



Chris Pietsch photo

## Sampling the smells

Harry Davey takes a sniff of peppermint from a jar held by his wife, Jane, during a shopping trip at the Moscow Food Co-op. The co-op stocks a wide variety of goods found nowhere else on the Palouse.

# Something for almost everyone

Moscow Food Co-op wants to be known as more than a 'health food store'

By Wendy Taylor

After 10 years — some of them rocky — in business, the Moscow Food Co-op has a new look, and, the managers hope, a new image.

They want to be thought of as a whole foods grocery store rather than a health food store. The label "health food store," they feel, doesn't really show that their customers come from all walks of life, and their merchandise ranges from French utility glasses to the ingredients needed for recipes in the trendiest food magazines.

Kenna Street, who's been with the co-op for two years, and David Cook, who's been there for five and a half, are co-managers.

Since they moved to Washington Street from their original premises on Second in 1978, business has been up and down, but in 1983 it began to improve. As business increased, a traffic problem developed, Street said. "When orders came into the store there was nowhere to receive them. They stayed in the middle of the store and got in the way."

That prompted the decision to rearrange so that instead of a center check-out stand, the stand is now against the north wall, the goods are arranged in groups so that the aisles are wider, and the produce is at the back of the store instead of the front.

The next goal is to get shopping carts. "More and more of our customers have small children in the store and it's difficult without carts," Cook added.

The store operates as a non-profit cooperative association, the managers explained. Income is generated from membership dues, \$5 a person, \$10 a family.

"There was a slump a couple of years ago and since then we've turned it around. This has been the second best year up until now. It may turn out to be the best year," Street said.

Customers come from all walks of life, the managers said. They hope that if people come into the store they'll realize they can find things at the co-op they might not be able to find anywhere else.

One of the advantages, they feel, is that one can buy most items according to need. If a recipe calls for a cup of pecans, you can buy that many from the co-op.

"A lot of our new selection is based on demand where we feel people are interested," Street said.

"We try to buy as much as we can in this area," she added. One of their main sources is Equinox, a wholesale co-operative north of Spokane.

Customers who knew the original store

would be surprised at how much has been added, the managers said. The remodeled store carries whole and ground coffee beans, cotton socks, a full line of health and beauty aids, and vitamin supplements.

They tried carrying clothing for a while, but found that they didn't have enough room to make it a success.

"We're trying to be more consistent," Street said. For goods to stay fresh there has to be a rapid turnover and if something doesn't sell quickly they discontinue it, but they will special order it for those who want it. "We have that policy in almost every department, especially herbs and spices and those items that depend on freshness.

"We want to be as complete a store as possible, but we want to keep a lot of emphasis on whole foods and quality," Street said.

There are misconceptions that have to go, Street said. You don't have to be a member to shop at the co-op, and if you're a member you don't have to work although you do get an extra discount if you do. You can also buy as much as you need, and that saves money on packaging.

Prices listed are member prices. Working members receive an extra 15 percent discount, but the work is geared towards what you are able to do, Street said.

The co-op is run by a board of directors made up of members, and the members make the decisions, the managers said.

Among its merchandise the co-op carries a full range of dairy products: milk, cream, sour cream, yogurt, cottage cheese, cheese and keifer. The largest source for cheese is Swiss Valley in southern Idaho.

The back part of the store will be remodeled into a "sticky room," Street said, and carry items like honey and molasses.

In addition to regular peanut butter, salted and unsalted, crunchy and smooth, the co-op sells sesame butter, almond butter and sunflower butter. It sells produce, organic and non-organic, salad dressings, small housewares, all kinds of ingredients for oriental cooking, cooking oils, bulk yeast, different flours, grains, nuts and legumes, tofu, teas, Chinese herbs, sodas and fruit juices, fruit spreads, and locally baked breads.

There are oriental dried mushrooms, pasta products, dried fruits, wild rice, rice bowls, oriental mortar and pestles and the French utility jars with lids that can be used for everything from cafe au lait to storing items in the freezer.

There's also a wide range of cookbooks. One of Street's favorites is The Enchanted

Broccoli Forest, and these are two of her favorite recipes from it:

### SPICED LENTILS

- 1½ cups lentils
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 large cloves of garlic, crushed
- 1 cup minced onion
- 1 large stalk of celery, chopped
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 cup coconut
- ½ tsp. powdered ginger
- ½ tsp. tumeric
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. coriander
- A few teaspoons of water as needed
- Fresh ground black pepper to taste
- Juice of 1 large lemon
- 2 cups chopped tart apples (2 large ones)
- Cayenne pepper to taste

Cook the lentils in 2¼ cups of water, bring to a boil then cover and lower the heat to simmer for 30-40 minutes. Mix with everything else except apples until tender in a deep, heavy skillet. Add water if necessary to avoid sticking.

Add apples and cook for 10 minutes more. Cover and keep warm in a 250° oven.

### OATMEAL YOGURT CAKE

- 1 cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup melted butter
- 2 eggs
- 2/3 cup firm yogurt
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. allspice
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. ground ginger
- 1½ cups raw rolled oats
- ½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
- ½ cup dark raisins (optional)

In a large mixing bowl combine the brown sugar and melted butter. Beat well. Add eggs one at a time, beat well after each addition. Beat in yogurt and vanilla until well blended.

Sift together flours, soda, baking powder, salt and spices. Add half the flour and the oats to the egg mixture. Add half the orange juice. Add the flour and the orange juice alternately ending with the orange juice.

Bake in a buttered 9x13 pan at 350° for 25 minutes or until a knife inserted comes out clean.