and 2022 we did them on Zoom. We also did a fun Trivia Night on Zoom.” Siegel retired from the committee in 2023.



PHOTO BY ZACHARY SCHULMAN

Thomas Oesau and Gabriella Di Piazza having fun the Coop.

Committee member Gabriella Di Piazza highlighted the vibrant energy of pre-Covid open mic nights, especially those held at the Old Stone House. “A particular highlight from pre-Covid days was seeing the range of talent and creativity on display within the Coop community,” she said. One performance that stayed with her was “a rap and tap combo performed by Sarah Safford, accompanied by Martha Siegel on cello and set to Run DMC’s instrumental of ‘You Be Illin.’ Good times!”

Fellow committee member Fadwa Abbas shared her appreciation for events that brought together different generations. She recalled a cardboard game afternoon where an eight-year-old girl outplayed everyone at Dixit—a favorite board game Abbas brought in. “She’d never played the game before but ended up being better at it than all of us,” Abbas said.

Events have varied in tone and format over the years. A spring cabaret featured performances by Coop members; a Coop Prom invited people to dress up and dance in a local church basement. Puppet-making workshops, trivia nights, movie screenings and seasonal gatherings all serve the same basic purpose: giving members a reason to slow down and connect with the Coop community.

it's part of the standard labor system at the Coop, members say the work is especially rewarding. "We're doing labor, just like any other shift," said Oesau, "but it feels different. You're collaborating to make something delightful happen."

"Before the pandemic, many of our events happened in the lounge upstairs in the Coop," Abbas said. "It made organizing events like card-making or pumpkin-decorating easy. I think losing the lounge space forced us to think more creatively about organizing events in terms of both location and types of events."

Oesau described how the committee adapted during the pandemic by hosting virtual events like trivia and an online open mic. They also partnered with the Diversity and Equality Committee on "Black Voices: Showcasing Black Creativity at the Coop" and created a 50th Anniversary exhibition in the Coop lobby. "All of that expanded our model," he said. "Now, collaboration is central. We work with outside spaces and members who want to help lead programs."

Newer members like Rob Price have brought fresh energy. "After meeting the team and learning about the community work that the team does, I thought that my background and skills could add value to the Fun Committee," he said. "Once I joined, I realized how the Coop community has so many shared values, and that there truly is a need to foster this by making space for the members to come together outside of shopping or shifts."

For Di Piazza, working on the 50th anniversary exhibition was a turning point. "Joining the committee became an avenue for me to engage with members beyond the shopping floor," she said. "One highlight was working on the 50th anniversary exhibition and diving into the Coop's archives, which helped me connect with the deeper history and perspectives of our membership."

"We have been trying to be thoughtful about representation, inclusiveness and access," said Oesau, "with our engagements a reflection of the Coop's principles and goals overall. Recent iteration and experimentation has opened up new opportunities

and events, while preserving some level of tradition so that people can return for events they enjoy.”

“We have a wonderful resource in the members themselves—lots of wisdom, talent and skill,” Abbas said. “So all we have to do is create opportunities for people to get to know one another in a social or creative setting.”

To reach out to the Fun Committee and get involved, send an email to psfcfun@gmail.com. You can also follow along with upcoming events and behind-the-scenes planning on Instagram at [@psfc_fun_committee](https://www.instagram.com/psfc_fun_committee).

Liora Fishman joined the Coop in December 2021. She lives in Prospect Heights and has a wonderful dog, Ollie, whom she loves very much.

Editors’ note: Two quotes that were originally incorrectly attributed to a Fun Committee member have been removed from this article.

WHERE DOES THE COOP’S FOOD ACTUALLY COME FROM?

July 15, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

April 22, 2025

By Dan Bergsagel

You may think you know where the Coop’s Brazil nuts and French couscous come from. But what about the English and Persian cucumbers? Or the Japanese eggplant and Jerusalem artichokes?

If you understand the origin of food and its journey from farms and other producers to the Coop’s aisles, you may be able to better grasp the potential impact of tariffs during this tumultuous economic period.

Leila Darabi’s insightful article from December 2024 outlined some of the potential overall impacts that the Trump administration’s tariffs could have on the agricultural sector and, consequently, prices at the Coop. Here’s a further exploration of tariffs and the Coop, based on an examination of the origins of the products lining the

Coop's aisles.

BUYING STRATEGY

The Coop seeks out food using two complementary aims: to source the best and to source locally. This approach is clearest with fresh produce.

"We try to source the best representation of the item," explained Cecelia Rembert, the Coop's fruit buyer. But buyers also try to prioritize sourcing from producers who are local, which the Coop defines as being within a 500-mile radius—a one-day drive—of Brooklyn. Using local suppliers ensures products are fresh and supports the regional economy.

Of course, not all produce can be bought locally.

"The local growing season is from May to September or October. During the season a lot of the food comes locally from the North East," Rembert said. "Outside of the local growing season, a lot of our produce comes from California and Mexico. Certain items are never grown in the United States, so we are always sourcing them from afar. Pineapples always come from Costa Rica. Bananas always come from Ecuador. Avocados come from Mexico almost all year round."

FOOD ORIGINS

What's more, even mapping the origins of the Coop's food is not easy.

"A lot of the data depends on what information is recorded when the food is received. Often we're more interested in getting it on the shelf and selling it than extra paperwork," said Ken Macdonald, a Receiving Coordinator who is involved in IT at the Coop.

Yet Macdonald provides a glimmer of hope for data enthusiasts: "We are in the middle of a big shift to a new database system right now, so probably in a year or two we

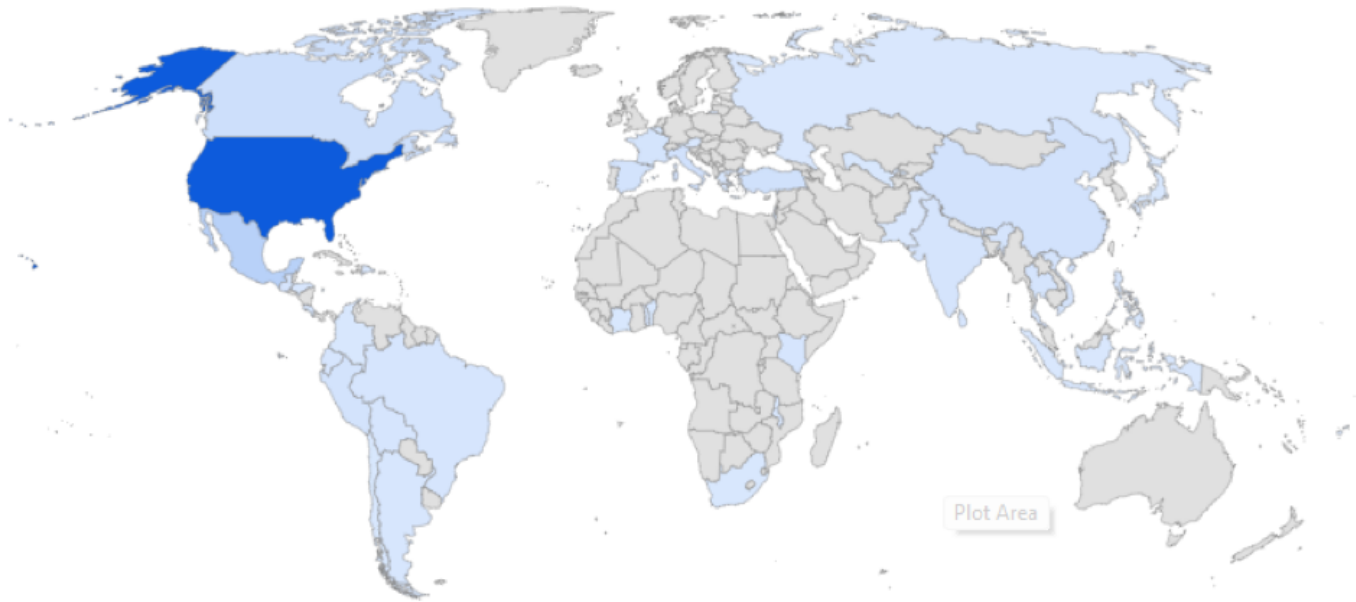
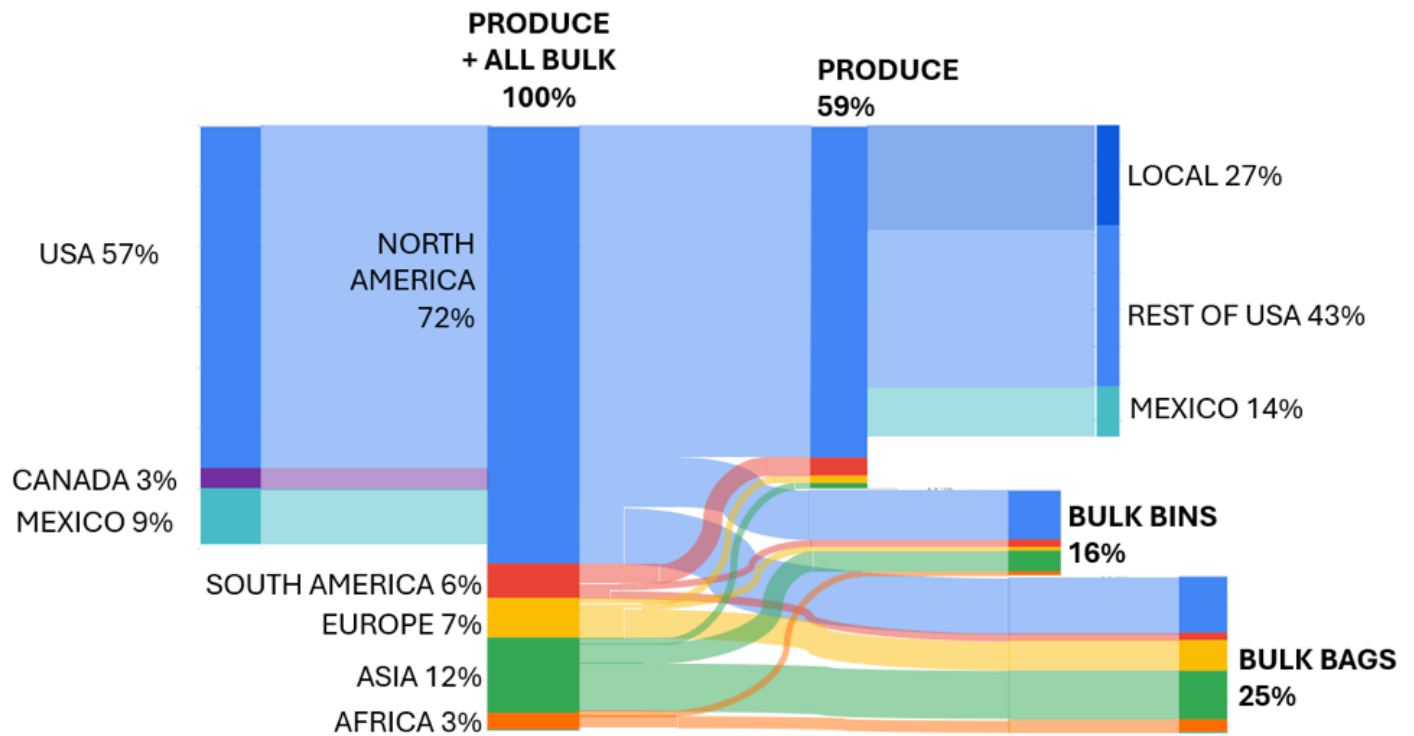
will have more access to origin information.”

While not all origin data is currently accessible, the Coop does record and publish weekly information on the origin of produce as well as occasional updates on the origin of bulk items, both in bins and in bags. This does not provide information on many items on our shelves, but it does enable us to generate a snapshot of where we currently source the food placed in the aisles on the far right as one enters the Coop.

Produce and bulk items sourced from North America make up 72 percent of the total, with U.S.-grown food accounting for 57 percent of the total, Mexican-grown for 9 percent, and Canadian-grown for 3 percent. All other countries individually contribute less than 3 percent.

Even though we are not currently in the local growing season, 27 percent of our produce items are sourced within a 500-mile radius, while 92 percent of our produce comes from North America. Some current locally grown produce include famous New York apples and hardy root vegetables like beets, potatoes, turnips and celeriac. Some items are even sourced from within a 5-mile radius, such as Brooklyn-grown Gotham Greens salad and basil.

The Coop’s reliance on other countries and regions increases for bulk items, with only 58 percent of our bulk bin items and 36 percent of our bulk bagged items coming from North America. Additionally, 25 percent of our bulk binned items and 31 percent of our bulk bagged items come from Asia, while 20 percent of our bulk bagged items come from Europe.



The data presented here is based on the variety of items on sale, not on the volume of each item of food sold. Two Coop produce staples skew these statistics significantly when the quantities sold are considered instead of the variety. Rembert estimates that around \$13 million worth of produce is sold at the Coop each year, including \$500,000 of bananas and \$750,000 of avocados. These foods—both sourced almost exclusively from outside the US—together account for over 10% of produce sales by volume.

THE TARIFFS TODAY

Most of our produce and bulk items are sourced within the U.S., but certainly not all of them. Does this leave the Coop open to price volatility caused by tariffs?

Since President Trump has taken office, there has been significant confusion and instability associated with his tariff policies. Has there been any change in the Coop's food supply? "We haven't heard anything from our distributors," Rembert explained. "The produce business is pretty matter-of-fact. People just do their thing. The market will reflect the supply or the demand, but nothing has changed yet."

It is tempting to try and anticipate food distribution disruption based on prior experience. Does the COVID-19 pandemic offer any lessons?

For Rembert, the banana supply was an interesting case study in supply chain dynamics. "We get our bananas from Equal Exchange—a small cooperative importer. When there was high demand for cargo ships during the pandemic, as a small distributor, they were often bumped. So we had some trouble getting bananas."

Rembert added that "the tariffs are different as there isn't really any supply chain disruption—things are just going to cost more. We're not going to do anything different. The price will go up, and we'll continue to apply the same markup. That might affect member purchasing, and we may see that demand goes down."

The recent headlines have all been about the impact of tariffs on exporting Kentucky bourbon and on importing European wine. Is it only a matter of time before they come for our fabled cheese case? Rembert, again: "It will be interesting to see what kind of impact this trade war—if it continues as a trade war for years—will have on reshaping what the Coop carries and what members are buying."

And finally, for the trivia fans: Our Brazil nuts and French couscous come from Brazil and France, but the English cucumbers are Canadian, the Persian cucumbers are Do-

minican, the Japanese eggplant are Honduran and the Jerusalem artichokes are American.

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

COMPOST COMMITTEE REPORT: NEW COMPOST ON THE BLOCK

July 15, 2025



April 22, 2025

By Mark Hellermann for the Compost Committee

The Coop generates upwards of 23 tons of food scraps each year. About a third of this gets composted at nine local sites in Brooklyn by members who are part of the PSFC Compost Squad. One of these community sites is just down the street at Union and 4th Ave—GreenSpace on 4th (GS4). A few weeks ago the Coop started offering this compost for sale. The sifted compost from GS4 is sold in repurposed paper coffee filter bags from a coffee shop in Windsor Terrace. All of the bags have unique brown stains (not unlike the packaging on the legendary Powdermilk Biscuits).

Compost inside the bag is made from fruit and vegetable scraps collected at the Coop and from CHIPS soup kitchen. Sources of carbon (aka “browns”) are wood chips from Greenwood Cemetery, wood shavings from a few Gowanus carpenters, leaves, coffee grounds and small amounts of cocoa chaff. No animal products are used in the making of this product. Except for the delivery of browns every few weeks, these materials arrive at GS4 via people-powered U-Boats. Most production does not rely on burning fossil fuels. You could say this is an ultra-local product that completes a full circle between Coop food scraps and Coop member gardens. (Someone actually did say that.)

Staff at the Coop (especially Cecelia Rembert and Joe Gordon) have been very supportive about getting this compost on the shelves so it can find its way into your flower and vegetable beds.

Food scraps not composted at community gardens get picked up by a commercial hauler known as Mr. T, which processes it into bioenergy in New Jersey. Coop members are making a concerted effort to increase local composting and to minimize the amount of food scraps being carted out of state and made into biogas and biosolids.

If you are interested in helping us process more of this nutrient-rich black gold, consider joining the Compost Squad. There are several openings and they are posted on the bulletin board by the elevator and also listed in “Join the Compost Committee” in this

edition of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Or you can contact psfccompost@gmail.com.

For more information on GS4 Compost, visit greenspaceon4th.org.