

Topeka Natural Food Co-op

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UPCOMING CO-OP EVENTS– DON'T MISS THESE!

Well, spring is on its way once again! The Co-op has plenty of activities for your family and friends to enjoy this season. As everyone is preparing to start their yearly outdoor gardening, here are some exciting ventures to participate in the community:

- 1) Member Erin Boyle will be teaching a class in the store about the basics of fermentation. Learn about baking, kombucha and cheeses and the integral part of fermentation in homemaking these treats. This class will be held Saturday, March 28, 2009 from 10:00-12:00.
- 2) Barbara Smith will be holding a class on developing economic and ecologically friendly baking mixes on April 18th, 2009 at the Potwin Presbyterian Church at 2:00 p.m. This class will focus on bulk buying and the greening your kitchen while saving the green in your wallet. Sign up and pay the enrollment fee in the store.
- 3) Visit the Topeka Natural Food Co-op's booth at the Shawnee County Public Library Green Fair. Learn about and celebrate our environment. Indulge in crafts, play games, make a green poster and pot a flower to take home. Meet a salamander, a snake and a packman frog. Talk with a real live bee-keeper and visit with wild animals from the Stone Nature Center. Enjoy music and dance at the fair. Wear GREEN get a prize! The event is Saturday, April 18, 2009 from 2:00-5:00 p.m. in the Marvin Auditorium, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library.
- 4) The Annual Co-op Member Meeting and potluck is being held on April 18th. After visiting the Library's Green Fair or participating in Barbara's baking mix class, stop home and grab your side dish and head down to the Potwin Presbyterian Church for the annual meeting. We will have our traditional potluck at 6:00, followed by the member meeting and board elections. There are three board positions up for election or re-election. To learn more— talk to Devrin at the store and be there on the 18th. If you are unable to be at the meeting there will be a proxy voting box at the store starting in March.

Business Hours:
Mon – Fri 9 a.m. -7 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday: 12 p.m.- 5 p.m..

Topeka Natural Food Co-op
503 SW Washburn
Topeka, Kansas 66606
Telephone: 235-2309

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VEGGIE SUBSCRIPTION SIGN UP!

The Wakarusa CSA sign up has begun at the Topeka Natural Food Co-op. This year, Jill Elmer and Mark Lumpe will be providing Wakarusa River Valley produce beginning April 24th and running through early fall. The April 24th date is subject to Mother Nature's demands— so check the store the week of the 24th to confirm the start date.

There are 50 spots on the registry. The registration and administrative cost is \$50.00 and includes the cost of the last bag. Each week veggies subscribers pick their bag from an assortment of goods brought fresh from the Wakarusa Valley. The weekly bag price is \$15.00, but is well worth the variety and assortment of fresh Kansas vegetables and goods. Last year, along with the tomatoes, beans, radishes, greens, were goodies like honey, sunflower butter, kohlrabi, edamame, mushrooms and much more! Sign up in the store to day and reserve your spot! Enjoy local, sustainable Kansas fresh produce with the Topeka Co-op's CSA.

Small farmer co-ops cultivate democracy – it's in their roots

by Phyllis Robinson, Equal Exchange

This May, we celebrate World Fair Trade Day. We're excited to honor all that we co-operatives *have* accomplished to support small farmers. Yet, it feels important to also take this opportunity to revisit the roots of Fair Trade, and reconsider what we *aim* to accomplish. Most people understand the critical importance of higher prices, advance credit and direct relationships - they allow farmers to stay on their land, send their children to school, and diversify their incomes. Yet, there's another equally – some would say even *more* important – goal of Fair Trade, one that seems to be slowly disappearing as new iterations of “ethical trade” and “direct trade” appear in the market: *empowering communities and social movements*. It is for this reason Equal Exchange chooses to work exclusively with small-farmer co-operatives.

In our culture, individualism is steeped into our subconscious from an early age. The American Dream says anyone who works hard enough can “pull themselves up by their bootstraps,” to become a millionaire - or the country's President. Americans have a hard time with the idea that movements are built by many anonymous, “ordinary” people each putting in “their grain of sand.” In contrast, many indigenous cultures are built around this central theme of “community”; even most European countries place a higher premium on “collective welfare” than we do. For people who have had to shed blood and lose family members to earn their most basic rights, it is obvious that true success can only happen through collective efforts, organization and cooperation.

This empowerment of indigenous peoples, and the poor in general – many of whom rely on farming as their livelihoods – is a concept that makes some people uncomfortable. As a society, we are okay with poverty alleviation and charity, but when the world's disenfranchised begin to organize and take control over their own lives, businesses, and communities, when they start gaining economic power in the marketplace and political power in their countries, and in our own... that makes people nervous. Why would we rather raise money and give it to “poor farmers” than support their efforts to make their own livings? For me, this notion of *empowerment* is the missing ingredient when folks in the coffee industry start talking about “going direct,” or referring to a co-operative as yet another “middleman.” The strategy places too much emphasis on one person's benevolence, and gives that person, or company, the upper hand. Today, I come to your village and establish a friendship, offer a scholarship for your family's children and purchase your highest quality coffee. Tomorrow, I might go elsewhere. It is a strategy, that while well-

intentioned and produces positive results, does little to build democratic control and power at the producer level.

These same strategies: scholarships, direct relationships, community projects, have a completely different, and I would argue stronger impact, when they occur within the framework of an organized co-operative, association, or community. It's a question of who's in control, who makes the decisions, who is acquiring experience, and ultimately who has the power to set the terms. It's about producers, consumers, and alternative trade organizations working together to ensure that the terms of trade are more fair. Higher prices – yes; advance credit; direct relationships; and social projects ... all of these are critical.



Above: Equal Exchange Democracy in action Meeting at San Fernando Co-operative, Peru

(Cont.)

But the emphasis and ultimate goal of all our work needs to be about equity and social justice. Fair Trade through co-operatives enables farmers to invest in their own businesses and improvements in their own communities. Through co-ops, they can participate in other organizations and social movements to influence, improve upon, and change national trade and agricultural policies. In this way, organized and well-run small farmer co-operatives can acquire the economic and political power necessary to create lasting and deep-seated change.

To learn more go to www.smallfarmersbigchange.coop or www.fairfoodfight.com

Strawberry Asparagus Summer Salad

1 pound fresh asparagus cut into 1-inch pieces
 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
 8 cups spring mix salad greens
 3 cups sliced fresh strawberries
 1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced
 1/2 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
 2 teaspoons sugar

1. In a bowl, toss the asparagus with 1 tablespoon oil. Spread in a single layer in a greased 15 x 10 x 1-inch baking pan. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. . Bake the asparagus at 400°F for 15-20 minutes or until tender. When finished, toss greens, strawberries, onion, walnuts, and asparagus in a large bowl.

Whisk the vinegar, sugar, and remaining oil. Drizzle over the salad and toss to coat. Enjoy!

CLASSIFIED ADS

**FREE CLASSIFIED ADS ARE AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS... TO
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Clark: 785 220-9808
Clark_Duffy@Cox.net

Brad: 785 209-0173
BMosher@Carrollsworld.com

PETER KIMBLE, ND NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Member
 American Association of Naturopathic Physicians

1709 SW Randolph Ave
 Topeka, KS 66604
 Ph. 785 234 0015
www.ndaccess.com/peterkimble



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*Topeka Natural Food Co-op
503 SW Washburn
Topeka, Kansas 66606*

Think Globally. Eat Locally.

CONTRIBUTORS

A special thanks to the contributors of the monthly Topeka Natural Food Co-op Newsletter:

Rachael Savage: Editor, Layout and Research

Devrin Forte: From the Manager Column

Thank you!

THE CO-OP IS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS! IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE YOUR TALENTS WITH US, PLEASE VISIT WITH DEVRIN AT THE STORE!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND SUPPORT YOUR CO-OP NEWSLETTER! WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! PLEASE SEND US STORY IDEAS, RECIPES AND TIPS TO SHARE WITH FELLOW MEMBERS!

EMAIL US WITH YOUR INPUT!

naturalnewsletter@hotmail.com

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU!

****PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER****