



Co-op News

A bi-monthly publication for members of the Olympia Food Co-op and its surrounding communities

April / May 2005

Local Produce at the Co-op A Behind-the-Scenes Look at How It Works



Did you know that the Olympia Food Co-op works in partnership with local farms and orchards to bring you the freshest produce available? In addition to CSA shares and the Farmers' Market, Co-op members are able to purchase fresh, local produce right here in our stores. If you look closely at many of the signs in the produce section, you may notice WA instead of CA and probably familiar names of farms in the corners. This program is yet another example of the Co-op's continued commitment to fostering local production and economy.

Each December, the Co-op produce managers invite all of the farmers and orchardists who we bought from in the past season, as well as growers newly interested in working with the Co-op, to our Annual Farmers' Meeting. The farmers receive with their invitations a local grower *Intend to Grow* form, a 2004 Local Farm Survey and Guidelines for Farmer Sales to the Olympia Food Co-op info sheet. The farmers bring this completed information paperwork to our meeting.

This year we had over thirty farmers come to our delicious potluck meeting—featuring a dish made from something you grow. It is here that we share successes of the previous season and brainstorm improvements for the season to come. During the potluck, farmers are able to share ideas and offer support to each other about all sorts of issues. Because of our success in building both business and community, there are a large, and still growing, number of local farms and orchards wanting to sell to us.

The next step of the local produce process is for the Co-op's produce managers to consolidate all of the farm or orchard's *Intend to Grow* lists, some of which have more than 50 items.

From the combined *Intend to Grow* lists, we make a master list that we call the

Local Buying Guide. The Local Buying Guide helps the produce managers organize their orders based on current availability. The principles we use in our buying guide prioritization are:

- 1 distributing the Co-op's buying power as equally as possible between all of the farms/orchards
- 2 buying from the smaller farms that have fewer items to sell to us over larger farms growing the same items
- 3 quality of produce
- 4 ability to meet the quantity required by our demand
- 5 ensuring delivery—can a farm bring the product as often as we need it while ensuring product freshness.

This may sound like a fairly straightforward process, but it becomes complicated as we divide a single crop of something like cucumbers into one farm being the primary supplier for the Westside Co-op and a different farm being the primary supplier for the Eastside Co-op (or vice-versa). Then, there may be two other farms that serve as the secondary supplier of cucumbers for each of the co-ops. Other farms may serve as the third supplier, and then sometimes we divide a single, long season crop into an early supplier or late supplier.

In January or February of each year, the Co-op's produce managers get together and appoint the new **Local Farm Coordinator** for the season. The Local Farm Coordinator is responsible for coordinating all of the information regarding availability and pricing of produce as well as any other issues that crop up (did you catch the pun?). Each week throughout the season, the Local Farm Coordinator creates a **Local Order Guide** that lists each farm or orchard and all of the items they have available to sell to us.

The Co-op's Pricing System

One of the most important aspects of this process is the method the Co-op uses to determine the wholesale prices we pay to the farmers and the retail prices we sell the produce for. The produce the Co-op sells

from non-local farms comes from two large wholesale produce distributors, based in Seattle and Portland. For these items, the Co-op uses a flat 50% mark-up to establish our retail prices. For our local farms, we use a mark-up system that attempts to "level the playing field" for small local farmers. We do this through two steps:

1. *Determining the wholesale cost:* we pay local farmers 13% above the amount that the big wholesalers charge.

2. *Marking-up to retail:* we mark-up local produce 32% to establish our retail price.

Example: 18-lb case of Broccoli		
	Local Farm	Large Distributor
Wholesale cost / case	\$ 27.12	\$ 24.00
Wholesale cost / lb	\$ 1.51	\$ 1.33
Co-op's mark-up	32%	50%
Retail price / lb	\$ 1.99	\$ 2.00

Although we pay more to farmers than we pay to the large distributors, our local produce is competitively priced because we use a lower mark-up for local produce. In this way the Co-op is creating a reliable marketplace to local farmers and a steady source of local produce to our members at the same prices we would charge for products from the big distributors.

Westside Produce Manager, Patrice Barrentine, shares some sentiments about the Co-op's local produce program:

Our local produce program makes me proud to be involved in the successful and sustainable relationship between local farmers and the produce departments of our member-owned food Co-op. The Co-op, as a retail store, has a unique and valuable connection to over 25 farms and orchards that market their high quality produce through us to you, our members, and the public at large. Talking with farmers has become one of my favorite times of the week. As this outdoor growing season approaches, I look forward to it eagerly. I am pleased to participate in bringing you the best produce available from our local farms and Washington orchards.

Photos above (and cover) include some of the local, seasonal produce available at the Co-op. Left Foot Organics farmer Ann Vandeman, mid-harvest.

PHOTOS: Todd Monette & Patrice Barrentine

Co-op News

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Westside Store

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(360) 754-7666
Open every day, 9am - 8pm

Eastside Store

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98501 • (360) 956-3870
Open every day, 9am - 9pm

Both Co-ops are open every day of the year, except New Year's Day, January 1st, for inventory.

The purpose of the Olympia Food Co-op is to contribute to the health and well-being of people by providing wholesome foods and other goods and services, accessible to all through a locally-oriented, collectively managed, not-for-profit cooperative organization that relies on consensus decision-making. We strive to make human effects on the earth and its inhabitants positive and renewing and to encourage economic and social justice. Our goals are to:

- **Provide** information about food
- **Make** good food accessible to more people
- **Support** efforts to increase democratic process
- **Support** efforts to foster a socially and economically egalitarian society
- **Provide** information about collective process and consensus decision-making
- **Support** local production
- **See** to the long-term health of the business
- **Assist** in the development of local community resources.

Opinions expressed in the **Co-op News** are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Co-op Staff, Board of Directors, Co-op Advertisers or anyone else. Co-op members are welcome to respond.

The **Co-op News** is published on a bi-monthly basis and comes out in February, April, June, August, October and December. Please contact the editor, Jennifer Shafer, at 360-789-7313 or at olycoopnews@yahoo.com to discuss your article idea or advertising inquiry. You may also leave messages in the newsletter box at either Co-op or mail them to either store, Attention: Co-op News.

Acceptance of advertising does not indicate endorsement by the Co-op of the product or service offered.



The Co-op Board Report

By **Gail Sullivan**, Board Member

Our 2005 Board of Directors has been busy these last few months with extra meetings padded into our schedules, hoping to make our wheels turn a little bit faster. We welcome back our veteran, John Nason and also our newest Directors, Samantha Chandler and Jodi Boe. They've hit the ground running, immersed in some interesting and critical decisions. Since our planning retreat last summer, we've committed ourselves to looking hard at some of the sticky points of Co-op governance. The Board's ability to stop, examine and revise some of our ways of doing business indicates a certain amount of breathing room we're experiencing as an organization. In the absence of emergencies and squeaky wheels, we're able to take some time to ask ourselves some difficult questions and find answers that will guide the Co-op into the next twenty years. We're grateful for this breathing room, and we hope it lasts!

As always, we don't want to make big decisions without the membership's input. So, at the top of our list has been developing strategies for improving member involvement. We're looking at starting a Member Relations Committee to interface more closely with concerns as they come up. Our By-laws Committee has made great progress in suggesting ways that we might amend the by-laws to make it crystal clear to members how they can initiate and implement their ideas for the direction of the organization. We're combing through their suggested changes now, and will continue for months to come. You'll be hearing a lot

more about this in the newsletter. Plus we'll be having informational meetings where everyone can talk about their ideas. Right now, you can access a web-based discussion forum at www.olympiafood.coop/forums.

Another goal we set for ourselves was to link the financial and pricing strategies to our organizational goals. Up until now, our prices and margins were based on a formula handed down from staff an era ago. The formula has been working without any real problems but raises some questions: Where are we going? How do we get there? Do our prices reflect our goals? Is the staff being compensated enough? Will the Co-op survive if a big box natural grocer moves in? Is it time to open another store? Are there strategic ways to plan for capital improvements to our existing facilities? What more could we do for the community if we had more available funds? How do we make the funds available?

So, as you can see, we have some big questions, and we don't have all the answers because we haven't heard from you yet. This point brings us back around to creating more in-roads for member involvement and feedback (Organic Chicken/Egg Syndrome, Anyone?). Please feel free to contact any Board member you know (or see the website under "About Us" for our contact information) if you have any concerns you'd like to voice. We are here to represent you, and our job is made easier if we know what's important to you.



Bylaws Committee Progress report

By **Cary Retlin**, Board Member

At the 2003 annual meeting, the Co-op Board of Directors heard from the membership that the Board needed to increase communication and member access to decision making. One topic that was discussed extensively was adding provisions for an initiative process to the Co-op's bylaws.

As a result of those requests, the Board of Directors created a committee with representatives from the staff, interested members of the Co-op and representatives from the Board to review the bylaws and to discuss an initiative process. The members of that committee are Ann Butler, Jason Baghboudarian, Ron Lavigne, Lea Mitchell, David Lavender, Shon Forsyth, and Eliza Welch.

The Bylaws Committee was hard at work for the next year. Their process included public forums held at the library last summer for the purpose of collecting input from other members and the community. The Bylaws Committee's work culminated in a packet of recommendations for the Board to review. These recommendations included changes to the bylaws that include an initiative process, some additions to policy and procedure and the formation of a new committee of the Board, the Member Relations Committee.

The Board is currently reviewing the recommendations from the Bylaws Committee. We will develop a process and timeline for bringing the proposed changes to the bylaws to the membership for a vote. Stay tuned to the newsletter, or stop by a board meeting to observe our progress. We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month at 7pm in the Co-op office, room 320 in the Security Building, located at 203 4th Ave SE, downtown.

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Volunteer at the Co-op

by **Amanda Jarmon**, Staff

Becoming a volunteer at the Co-op just got a little easier! We are happy to host regular Volunteer Intro Tours for people interested in learning more about being a volunteer working member. Come tour the store, learn about how the Co-op works and hear about weekly volunteer opportunities and special projects. We're excited to meet you and to figure out what volunteer work is best suited to your unique talents and abilities. This session will serve as an orientation to the volunteer program and is the first step to becoming a weekly Co-op volunteer.

Weekly volunteers are involved in many areas of store operations, from cashiering to packaging cheese, stocking to being a shopping assistant for homebound members. The Co-op relies on volunteers to fulfill our mission and to be the most awesome and fun grocery store in town. Volunteering is a direct way to be involved with your Co-op and meet new people. Besides all that, volunteers receive discounts on grocery purchases at the Co-op. Additionally, volunteering at the Co-op is a great way to learn job skills and gain experience.

Volunteer Intro Tours are held at both the Eastside and Westside stores. The tours last approximately 1-1/2 hours. To become a volunteer or learn more, please sign up for a tour at the store at which you would like to volunteer.

If the scheduled times don't work for you, or you have special needs regarding training, please contact us via telephone or in person at either store to arrange an alternate orientation time.

Volunteer Project Opportunities

Projects at the Co-op are a good way to get involved if you're new to volunteering at the Co-op or are unable to volunteer on a weekly basis. You do not need to attend a Volunteer Intro Tour to participate in the following projects. Please call or stop by to sign up for inventory or deep-cleaning parties at either store.

Summer Inventory – Save the Date!

Thursday, June 30th at 7pm

Summer inventory is just around the corner. Inventory is an easy way to volunteer at the Co-op. We do inventory at the Westside and Eastside stores four times a year. Please join us for food, friends and fun while we count everything in the store.

Nighttime Cleaning Parties

Help us get the stores looking spic & span. We're turning over a new leaf and want to get the stores looking great again (remember when they were new?) Come help us scrub, wipe, wash, polish and clean the stores after they're closed. Love the bulk foods department? Help keep the bulk department shining and learn more about bulk foods with Jim, Eastside Bulk Department Co-Manager. Please be able to lift 25 – 50 pounds and have a love of cleanliness. Snacks will be provided for all cleaning parties, and you are encouraged to bring music you'd like to listen to. Please call or stop in to either store to sign up for the cleaning party of your choice.

Tuesday, **April 5th Westside** Store Cleaning 8pm-11pm

Tuesday, **April 12th Eastside** Store Cleaning 9pm-midnight

Wednesday, **April 20th Eastside** Bulk Department Cleaning 8:30pm-11:30pm

Tuesday, **April 26th Westside** Store Cleaning 8pm-11pm

Wednesday, **May 4th Westside** Store Cleaning 8pm-11pm

Tuesday, **May 10th Eastside** Store Cleaning 9pm-midnight

Wednesday, **May 18th Eastside** Bulk Department Cleaning 8:30pm-11:30pm

Tuesday, **May 24th Westside** Store Cleaning 8pm-11pm

Wednesday, **June 15th Eastside** Bulk Department Cleaning 8:30pm-11:30pm

Facilitate a Community Kitchen Class

The Co-op and the Free School work in partnership to offer a free educational program called The Community Kitchen. We are looking for facilitators to teach classes on nutrition, gardening, cooking and healthy living. All class facilitators receive Co-op volunteer credit for their time. To facilitate a class, please sign up at either Co-op or contact Beth at info@olympiafreeschool.org.

Calling all High School Students!

What are you doing with your summer vacation? Think about volunteering at the Co-op. It's a great way to get out of your house and have fun. Get involved with your community and meet amazing people, while learning about organic foods and how a collectively-run business works. You'll also gain job skills and experience. Teens are welcome to work in most positions at the Co-op, but we ask that cashiers be 17 years or older.

For more information about volunteering at the Co-op, please contact Amanda or Eunsil at the Eastside store, (360) 956-3870 or Lucas, Rebeca, or Tatiana at the Westside store, (360) 754-7666.



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Upcoming Volunteer Events

April

5th—Westside Store Cleaning Party, 8pm

6th—Westside Volunteer Intro Tour (V.I.T.), 6:30pm

9th—Westside V.I.T., 1:30pm

11th—Westside V.I.T., 6pm

12th—Eastside Store Cleaning Party, 9pm

14th—Eastside V.I.T., 6:30pm

17th—Eastside V.I.T., noon

20th—Westside V.I.T., 6:30pm

20th—Eastside Bulk Cleaning Party, 8:30pm

23rd—Westside V.I.T., 1:30pm

25th—Westside V.I.T., 6pm

26th—Westside Store Cleaning Party, 8pm

28th—Eastside V.I.T., 6:30pm

May

4th—Westside Store Cleaning Party, 8pm

4th—Westside V.I.T., 6:30pm

8th—Eastside V.I.T., noon

9th—Westside V.I.T., 6pm

10th—Eastside Store Cleaning Party, 9pm

12th—Eastside V.I.T., 6:30pm

14th—Westside V.I.T., 1:30pm

15th—Eastside V.I.T., noon

18th—Westside V.I.T., 6:30pm

18th—Eastside Bulk Cleaning Party, 8:30pm

23rd—Westside V.I.T., 6pm

24th—Westside Store Cleaning Party, 8pm

26th—Eastside V.I.T., 6:30pm

28th—Westside V.I.T., 1:30pm

June

1st—Westside V.I.T., 6:30pm

5th—Eastside V.I.T., noon

9th—Eastside V.I.T., 6:30pm

11th—Westside V.I.T., 1:30pm

13th—Westside V.I.T., 6pm

15th—Westside V.I.T., 6:30pm

15th—Eastside Bulk Cleaning Party, 8:30pm

19th—Eastside V.I.T., noon

23rd—Eastside V.I.T., 6:30pm

25th—Westside V.I.T., 1:30pm

27th—Westside V.I.T., 6pm

30th—Eastside and Westside Inventory, 7pm

You get excited when you find a sharp pencil at the Co-op. You think you have amazing (but heretofore unclaimed) talent. You've thought about moving to Portland but you haven't. You wonder why that guy parks around town with an airplane on the roof of his van. We get excited when we find a sharp pencil at the Co-op. We think we are pretty talented. (Others aren't so sure.) We can't move our store to Portland: it's big and brick and it sits on Capitol Way. (And anyway, it's a real nice store, and downtown Olympia is cool.) We are **COMPASS ROSE**, located on 416 Capitol Way South, and we sell upscale imports, jewelry, home decor, locally and regionally crafted items, and other nice things.

COMPASS ROSE
416 S CAPITOL WAY
OLYMPIA, WA 98501
360-352-0123

We love it when you come see us!

Are you a "card carrying" Co-op member? Flash us your card (discreetly in front of other customers, please) and we will take 10% off any one item of your choice (one item per day, cash or check, please, offer expires if/when we ever say so!). Thank you for supporting the Co-op, Compass Rose, and other local businesses. Compass Rose Staff

Recipes

Asparagus with White Miso Vinaigrette

Reprinted from *Asian Ingredients* by **Bruce Cost**

2 tsp mustard powder
2 tsp cold water
1 pound asparagus
2 tsp white miso
2 tsp soy sauce
1 Tbl fresh lemon juice
1 Tbl white rice vinegar
2 Tbl minced scallions, white part only

Mix the mustard powder and water together to form a thin paste. Allow it to sit for 10 minutes.

Cut the asparagus diagonally into thin slices about 1 inch long. Cook the slices in boiling water until barely tender, 1-1/2 minutes or so. Then run under cold water to stop the cooking. Drain and set aside.

Stir the remaining ingredients with the mustard and allow it to sit before tossing with the asparagus. Serve at room temperature.



Miso for the Masses

By **Maureen Tobin**, Staff

Have you ever made a soup or a stir-fry and felt like it could use more pizzazz, more flavor, something interesting and different? Miso is a versatile yet simple ingredient to add to your pantry that can help round out all sorts of dishes with its deep flavor.

Miso is a fermented soybean paste that has been a mainstay of the Japanese diet for centuries (miso soup is still consumed several times daily by most Japanese). Miso is a cultured, aged food made from fermenting soybeans and a grain such as rice or barley with a mold called *Aspergillus oryzae*. Its color can range from white to red to deep brown, and the texture can be chunky or smooth.

All misos, whether it's called barley miso or brown rice miso, contain soybeans with the exception of chickpea miso which is made without soybeans. There are three major miso families and about 30 varieties, all with very different tastes, so experimentation is a must. If you're trying miso for the first time, the "mellow" types of brown rice or white miso are a good place to start. It can be easily incorporated into soups, stews, gravies, stir-fries, sauces and salad dressings. In Japan and Korea, miso is not only made into soup but also made into dipping sauces and pastes for vegetable and meat, often combined with dashi or another broth, ginger and lemon juice and ground sesame seeds.

Be careful not to boil miso or expose it to too much heat which can break down its nutritional properties. Miso contains 12-20% protein by weight, an amount comparable to that in chicken or eggs. And because miso is a fermented food, the live enzymes and beneficial bacteria help stimulate digestion and proper absorption of nutrients by your body. Miso can be expensive, but like fine wine, the good stuff is worth the price for a handcrafted, carefully aged product.

Barley Miso is a dark brown, often chunky, deep-flavored miso that is usually aged a couple of years and imparts a strong flavor to dishes. It is often used more sparingly than lighter misos.

Brown Rice or Yellow Miso is smooth-textured and light yellow or light brown. It is the most widely available type in the U.S. and is known to be a bit saltier than other varieties. It is considered a good all-around miso for many recipes.

Red Miso is also a rice combination miso with a high salt content, so much so that it will stay good to eat almost indefinitely even at room temperature. The color of red miso can be light or dark, and the texture varies depending on the maker. It is used as a

common cooking miso good for most recipes.

White Miso has a greater portion of its make-up as rice, and it tends to have a sweet and mild flavor with a smooth creamy texture. It is especially used in dressings and marinades and can even be used to make sweets.

Hatcho Miso is a gourmet variety that is well aged in cedar. It has a complex and deep flavor and is regarded as especially good for the health (some use it as a tonic). It is coarse in texture and sometimes mixed with a lighter miso to soften the flavor. It is traditionally used in soups.

Chickpea Miso is most similar to white miso, but it is made without soy and can therefore be used by those with soy allergies. It has a light flavor and blends into sauce well; try it with tahini, garlic, and lemon for a hummus-like flavor with much more of a twist.



Have you joined yet?

by **Kitty Koppelman**, Staff

TULIP Cooperative Credit Union celebrated its first anniversary in December! TULIP opened in 2003 as the first new credit union in Washington in more than 10 years. It's the only credit union in the state with the specific mission to serve low-income members. Membership is open to any Thurston County resident whose annual gross household income is at or less than 80 percent of the national median, approximately \$35,000. While TULIP's focus is on providing services to low-income residents, membership is also open to all members of the Olympia Food Co-op. Many Co-op members have joined because they want to conduct their financial services at an institution with a community-minded mission and not because they meet the income requirements.

In its first full year of operation, the credit union has exceeded its membership goals and now has over 450 members. "Beating our first year membership goal is an exciting milestone for us," said Darlene Morales, TULIP's CEO. "The community response has been very positive. We've laid a great foundation and now need to build on it to reach more people." TULIP's message of equalizing economic power and helping the local economy sustain itself has been a draw for many supporters, and the credit union has drawn people to the Co-op who might not have otherwise known about it.

TULIP's efforts have "made a difference" in many of the ways its founders had intended: "We've had some great success stories of helping reach people who have not been the target customers for more traditional financial institutions," Morales said. "We're really

filling an important niche for many people. TULIP offers an alternative to people who want to make a difference in their community even while doing something as routine as their banking."

TULIP Cooperative Credit Union is a not-for-profit financial cooperative located inside the Co-op's Eastside store. Offering savings & checking accounts, CDs, personal loans and auto loans, TULIP is dedicated to meeting the financial

Please borrow from us!!

TULIP needs to make loans in order to support all of our activities. Come apply for a loan!

needs of the underserved. Credit Union hours are Mon, Fri and Sat. from 11 a.m. to 4pm., and Wed. from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. For more information call at (360) 570-2292.



Online Forums

The Co-op's website just became interactive! Post your announcements, events, and services just like you do at the stores. You'll also find places to discuss products, the newsletter, the by-laws and more. Go to www.olympiafood.coop/forums. You must register in order to post, but anyone can read it. Everybody Welcome!

Making More Co-ops

Eatonville and beyond

by **Andrew McLeod**, Staff

On January 27, a new food co-op opened its doors in Washington. After more than a decade with no natural foods store, Eatonville saw the opening of the Mountain Community Cooperative's storefront, after two years as a buying club. The store has been warmly received by the community; during its first month of operation, 20 people joined, bringing the total membership to 118 in a town of about 2,000 residents.

The opening of Mountain Community Cooperative was also significant for the Olympia Food Co-op, marking the first big

success in our new co-op development effort. For the Eatonville project, OFC staff worked with the Northwest Cooperative Development Center to provide grant-funded technical assistance. Six OFC staff members have provided assistance, including nearly a dozen store visits over most of a year. These visits have ranged from sitting in on a board meeting to being on hand for the new store's entire first week of business.

Eatonville now joins Olympia as having the only food co-ops between Seattle and Portland. But that may soon change: OFC has received inquiries from Vancouver, Onalaska,

Tacoma, Buckley and Bremerton about how we can help get co-ops started in those communities. Of these groups, Vancouver is furthest along in the development process; the group already has a buying

club, a website and is currently working on its bylaws. Because the project is within both Washington state and the Portland metropolitan area, we are exploring ways of collaborating with People's Food Co-op of Portland in order to best use our collective resources.

We are not only providing support for the creation of food co-ops; in 2002 we worked with the staff of Sound Builders' ReSource (who have since regrouped as Olympia Salvage) on setting up democratic management. In 2001, we helped start TULIP Co-operative Credit Union. OFC staff have also recently met with the striking workers at Pizza Time. This group is interested in starting their own worker-owned pizzeria, and is currently exploring their options for capitalizing the project and beginning development of a business plan.

OFC has also created a staff Co-op Support Coordinator to work on these and other projects. Judging from the recent spike of interest in cooperatives in Olympia and elsewhere, it may not be possible to provide intensive support for everyone who wants their own co-op. But this coordinator will consider the various projects and help create assistance proposals.

In this time of economic insecurity and downright scary politics, cooperatives provide a chance for people to democratically take care of their own needs and create the foundation of a just society. And the more that cooperatives can cooperate with each other, the more effective we can be in transforming our economy. Hopefully OFC's efforts to provide support for new cooperatives can be an example of how we can build that transformation.



Olympia Food Co-op staffer Jim Schulruff looks on as volunteer coordinator Sally King practices making price tags. The price guns and cash registers were among the equipment donated by OFC.

MCC organizers pose with the store's sign, designed by member Deb Boston. Clockwise from left are board members Margaret Franich and Steve Pruitt, and volunteer coordinators Cheryl Dixon and Sally King.



Let's Talk Sales

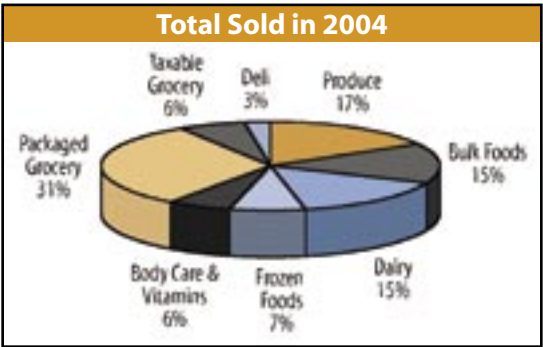
By **Kitty Koppelman**, Staff

Most any shopper who's waited in line at the checkstands lately can confirm the biggest financial news at the Co-op—sales growth is booming! For the year 2004, the Co-op sold 12.3% more than in 2003. This amount exceeded our projections, and we expect to continue on this hearty trend. In order to keep up with the sales boom, the staff is increasing store coverage by increasing the number of shifts and hours, which means that the staff collective continues to grow right in line with sales.

Sales growth is measured in relation to the previous year. For 2005, we're working towards reaching sales of just over eight million dollars! (\$8,040,956.06, to be exact). This would be 8.5% more sales than 2004. All of these numbers represent the total for both stores. Generally speaking, the

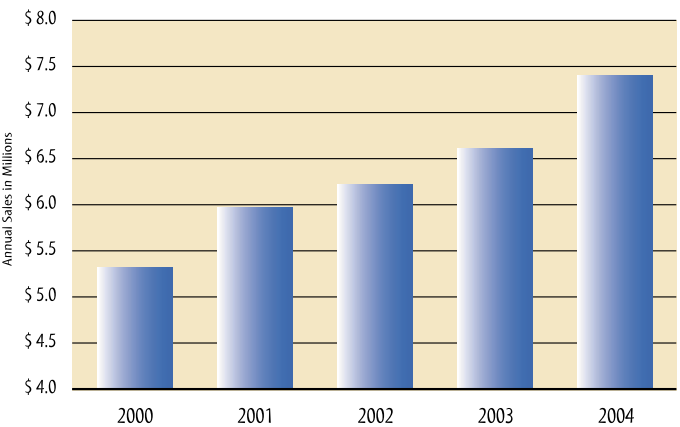
Eastside makes up almost 2/3, and the Westside Store contributes just over 1/3 of total sales. Over the years, sales at the Eastside have been growing a bit faster than the Westside. In 2005, we've budgeted for a 6% increase at the Westside and a 10% increase at the Eastside above last year's sales levels (see graph, below).

What are we SELLING?
The pie chart above shows a breakdown of the Co-op's eight basic merchandise categories and how much each contributed to our total sales in 2004. Our categories are very general, but they give us a way to track how



we are doing in terms of sales, inventory, margin and spoilage or other losses. The dairy category includes things like tofu, milk and eggs, and the taxable category includes plant starts, dish soap and soda. Our scanner system gives us more detailed information about these "subcategories" so we now have the means to track information (and respond to it) in more detail than ever before (see chart, above).

For more detailed financial information, call me or any of the bookkeepers (Corey, Grace or Harry) at the Co-op's business office 357-1106, or email olyfoodcoop@juno.com



Sales growth is measured in relation to the previous year. If sales continue at the present rate, sales for 2005 will reach \$8 million.

The Co-op's Excel(lent) Adventure

By **Virginia Lange**, Staff

One Tuesday in February, three Co-op staff fanned out through the Olympia area to do a price comparison of grocery, dairy and frozen items in other stores. We came with a spreadsheet of well over 200 items that we considered basic needs to check. It took hours to complete each survey. We even did a little customer service when their shoppers mistook us for store employees. Grace compiled all the spreadsheets so we could analyze the data. We discovered that the Olympia Food Co-op is a unique oasis of organic food and low prices.

No other store carries more than a small fraction of our selection of organic grocery and dairy items. We spent hours searching stores for equivalent organic foods. We were all shocked by the lack of what we consider to be staples. We knew the prices would be higher but how much higher was a bit surprising. Since we have many of the same suppliers, we have a rough idea of what our competitors pay for their products before they mark them up for sale. It was hard to refrain from snatching the groceries from their customer's baskets and to resist telling them how much they would save at the Co-op. Most stores sold non-organic products for about the price of our organic products!

continued on page 7

Across the board, the Co-op's prices proved to be as much as 30% below all other stores in entrees, frozen and boxed.



Committees of the Co-op

One of the many duties of the Co-op's Board of Directors is to "appoint standing and special committees as needed." Here is a brief description of the current Board Committees, and contact information for each:

Outreach and Education Committee

The Outreach and Education Committee works on projects aimed at increasing understanding of the principles and purposes for which the Co-op was founded, and building awareness about the Co-op among the broader community. This Committee provides representation at local community events and coordinates the Co-op's partnership with the Olympia Community Free School, which offers a program of educational classes. For more info, contact Mo at 956-3870.

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee is responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the Co-op's Personnel Policy, facilitating the grievance procedure, overseeing all personnel tasks as identified by the Board, Staff, Volunteers, or Members, and staying abreast of legal issues pertaining to our volunteer system. For more info, contact Eliza at 956-3870.

Newsletter Committee

The Newsletter Committee deals with all issues pertaining to the Co-op News, including editorial production and advertising. The primary purpose of the Newsletter Committee is to make the newsletter as high quality as possible, reflecting the mission of the Co-op. For more info, contact Kitty at 754-7666.

Ad-Hoc Bylaws Committee

This is a special committee, which will disappear after it completes its work. The Bylaws Committee has been formed to thoroughly examine the Bylaws with regard to member involvement in governance. Their work will culminate in a proposal to the Board that will include proposed bylaws amendments for member ballot and other related systems and policies to encourage member involvement in governance at the Co-op. For more info, contact Eliza at 956-3870

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee reviews and makes recommendations to the Board on any finance-related decisions, presents financial reports to the general membership at the Co-op's Annual Membership Meetings, and reviews and makes recommendations to

the Board on the Co-op's annual operating budget and financial statements. The committee also participates in the Co-op's long-range financial planning and responds to any unforeseen financial events. For more info, contact Corey, Grace or Harry at 357-1106

Ecological Committee

The Ecological Committee is a brand new committee with a newly approved charter. It is still in its early development stages, but the intent will be to evaluate the ecological impact of the Co-op's operations. This Committee will propose, design and implement programs, activities and infrastructure changes to facilitate the minimization of any residual negative effects, and enhance any regenerative effects the Co-op's operation has upon the Earth. Stay tuned for more details and info on how to get involved!

Co-op Committee Meeting Schedule April-May 2005

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 April	4	5 Standing Hiring Committee Meeting	6	7 Outreach & Education Committee Meeting	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 Finance Committee Meeting	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Board of Directors Meeting	29	30
1 May	2	3 Standing Hiring Committee Meeting	4	5 Outreach & Education Committee Meeting	6 Newsletter Committee Meeting	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 Finance Committee Meeting	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Board of Directors Meeting	27	28
29	30	31	1 June	2	3	4

Meeting dates are subject to change. For more info about meetings, please call the stores.

Standing Hiring Committee

The Standing Hiring Committee is responsible for coordinating all aspects of staff hiring. This includes developing and maintaining a hiring handbook with all policies and procedures for hiring, developing and maintaining an active outreach program, maintaining awareness of the Co-op's needs with regard to hiring, ensuring legal compliance with regard to hiring, and developing and maintaining an integration process for new staff to transition from new hire to trainee. For more info, contact Kitty at 754-7666

Local Farm Committee


This committee works to help strengthen ties between the Olympia Food Co-op and local food producers (any farm within Thurston, Mason, Lewis, Pierce and Grays Harbor counties) to increase the Co-op membership's awareness about the benefits and availability of locally-grown food, and to be a conduit for membership concerns about local produce. For more info, contact Tatiana at 754-7666 or Todd at 956-3870.

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The Co-op’s Excel(lent) Adventure *continued from page 5*

There were almost no choices at other stores in many categories like gluten-free or vegan foods. We usually have more items on special within a category than most stores even carry. Our frozen department put all others to shame for selection and price. The cheese prices at the Co-op are the best in town, and the organic cheese

selection is second to none. The variety and value in yogurt choices at the Co-op is beyond compare.

The Co-op’s special prices are significantly lower than our regular prices. The special prices at other stores were often only a few cents off the regular price. Although some stores have lower prices on some items, an

across-the-board price comparison clearly shows the Co-op’s overall price advantage.

Another difference is the values represented by the brands we carry. For example, we carry Organic Valley products where we can while others carry just Horizon. Organic Valley pays its farmers a living wage while Horizon buys its products as commodities.

We carry Lakewood and Nana Mae juices to support family organic farms. Other stores carry only the mega-corporation-owned Knudsen and Santa Cruz juices. We know our customers appreciate this.

Thanks for shopping at the Olympia Food Co-op! And here’s the data...

Brand	Description	Co-op	Ralph’s	Bayview	Fred Meyer	Top Foods	QFC	Safeway	Albertsons
Ak-mak	Crackers	\$ 1.55	\$ 2.19	\$ 2.19	\$ 1.99	\$ 2.17	\$ 1.99	\$ 1.89	
Amy’s	Lentil Soup	\$ 2.13	\$ 2.79	\$ 2.79	\$ 2.19	\$ 2.19	\$ 1.99	\$ 2.49	\$ 3.19
Amy’s	Cheese Pizza	\$ 4.29 ^{sp}		\$ 6.59	\$ 4.99	\$ 5.49		\$ 5.99	\$ 5.99
Amy’s	Pot Pie, Vegetable	\$ 2.27	\$ 2.99	\$ 2.99	\$ 2.29		\$ 2.99	\$ 2.89	\$ 2.99
Amy’s	Pockets, Black Bean	\$ 2.08	\$ 2.59	\$ 2.59	\$ 2.19		\$ 2.59	\$ 2.49	\$ 2.39
Annie’s Homegrown	Shells & Cheddar	\$ 0.99 ^{sp}	\$ 2.49	\$ 1.99 ^{sp}	\$ 1.59		\$ 1.79	\$ 1.99	\$ 2.49
Annie’s Naturals	Goddess Dressing	\$ 2.90	\$ 3.99	\$ 3.99		\$ 2.99	\$ 3.49		\$ 3.59
Barbara’s Bakery	Shredded Oats, Bite Size	\$ 3.68	\$ 4.49	\$ 4.19	\$ 3.69	\$ 3.69	\$ 3.99 ^{sp}	\$ 3.99	
Bob’s Red Mill	Pancake & Waffle, 10 Grain	\$ 2.60	\$ 3.19	\$ 3.19	\$ 2.99		\$ 2.79	\$ 2.99	\$ 3.39
Cheese	Brie, Wheels	\$ 6.49	\$ 12.99	\$ 14.09	\$ 9.99	\$ 12.99	\$ 12.49	\$ 9.99	\$ 8.98
Cheese	Mozzarella, Part Skim	\$ 3.93	\$ 3.99	\$ 5.79	\$ 4.99	\$ 5.49	\$ 4.49	\$ 8.78	\$ 4.99
Cheese	Feta In Brine	\$ 6.14		\$ 6.78	\$ 13.96	\$ 12.99	\$ 8.99	\$ 9.31	\$ 7.98
Emerald Valley Kitchen	Medium Salsa	\$ 2.29 ^{sp}	\$ 3.79	\$ 4.39	\$ 2.89	\$ 2.89	\$ 2.99		\$ 3.19
Golden Temple	Maple Pecan Crisp Peace Cereal	\$ 3.75		\$ 4.19	\$ 3.49		\$ 3.00 ^{sp}	\$ 3.85	\$ 3.99
Grain Millers	Organic Oats, Rolled	\$ 0.70	\$ 0.99	\$ 0.99	\$ 0.99				
Health Valley	Beef Flavored Broth	\$ 1.67	\$ 2.19	\$ 2.19		\$ 1.69	\$ 2.19		\$ 2.19
Health Valley	Spicy Chili, Vegetarian	\$ 2.04	\$ 2.79	\$ 2.79	\$ 2.19	\$ 1.69 ^{sp}	\$ 2.29	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.69
Imagine Foods	Original, Enriched Silk Soy Milk	\$ 2.13	\$ 2.49	\$ 2.49	\$ 1.99	\$ 1.99	\$ 2.39	\$ 2.19	
Kettle Foods	Sesame Blue Moons	\$ 2.19	\$ 2.49	\$ 2.49	\$ 1.99		\$ 2.39	\$ 2.49	
Kettle Foods	Lightly Salted Potato Chips	\$ 1.96	3 / \$ 5 ^{sp}	\$ 1.99	\$ 1.89	\$ 1.99	\$ 1.99	\$ 2.19	\$ 1.99
Lifestream	Buckwheat/wildberry Waffles	\$ 2.64	\$ 3.49	\$ 3.49	\$ 2.39	\$ 3.19	\$ 2.89	\$ 2.99	
Lundberg	Organic Short Grain, Brown	\$ 1.03	\$ 1.49	\$ 1.49		\$ 0.94	\$ 3.59		
Lundberg	Organic Basmati Rice, White	\$ 1.62	\$ 2.29				\$ 4.69		
Muir Glen	Whole Tomatoes	\$ 1.49	\$ 2.39	\$ 2.39	\$ 1.69	\$ 1.99	\$ 1.99	\$ 1.79	\$ 2.49
Muir Glen	Tomato Paste	\$ 1.01	\$ 2.59	\$ 1.39	\$ 0.89	\$ 1.29		\$ 0.99	\$ 1.59
Nature’s Path	Variety Pack Instant Oatmeal	\$ 3.36	\$ 4.19 ^{sp}		\$ 2.99	\$ 3.99			
Nature’s Path	Optimum Breakfast	\$ 3.76	\$ 4.19 ^{sp}	\$ 4.69	\$ 3.59		\$ 3.59	\$ 3.99	\$ 4.29
Newman’s Own Organics	Newman O’s Original	\$ 3.41	\$ 4.29	\$ 4.29	\$ 2.99		\$ 3.49	\$ 3.59	
Newman’s Own Organics	Fig Bars Low Fat	\$ 2.49 ^{sp}		\$ 4.19	\$ 2.99	\$ 3.39		\$ 3.49	
Oregon Chai	Original	\$ 4.05	\$ 4.89	\$ 4.89	\$ 3.99	\$ 3.99		\$ 4.49	\$ 4.79
Organic Valley	Whole Milk 1/2 Gallon	\$ 3.05	\$ 3.39	\$ 3.39	\$ 3.29		\$ 3.39		\$ 2.99
Organic Valley	Ultra Past Half & Half	\$ 1.69	\$ 1.99	\$ 1.99	\$ 1.89		\$ 1.89		
Pacific Foods Of Oregon	Org. Chicken Broth	\$ 2.65	\$ 3.49	\$ 3.49	\$ 2.49	\$ 2.69	\$ 2.79	\$ 2.99	\$ 3.29
R.W. Knudsen Family	Lemon Ginger Echinacea Juice	\$ 1.99 ^{sp}	\$ 2.50 ^{sp}	2 / \$ 5 ^{sp}	\$ 2.79	\$ 2.69 ^{sp}	\$ 2.59 ^{sp}	\$ 3.59	\$ 4.59
Seeds of Change	Roasted Garlic, Spicy Salsa	\$ 3.88	\$ 4.69	\$ 4.69		\$ 3.99	\$ 4.49	\$ 4.99	
Spectrum Essentials	Flax Oil	\$ 4.56		\$ 8.99	\$ 8.99			\$ 9.59	
Thai Kitchen	Curry Instant Soup	\$ 0.69		\$ 0.79	\$ 0.99	\$ 0.99	\$ 1.09		\$ 1.09
Tofutti Brands, Inc.	Better Than Cream Cheese	\$ 2.37		\$ 3.09	\$ 2.99		\$ 2.99	\$ 3.59	
Traditional Medicinals	Throat Coat	\$ 2.99 ^{sp}	\$ 4.49	2 / \$ 7 ^{sp}	\$ 3.79	\$ 2.99 ^{sp}	\$ 4.39	\$ 4.79	\$ 3.99 ^{sp}
White Wave	Silk Plain (Orange)	\$ 3.40	\$ 3.79 ^{sp}	\$ 3.99	\$ 3.79		\$ 3.59		\$ 3.79

Across the board, the Co-op’s prices proved to be as much as 30% below all other stores in entrees, frozen and boxed.

sp = Sale Price



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Co-op News

A bi-monthly publication for members of the Olympia Food Co-op and its surrounding communities

April / May 2005



Local Produce at the Olympia Food Co-op

A Behind-the-Scenes Look at How It Works



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Kids Corner

What is it?



April / May

What is it?

Deadline: May 1st, 2005

Name _____

Age _____

Guess _____

Where do you want to pick up your gift certificate?

☐ Eastside

☐ Westside

If you're 10 or under, write your name and your guess on this form and put it in the *What Is It?* box in the front office. Please enter once per newsletter. Guess correctly, and you'll win a \$1.00 gift certificate to spend at the Co-op!

Remember that the deadline is **May 1st**. A winners list will be at both Co-ops where you can ask for your coupon. Print neatly!

Last Issue's *What Is It* was:
Fettucini!

Congratulations:
Oni, Indigo, Leti, Thesla, Clyne



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