



**Hampden Park Co-op Mission:** The corporation exists to serve its member stockholders and the surrounding community, promoting wholesome, healthful and ecologically sound food consumption, and permitting member involvement both in the procurement of that product and the operation of the corporation.

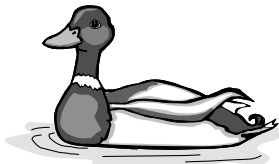
# Hampden Park Co-op News

## February/March 2007

Volume 18 Issue 1

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### Co-op Hours:

Monday–Friday 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
 Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
 Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

### Board Meetings:

The Hampden Park Co-op Board of Directors meets monthly. See its bulletin board in the entryway for meeting dates and locations.

### Newsletter Deadline:

The deadline for the April/May issue is March 1. If you wish to write an article for the newsletter, contact Naomi Jackson at [naomijx@juno.com](mailto:naomijx@juno.com), or leave a note in the Membership Coordinator envelope in the entryway.

### HPC Web site:

<http://www.hampdenparkcoop.com/>

### Natural Foods in the Mainstream

—by Kjersti Hanneman, HPC Member

I recently started a new job in advertising. I work in (what I consider to be) the most exciting part of advertising—account planning. As an account planner, I bring consumers into the initial planning stages of an advertising campaign through interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative research. I certainly have qualms about working in this field, but so far, I am working with brands that I believe in. One of those brands is an ice cream that features zero additives, artificial colorings and flavors, or other synthetics.

As a loyal HPC shopper and an advocate of sustainable, local food, I am deeply interested in food systems and the distinctions (sometimes rather confusing) between organic, natural, local, sustainable, free-range, hormone-free, etc. My first project at my new job examines how people feel about the label "natural," for food in general, and specifically for ice cream.

Needless to say, this project excites me more than my other projects, which focus on lawn equipment and insurance. While I won't go into detail, I will share what intrigued me most about the results of my research. People in our specific target audience (30-something moms around the country) read labels and care a great deal about specific ingredients found on those labels. In addition, it is the lack of synthetics, artificial ingredients, additives, trans fats, and high fructose corn syrup that defines "healthy" for these moms, rather than the lack of calories and fat. This seems obvious to many of us here at HPC, but it is a significant change of attitude for many. Some people on my team at work couldn't get over thinking of "healthy ice cream" as an oxymoron.

Mainstream American consumers are redefining what healthy foods mean. As a result, we see evidence of the organic "trend" going mainstream, which is good for co-ops like ours, right?

Yes and no. First of all, the participants in my research were intimidated by the organic category and knew very little about how it differs from other labels, such as "natural." (A whole series of articles could be written about labeling.) Second, they weren't going to co-ops to find natural foods. They were going to the supermarket, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe's. Finally, I did not see a broader ethical component in the mainstream trend towards buying natural and organic. The research participants were concerned solely about the health of their families. The health of our soil, planet, and farm economy did not come up.

So, I think it is up to all of us to raise awareness of the significance of labels such as local, organic, "deep" organic, natural, and sustainable. It is up to us

(cont. on p. 8)



## Membership News

—by Naomi Jackson, Membership Coordinator

Apparently word has spread that Hampden Park Co-op is a great place to shop and volunteer. This is good news; it also means we have a lot of volunteers looking for open shifts. Be patient, plan ahead, and, out of courtesy to the other volunteers, remove your name from the calendar as soon as you know you have a schedule conflict.

If you have a flexible schedule, there is a sign-up sheet for people who are able to come in on short notice, in case we have a last-minute cancellation. Leave us your name, phone number, and the times and days you are available.

Maybe it's the weather, maybe it's the flu, but we've had an increasing number of "no-shows"—people who sign up and just don't show up for their shift. This is a problem for us, because we are stuck without a volunteer, and it's a problem for other volunteers who could have had the spot you had tied up. If we find you are regularly not showing up for a shift, we may ask you to reconsider volunteering.

If you need to cancel a shift, make sure you talk to a staff member when you call. Don't leave a message on voice mail. Our voice mail system is intended only to provide information about the store. We do not accept messages on it.

And, as always, if you have questions or comments, need a new card, or need help figuring something out, leave me a note in the membership coordinator envelope. It's near the volunteer calendars in the entryway.

## Membership Information

Membership in Hampden Park Co-op involves a one-time purchase of one share of stock per household. The cost of a share is \$30. Stockholders can be eligible for dividends at the end of each fiscal year. You may sell back your stock share if you move away.

## Volunteer Discounts

One or two non-senior adults in a household may earn:

- 15% discount for 3 hrs./month
- 21% discount for 6 hrs./month
- 28% discount for 12 hrs./month

## Seniors

All seniors receive a 15% discount on the first Wednesday of the month. Senior members always receive a 15% discount. Your membership includes you and your spouse or significant other. If you are 65+ and would like a senior card, talk to any coordinator. Senior working members start with a 15% base, plus time worked.

## Food Shelf Contributions

Any shopper, member or non-member, receives a 28% discount on food shelf items. When you get to the checkout counter, let the cashier know that you have food shelf purchases.

## Non-discountable Items

Certain items in the store are non-discountable. These include milk (quart and larger), eggs, non-organic frozen orange juice, baby food, brewed coffee, HPC hot soups, gift certificates, and some sale items. There is no discount on these items because the mark-up on them is intentionally low.



## Food Shelf News

Deb Ahlborg, our food shelf volunteer, reports that our co-op donated approximately 870 pounds of goods to Midway Food Shelf in 2006.



This is considerably less than the 1,200 pounds we donated in 2005. At the same time, the need at all food shelves continues to rise.

You can help. All Hampden Park Co-op shoppers can purchase items for Midway Food Shelf at a 28% discount. Items needed include cereal, boxed dinners, canned goods, powdered milk, soap, shampoo, paper products, and baby food. They are unable to accept perishable or bulk items.

When you get to the check-out counter, keep your food shelf purchases separate, and let the cashier know that you have items for the food shelf. Once your transaction is completed, the cashier will show you where to place your donations.

Thanks to everyone who was able to donate in 2006!

## Welcome, New Members !

## Safe Fish Storage and Preparation

—by Kate Wagner, HPC Member

The consumption of fish and seafood increases dramatically in February and March, as many Christians observe the season of Lent. This is a good time to educate ourselves about how to buy, store, prepare, and cook fish safely, as well as how much fish is safe to eat.

### Buy the Best

Fish tastes “fishy” when it hasn’t been handled properly. To avoid “fishy” fish, use your senses when making your purchase. Fish should have a fresh and mild odor. It should be firm to the touch and “spring back” into place after you remove your finger. If you can see your finger print after you touch it, or if it has a strong odor, it’s not fresh.

Don’t buy cooked seafood, such as shrimp, crab, or smoked fish, that is displayed in the same case as raw fish. Juices from the raw fish can transfer bacteria onto the cooked or ready-to-eat fish. For frozen seafood, avoid frost or ice crystals. These are signs that the fish has been stored for a long time, or thawed and refrozen.

### Storage

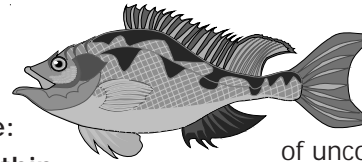
Because of its high protein content, fish spoils quickly. Spoilage begins as soon as the fish dies. Ice is the key to fresh-tasting fish. One pound of ice for each 2 pounds of fresh fish is a good rule of thumb.

Freeze fish at 0° F or lower. Fish stored at 15° F for as little as 2 weeks will show a significant loss of quality. Freeze for no more than 4-6 months. Never refreeze fish.

If refrigerating, store fish in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Allow air to circulate freely around the package. Store uncooked fish below ready-to-eat foods.

**Source:** University of Minnesota Extension Service Department of Food Safety Education and Research and the US Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition.

For information about safe amounts of fish to eat, see the Minnesota Department of Health Web site: <[http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish/eating/safe\\_eating.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish/eating/safe_eating.html)>.



### Guidelines for safe storage:

- ◆ If seafood **will be used within two days** after purchase, store it in the refrigerator.
- ◆ If seafood **won't be used within two days** after purchase, wrap it tightly in moisture-proof freezer paper or heavy-duty foil or freezer bags to protect it from air leaks, and store it in the freezer.

### Thaw It Safely

Fish cooks more evenly if thawed before cooking. For best quality, thaw overnight in the refrigerator. If you need to thaw fish quickly, place it in a sealable plastic bag and put it in cold water for about an hour. To thaw in a microwave,, use the “defrost” setting; remove the fish while it is still icy but pliable. Cook immediately.

### Preparing and Cooking Fish

If you are baking or broiling fish, allow 10 minutes per inch of thickness. Flesh should be white and flaky (155° F on a food thermometer). Don’t overcook it. Cooking fish for too long or at too high a temperature will toughen it, dry it out, and destroy the flavor. If you don’t have a food thermometer, there are other ways to determine whether seafood is done.

- ◆ *Fish:* Slip the point of a sharp knife into the flesh and pull it aside. The flesh should be opaque and separate easily. If you cooked the fish in the microwave, check it in more than one spot.
- ◆ *Shrimp and Lobster:* The flesh becomes pearly-opaque.
- ◆ *Scallops:* The flesh turns milky white or opaque and firm.
- ◆ *Clams, Mussels, and Oysters:* When the shells open, they are done. Discard those that don’t open.

Cooking also destroys harmful bacteria and parasites. Outbreaks of the broad fish tapeworm infections have occurred in Minnesota due to the consumption

of uncooked pickled pike. Don’t eat raw fish unless it has been frozen at 0° F for 48 hours to destroy parasites. After freezing, it is safe for pickling.

### Prevent Cross-Contamination

When you’re preparing fresh or thawed seafood, it’s important to prevent bacteria from the raw seafood from spreading to ready-to-eat food. Take these steps to avoid cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods:

- ◆ Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before and after handling any raw food.
- ◆ Wash the cutting board with soap and hot water to remove food particles and juices after using it for raw foods such as seafood, and before using the board for cooked or ready-to-eat foods or preparing another food item.

As an added precaution, sanitize cutting boards by rinsing them in a solution made of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach in one quart of water. Plastic boards can go through the wash cycle in your dishwasher. Or, consider using one cutting board only for raw foods and another only for ready-to-eat foods such as bread, fresh vegetables, and cooked fish.

As a rule of thumb, avoid using cutting boards that are made of soft, porous materials. Instead, choose those made of hard maple or plastic, and make sure they are free of cracks and crevices. Smooth surfaces can be cleaned more easily and thoroughly.

Cross-contamination can happen once your seafood is cooked, too. Here are simple ways to keep your seafood safe when serving:

- ◆ Place cooked seafood on a clean plate for serving. If cooked foods are placed on an unwashed plate that previously held raw seafood, bacteria from the raw food could contaminate the cooked seafood.
- ◆ Use clean utensils to serve food, not those used to prepare raw food.

## Heirloom Seeds: History, Nostalgia, and So Much More

—by Emma Onawa, HPC Member

Getting that gardening itch, now that the holidays are over and winter is soon to wane? Just imagine: purple, yellow, green, and orange cherry tomatoes, white eggplant, deep green watermelon with star- and moon-shaped speckles, black-eyed susans and petunias that grow on long vines, beans with purple-green leaves and rose-colored pods, ribbed and striped slicing tomatoes, white sunflowers, and bushy, globe-shaped basil. With heirlooms you can add beautiful, interesting, and tasty varieties to your garden, preserve old and rare cultivars of plants, and fight agribusiness and corporate greed and control—all at the same time.

Interest in heirlooms and their preservation is increasing as gardeners become more aware of their value, politics, and availability. A relatively small variety of seeds have come to dominate the world seed market, particularly with the development of hybrids in the last 50 or so years. For example, in the early 1900s there were approximately 7000 varieties of apples in the United States; now there are fewer than 1000. A handful of large agricultural and chemical companies has taken control of the world's seed supplies, to everyone's detriment. These companies control our food supply by forcing farmers to abandon ancient practices of saving their own seeds from year to year, in favor of buying mass-produced hybrids every year. The stakes are enormous.

What exactly is an heirloom and how does it differ from a hybrid? An heirloom is an openly pollinated plant that will reproduce year after year true to type, meaning it will look, act, taste, and grow the same every year. Often an heirloom has a special defining characteristic, such as having origins in a particular region. There is difference of opinion as to how old a plant has to be to qualify as a hybrid: 50 years, more than 150 years, or its existence prior to 1951 (when large-scale hybridization began). However, an heirloom is likely to be an old variety, whether 50 or 2000 years old.

A hybrid is a plant that is bred by crossing two distinct plants to create a genetically different third plant. Hybrids are sterile, since they cannot reproduce the crossed variety, but will revert to one of the parent plants. Hybrids are bred to take advantage of certain characteristics each parent may have. Hybrids are created for a variety of, usually economic, reasons, such as uniform size for shipping and marketing, the ability to withstand transport over long distances, ripening at the same time, or resistance to pests, blight, and other environmental and weather hazards. Hybrids also bring a consistent cash flow to seed companies, with the cost of lost flavor, nutrition, and interesting variety. Genetically engineered plants, with their accompanying issues and dangers, essentially are a step beyond hybrids.

By themselves, hybrids are not a problem and have resulted in some benefits. The issue is that agribusiness seed companies have sacrificed the genetic variety that heirlooms provide for mono-crops that are very profitable for business, but cause a host of other problems. One only need bring to mind the Irish potato famine as a cogent example. Thousands of heirloom seed varieties have been lost as a result of mergers and consolidation of seed companies during the 1970s and '80s. We are eating only a handful of the fruits, vegetables, and grains that were once abundant.

The good news is that there are groups, small farmers, and companies that have taken action to preserve heirloom varieties. One interesting source is the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants, located at his historic home in Monticello. Jefferson was an avid gardener and his focus was on unique plants from all over the world. Today gardens are grown in Monticello featuring many of the varieties he grew. A sampler seed packet is available for purchase.

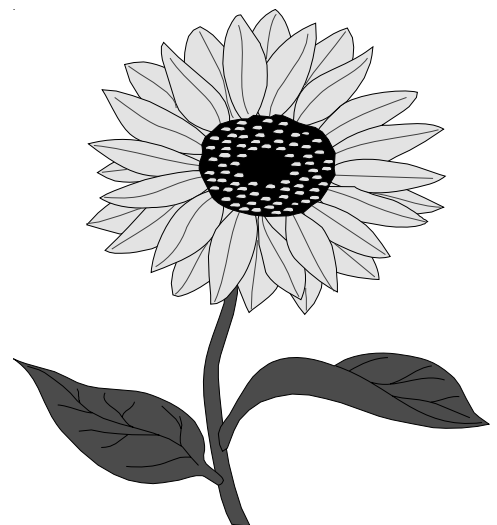


### Making a difference

Individual gardeners also can play a part in preserving our food and plant heritage. What can you do?

- ◆ Watch for and try heirloom varieties in your garden this year and join a seed saver's exchange. You'll be delighted at the fun you can have with the wonderful and interesting characteristics that heirlooms have. Be aware that some heirlooms may be susceptible to environmental hazards and disease. Growing native plants is one way to combat this potential.
- ◆ Support farmers who grow heirloom crops and nurseries that sell them, by buying their produce and plants at farmers' markets and other outlets. They are well worth any additional cost.
- ◆ Watch for legislation that affects agricultural issues and agribusiness, make your views known, and refuse to support products that are damaging, such as genetically modified foods.
- ◆ Keep informed about heirloom varieties and issues related to agribusiness practices and genetically modified foods, and talk to others about them.

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## Who Owns What?

### A little research into corporate ownership of natural foods products

—by Heidi Goar, HPC Member



I don't know about you, but I am a total snob when it comes to buying food. Totally self-righteous. I have been a proud volunteer member of HPC for years and I shop here almost exclusively. In fact, I drive from the West Side of St. Paul to shop here. I don't go to other co-ops much because they are too glitzy, too "corporate." I like HPC because it's quaint; there isn't enough room for everything and you have to say "excuse me" a lot as you squeeze through the aisles. I can chat with three or four people each time I stop in. I am allowed to use the bathroom even when I am not volunteering (mum's the word).

#### Are we corporate pawns?

All this allows me to maintain one of my many delusions in life: that I am not a pawn in the game of "the man." I am not one of those fools who buys all that mainstream, agri-business produced "food" others do. I am progressive and on to all of them. I know about the poisoned food supply, have for years. I know that the evil corporations have one motivation and one only—profit—and that compromises the quality of any product they produce. I know about herbicides, pesticides, GMOs, bad fat, good fat, all of it.

Shockingly, I still maintain this delusional state, even though I learned a few years ago that Kellogg's owns Kashi brand (acquired in 2000)! I feel great about myself shopping at my funny little, quirky co-op, buying Boca Burgers for my boyfriend, even when they're owned by Kraft (acquired 2000). I love to serve my After The Fall Cranberry Juice Sea Breeze cocktails and gloat about the high quality mixer I have in my house, even though Smucker's has owned them for over a decade (acquired 1994). I feel superior to my unenlightened friends when I spread my shockingly imperial Muir Glen Pizza Sauce on my organic speltz-based crust in preparation for the

pesticide-free mushrooms and rBHT-free mozzarella cheese, the whole thing costing a pretty penny, as General Mills rakes in an amazing profit on the simple tomato-based product (acquired 1998).

#### Has "organic" lost its meaning?

This smug elitism, affordable only by those of us who can literally afford it, is unattractive. The truth is that the world of organic is not what it used to be (which might be analogous to what the Greeks used to say: the Greek theater was never what the Greek theater used to be). Still, having corporations take charge of the production of organic foods should make you suspicious because, "...it leads to a lowering of standards, and emphasis on price as opposed to cost. It leads to uniformity, power, concentration, and control."<sup>1</sup>

The sheer magnitude of the influence of corporations on the organic food industry is fascinatingly frightening. Since, by definition, corporations are motivated by profit, and to make profit, as the great Karl Marx first pointed out, a commodity must be sold for more than it cost to produce, we know that there must be hundreds of boardroom deals being made every day to push profit margins. It means that to make as much profit as possible, always the end for the capitalist, the single highest cost of production must be reduced: wages (and labor rights and benefits; consider issues raised about organic ingredients shipped from China where labor laws are non-existent). It also means corporations are interested in every aspect of this industry, including the definitions of "organic," "natural," and "artificial."

#### Corporations go organic

Corporations know what we are going to buy even before we start buying it, and that's why they started acquiring organic brands before organic started to go really mainstream. That means that,

ironically, as the organic food market explodes, so does corporate profit. Demand has been growing 20% per year to a \$14 billion industry in 2005 and accounts for 4% of all grocery spending, which is about \$550 billion.

But growth is slowing to about a 15% increase annually, maybe due to price or inability to meet demand. There aren't enough organic ingredients. Seriously, we just don't even come close to having enough. That means that one of the key tenets in the organic food movement, buy and sell locally, is being rapidly compromised. When Stonyfield (acquired by *Groupe Danone* in 2001) has gotten so big that it has to ship organic milk powder 9,000 miles (from Australia) to the East Coast to meet the demand for organic yogurt, you know the "buy locally" gig is up.<sup>2</sup>

If 40% of the organic products are owned by major corporations, that means that the production of those products are on a massive scale. Therefore those of us who are patting ourselves on the back for being sooooo conscientious should realize we may be part of the problem.

#### Who makes the rules?

While you may find this veiled ownership of your favorite organic or natural brands somewhat underhanded, what should be more disturbing is that when corporations have their grubby hands in anything, it means they will want to remake the rules of the game. And this situation is no different. In the mid-1990s when the first USDA guidelines were published they allowed for the "irradiation of meat, the inclusion of genetically modified crops, and confinement of livestock."<sup>3</sup> The USDA received 275,000 letters protesting the lax proposals, which resulted in the definition used today: at least 95 percent of the ingredients in the product are farmed without using chemicals, hormones,

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(*Who Owns What* cont. from p. 5)

pesticides, or any method regarded as harmful to the environment. (See sidebar on page 7 for definitions).<sup>4</sup>

### Does corporate involvement compromise organic quality?

But efforts by some of the larger organic companies to create a less stringent definition of "organic" continue. In April 2004, the USDA announced that it was considering allowing farms to retain the organic seal even if they used animal growth hormones, fed cattle nonorganic fishmeal, or sprayed some kinds of pesticides. Consumer advocates mobilized against the idea and sent thousands of e-mails and faxes to Washington, DC, within just a few days. The USDA backed down.<sup>5</sup>

The Food and Drug Administration permits the use of more than 300 synthetic food additives in conventional foods. US certified organic foods contain none of these additives. But we know that corporations' profit margins are augmented by using them; so as the corporations become more and more involved, vigilance will have to increase to insure additives don't creep into the organic food supply.

And now that WalMart is part of the organic market, we'll need to be aggressively watchful. WalMart has increased its food sales from 3% to 11% in six years<sup>6</sup> and is able to sell its organic food for only 10% more than its conventional groceries! We all know what the implications of this can be, how "rolling back" prices can crush smaller stores. But even more disconcerting is that WalMart has the ability to control whole markets (see *Frontline's* "Is WalMart Good for America?"), including the capacity to shut down producers who don't conform to their fiscal demands. They have already launched their own organic milk products and created a line of organic apparel.

### Who are we kidding?

But WalMart is, to date, not yet the main problem. The main problem here, if you ask me, is self-delusion. We who shop exclusively at co-ops

and buy these quirky foods no one has ever heard of, live in a little bubble. Says Mark Kastel, director of the Organic Integrity Project at the Cornucopia Institute, an advocacy group promoting small family farms, "Organic consumers think they're supporting a different kind of ethic,"<sup>7</sup> but we are really supporting corporations and many of the policies rejected by those who shop organic.

Barbara C. Robinson, who oversees the USDA's National Organic Program, says Horizon (acquisition by Dean started in 1998 and completed in 2004) is the number one organic milk brand in the country and has 8,000 cows in the Idaho desert. Horizon cows eat corn, barley, hay, and soybeans, "...as well as some grass from pastureland," says Robinson. "The company is currently reconfiguring its facility to allow more grazing opportunities, [but the USDA] simply says animals must have 'access to pasture.' It doesn't say they have to be out there, happy and feeding, 18 hours a day."

Believe me, I have bought plenty of Horizon products. But I love to hate stores like Whole Foods. I have never, ever purchased anything there, because it's a corporation and I don't support their ethos. They got successful by buying out the bigger, more successful stores and then rebranding them. They do centralized purchasing for produce, which now comes from places like Chile and New Zealand. In the process, many local organic producers went out of business. I particularly dislike that they seem as if they are a co-op; some people think they *are* a co-op. But, really, what's the difference? There may be one, but I am not so sure anymore.

Massive scale and centralization of power and capital is the antithesis of what was the original intent of the organic food movement. I guess what's troubling about Whole Foods is that they can get away with it more easily than Safeway because everybody thinks of them as green. The branding is so powerful that nobody thinks to question it.<sup>9</sup>

### Escaping the corporate grasp

I am and will remain a food snob. I won't start shopping at big box food stores to get the best deal, but that's because I don't have to. That giant corporations control not only a relatively large percentage of the production of organic food, but they are becoming major players in distribution of it, makes this the best of times and the worst of times.

Naturally, we should all be happy that demand is so great. I have been telling others what to eat for years and now I guess many are listening. We should all be happy that the price is within the reach of the middle class. But the trade-off is serious. Is it a sell-out? Ultimately, yes, it is, because, to quote Marx again, "those who control the means of the material production in a society, also control the means of intellectual production in a society."

Maybe we should base our next moves on some co-op principles: autonomy and independence, education, cooperation among cooperatives, and concern for community.

**Note:** You can find a map of what corporations own which mainstream organic brands, as of August 2006, at <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/corporate-ownership.html> > .



### Sources:

1. <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/corporate-ownership.html> >
2. [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06\\_42/b4005001.htm?chan=top+news\\_top+news+index\\_top+story](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_42/b4005001.htm?chan=top+news_top+news+index_top+story) >
3. <http://www.mindfully.org/Farm/2004/Monoculture-Organic-Corps1oct04.htm> >
4. *ibid.*
5. <http://www.mindfully.org/Farm/2004/Monoculture-Organic-Corps1oct04.htm> >
6. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/November05/Features/hereYouShop.htm> >
7. <http://www.cornucopia.org/> >
8. [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06\\_42/b4005001.htm?chan=top+news\\_top+news+index\\_top+story](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_42/b4005001.htm?chan=top+news_top+news+index_top+story) >
9. <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/10/09/tbr.organic/> >

## The label says "organic," but is it really?

The US Department of Agriculture issued standards for anyone using its "organic" label in 2000. These standards prohibit the use of most synthetic (and petroleum-derived) pesticides and fertilizers, and all antibiotics, genetic engineering, irradiation, and sewage sludge in the production of fruits, vegetables, meat, and poultry. In order to be labeled organic, livestock must eat 100 percent organic feed that is free of animal byproducts or growth hormones. These animals also must have access to the outdoors (although the definition of "outdoor access" for chickens is ambiguous). Even with these guidelines, labels for organic foods vary. They include:

**100% organic:** Contains only organically produced ingredients.

**Organic:** 95 percent of the ingredients must be organically grown; the remaining 5 percent must come from non-organic ingredients that have been approved by the National Organic Standards Board.

**Made with organic ingredients:** A product is made with no less than 70 percent organic ingredients.

**Free-range or cage-free:** No regulation or standard definition exists for most animals. The USDA regulates the use of the term "free-range" with poultry (not eggs), but chickens can have extremely limited access to the outdoors and still meet the criteria.

**Natural:** This label doesn't mean anything except on meat and poultry, where the USDA says the meat must not contain artificial flavoring, color, ingredients, chemical preservatives, or artificial ingredients. It can only be "minimally processed." No certification or verification process exists to hold companies accountable for using the term.

**Source:** The Consumers Union Guide to Environmental Labels (<[www.eco-labels.org](http://www.eco-labels.org)>).

## Board of Directors Profile: Jay Dregni

[Editor's note: Previous profiles have featured board member Kjersti Hanneman interviewing other board members. In this profile, Jay Dregni chose to write about his participation at Hampden Park Co-op.]

Co-ops are an important part of food distribution with an emphasis on locally grown and organic options. My first connection with the co-op movement was in the 1960s, the early days of the Lakewinds Co-op in Minnetonka. Hampden Park Co-op has been my place of choice during the past five years, which include one year as a board member.

The co-op offers convenience to my wife Meredith and me, as we live across the park in a condo in the former St. Cecilia School. The co-op is also a neighborhood meeting place, where conversation abounds and community is fostered. When volunteering I have been impressed when tradespeople poke their heads into the kitchen area and ask what the soups are today and announce, "I'll be back at noon." Another example of co-op life is the annual meeting, which encompasses many of the values of a co-op. At the meeting, members, families, staff, and board congregate, eat great food, and learn about new foods and products and how they are grown.

I am impressed with how well our board functions at the co-op, including the willing work done by board members. That also describes our exceptional staff. These combine for an organization that has captured a special place in the lives of many people in our community.

Experience in human resource work landed me on two board committees, personnel and board development. I recently agreed to chair the Board Development Committee for the coming year. I also serve on a third committee for long-range planning, which provides a unique challenge, as the future can yield the unexpected for those unprepared. Being mostly retired enables me to also volunteer with the Resource Center of the Americas and *Mano a Mano*, a non-profit medical supply group associated with Bolivia.

Kjersti also asked me to comment on where I grew up, and I realized that also meant when. What flashed into my mind (and ideas still do flash) reminded me of dramatic times like shipboard duty in the US Coast Guard, marriage, raising a family, plus numerous transitions like teens, 20s, 50s, and 60s—all part of my ongoing journey of growing up.

Another question was about my favorite choices at the co-op. For me food choice all starts with a giant cardamom cookie, then avocados if Sophie will choose one, hydroponically-grown lettuce, and easy-to-prepare ravioli. Then the numerous bulk grains, maple syrup, peanut butter, fish, and Newman's Own cookies. Scandinavians start with the sweets and end with them.

In a nutshell, our co-op embodies my personal values of "small is beautiful," the importance of buying local and organic foodstuffs, friendliness, community, and convenience.

Contact me if I can be of assistance, so I can best represent co-op members and shoppers. My name is on the bulletin board in the entryway along with those of other board members.

## Have You Tried...? The HPC Aisles Revealed

-by Katharine Holden, HPC Member

Hampden Park Co-op is packed with products you may not have tried before. Here's the dope on a few of them:

### Gertrude & Bronner's Magic Alpsnack

The minute I saw the Bronner name, I expected the package to be printed all over with All-One! All-One! All-One! But no, this is the new generation of Dr. Bronner's products. Gertrude, the hemp product queen, and Dr. Bronner have teamed up to provide this tasty line of snack bars. My favorite is the one with cranberries. They are free of dairy, wheat, and gluten. The package says that all profits go to hemp advocacy work. For more about the hemp nut (that's not a pejorative; it's a high-quality protein source), visit <[www.drbronner.com/a\\_story.html](http://www.drbronner.com/a_story.html)>. You'll find these snack bars near the other protein bars on the far left of the vegetable cooler.

### Almondina Gingerspice Cookies

Almondina offers several flavors but Gingerspice is my favorite. These days, many cookies with ginger in the name actually contain no ginger. It's the same with ginger ale. Big box manufacturers use food coloring and/or molasses to simulate the color ginger adds to recipes. No worries about faking the ginger component with Almondina ginger cookies. They are dotted with chewy bits of real ginger. They're made in the United States and were first produced in 1929. Visit <[www.almondina.com](http://www.almondina.com)> for more info. (See recipe in side bar.)

### Nature's Path Organic Millet Rice Oatbran Cereal

Nature's Path makes a variety of dry cereals. Some of them are better than others. In my opinion, their spelt-based cereal has a lot in common with cardboard. However, their Millet Rice Oatbran cereal is good. It's vegetarian and free of wheat and trans fats. A bowl of this topped with vanilla-flavored rice milk...very tasty. Visit <[www.naturespath.com](http://www.naturespath.com)> for more info.

### Organic Mills Breads

HPC stocks several breads from Organic Mills of Eagan, Minnesota. They make an excellent Bavarian Rye with the authentic slightly sharp rye taste. Try also their cinnamon swirl and sourdough varieties. It's easy to miss HPC's bread shelves because they're opposite where you queue to pay for your items. People may be blocking your view of the bread. Also, there's a second side to the bread shelves, so be sure to check both.

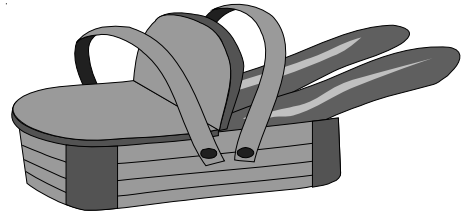
### Home Again Premium Soup Base and Stock

Unlike nearly all dehydrated soup stocks and bouillons, Home Again's products are free of MSG and are low in sodium. Homemade stock is best, but when you don't have that, Home Again is an excellent alternative.

### Household products

HPC carries all the products you need to package your food items and clean your house. We offer sponges, scrubbers, alternative cleaning detergents and soaps, traditional cleaning products like Bon Ami cleanser, bags, parchment paper, 100% recycled aluminum foil from Finland, and more. You will find these items in the aisle directly opposite the lentil dispensers and spice jars. In addition, individual and bulk containers of Dr. Bronner's castile products (All-One!) are available up in front below the personal hygiene items.

[Katharine Holden would like to state, for the record, that the rumor about beet fondling is unfounded and shows a lack of human kindness on the part of certain persons.]



### Gingerspice and Feta Open-Face "Sandwiches"

(All ingredients are available at Hampden Park Co-op.)

- 4-ounce package of Almondina Gingerspice cookies
- Half of a package of Valbreso French feta cheese
- 1-2 tablespoons of softened Organic Valley cream cheese

Put feta cheese in a bowl; add cream cheese. Stir with spoon until feta is less crumbly and more like a paste (doesn't take long). Carefully spread medium layer on Gingerspice cookies. Enjoy.

A glass of good red wine goes well with these "sandwiches."



(Natural Foods cont. from p. 1)

to add the context of environmental and societal health to the discussion of natural and organic as healthier than conventional foods. It is up to us to speak up about the importance of sustainability and locally grown foods in this discussion. I firmly believe that if left to run its course, this trend will not incorporate environmental, economic, and societal health into the picture. Right now, the mainstreaming of organic is based on individual health concerns, which are just one part of why food choices are so critical in today's world. As more and more people in our lives "go organic," let's be there to shape the discussion of food choice to include the health of our society, economy, and environment.

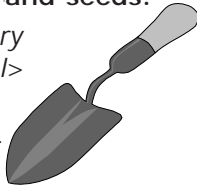
(Heirloom Seeds cont. from p. 4)

### For information on and sources of heirloom plants and seeds:

◆ <<http://www.victoryseeds.com/index.html>>

◆ <<http://www.heirloomseeds.com/>>

◆ <<http://www.vegparadise.com/heirloom.html>>



(A vegetarian Web site that contains extensive information on Web sites for companies and organizations that preserve heirloom seeds, books on heirlooms, and information on vegetarian diets.)

◆ <<http://www.seedsavers.org/>>

(The largest heirloom seed-saving organization where individual gardener members preserve and exchange heirloom seeds.)

◆ <<http://monticello.org/chp/>>

(The Web site for the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants.)

◆ <<http://www.sustland.umn.edu/implement/wildflower.htm>>

(Sustainable Urban Landscape Information Series through the University of Minnesota, with detailed information on saving and preserving native wildflower and prairie seeds, as well as sources of wildflower and native seeds in Minnesota.)

◆ <<http://www.maes.umn.edu/HardyPlants.asp>> 150 Years of Hardy Plants

(A University of Minnesota Web site that features some heirlooms hardy in Minnesota.)

◆ <<http://www.rareseeds.com/index.php?page=magazine>>

(An heirloom-specific magazine sponsored by the Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company, located in Missouri.)

◆ <<http://organicconsumers.org/>>

(Organic consumers organization, includes extensive information on a variety of issues, such as health, sustainability, and related politics. Allows a topical search for heirlooms, which provides a variety of information about them.)

## Supporting Locally Owned

—by Piyali Nath Dalal, HPC Member

On November 11, 2006, I attended an evening with Stacy Mitchell, where she discussed the importance of shopping at locally owned businesses. Mitchell, a Macalester alum, is currently on a book tour promoting her new book, *Big Box Swindle: The True Cost of Mega-Retailers and the Fight for America's Independent Businesses*, in which she outlines the social and economic impact of bringing big retailers into communities.

Mitchell is an excellent speaker and can articulate complicated issues well. She shared the struggles that locally owned businesses face when big box retailers move into communities and strip their customer base. Mitchell also explained the fascinating efforts of citizens throughout the country who are working to stop big box retailers from taking over their local economies. She also challenged the audience to not just view WalMart as the only evil institution in the big box landscape but also to see that even our local favorite, Target, is a culprit when it comes to tax abatement, unfair labor practices, and more.

Stacy Mitchell works for the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), a nonprofit with offices in Minneapolis and Washington, DC. The ILSR, along with the Metro Independent Business Alliance, a coalition of locally owned businesses in the metro area, are finding ways to create a better landscape for independent businesses through public awareness campaigns and policy initiatives.

For my final project for my master's degree in public policy at the University of Minnesota, I have spent the last few months working on a Pizza Project—a public awareness campaign that demonstrates that no matter where you live in the Twin Cities, you can have a locally owned pizza place deliver to your home. We developed a comprehensive list of pizza places as well as a map outlining our findings, and we had a public celebration at Snap Pizza in Northeast Minneapolis in late October 2006. Our findings can be found on the Metro Independent Business Alliance Web site (<[www.metroiba.org](http://www.metroiba.org)>).

In addition to learning more about the economic and social impact of big box retailers, Stacy Mitchell made me think about how to put my values into practice when I make decisions as a consumer. As a member of the co-op, I feel that my husband and I are already making significant efforts to support local farmers as well as the organic food movement. I am, however, always trying to find more ways to promote locally owned businesses and encourage you to do the following, especially as we begin a new year.

- 1) In addition to supporting Hampden Park Co-op, consider visiting the other independent businesses along Raymond Avenue, Como Avenue, and throughout St. Anthony Park.
- 2) Make purchases at locally owned businesses. Gift cards to the co-op and other locally owned businesses make wonderful presents. Also support neighborhood artists and visit craft fairs throughout the Twin Cities.
- 3) Check out the Metro Independent Business Alliance Web site (<[www.metroiba.org](http://www.metroiba.org)>) and find out more ways to support your local and regional economy.

[Piyali Nath Dalal is a proud member of Hampden Park Co-op and a resident of Northeast Minneapolis. She is finishing her public policy degree at the Humphrey Institute, and she and her husband, Justin Felicetta, are expecting their first child in early 2007.]

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