

Day-NW HD 3284 N48

Moscow Food Co-op 

Jan. 85

NEWSLETTER





## THE SPIRAL OF DOOM

By: Bill London

I have watched food co-ops die, and it's not much fun. A good example is the co-op in St. Maries that many people (including myself) spent years supporting. Of course, there are lots of other examples to choose from -- Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Sandpoint, and unfortunately many etc's.

There are always plenty of explanations when a co-op dies. But it seems to me that it all boils down to the Spiral of Doom. A co-op is started by a group of idealistic and committed folks. Eventually, because some people move away and others are dissatisfied for good reasons and bad, the number of hard-core supporters dwindles. For some, it becomes a chore to deal with the inefficiencies, or the lack of cleanliness, or the over-worked and burnt-out staff. Sales drop off. The chronically underpaid staff finds there are fewer volunteers, but just as much work to be done. The work doesn't all get done; the store becomes even less efficient; fewer people enjoy shopping there; and finally only a very hard core of supporters are left. Soon the co-op can not pay its bills and disappears. And serious competition (like the natural foods section in Safeway, and soon, Rosauers, plus Pilgrims and GNC) hastens the process.

I don't believe that the Moscow Food Co-op is now spiralling to its doom. However, it could, if we assume that not trying to grow is OK. Our hope lies in expansion of inventory, sales and customer base. If our potential new customers start shopping at Safeway, all we'll have is our old customers, and as they leave or quit, then . . .

I supported Ginger's selection as general manager while a member of that hiring committee. She seemed to best be able to meet this challenge of bringing in more customers, improving the overall management of the store, and thereby creating the money for better equipment and higher wages. She has had a harder time of it than I had expected. Learning a more cooperative style of management, plus learning the nuts-and-bolts of the entire economic structure of this business is a lot. But she also had to deal with a lot of distrust, resistance and evaluation-by-rumor. So I can only echo Terry Lawhead's suggestion -- talk to her yourself, she's practically normal and quite friendly.

And now to specifics: at their last meeting, the Board (upon the recommendation of the exiting general manager, David Cook, and Ginger) voted to fill the jobs of Pam Palmer and Sharon Lyons (both of whom had resigned their jobs, but wanted part-time work) with full-time staffers. Full-time workers were expected to be more committed to their jobs, more professional and knowledgeable, than a group of part-time workers. Unfortunately, the chronic lack of money sets a limit on the number of total staff hours. The Board recognized that while Pam and Sharon might want more paid hours, for the good of the Co-op, they would have to take whatever hours were available. It was a tough choice, and it's not fun to possibly displease Pam and Sharon, but I think the Board acted responsibly.

And now, off the soapbox. If you agree or disagree with any of this, let us know. Anyone is free to use this Newsletter to talk to the Co-op members. Write it down.

## TOFU, FOR YOU?

By: Kate Schalck

Tofu is a staple in many vegetarian diets and has been consumed in the Orient for 2000 years, but this nutritious protein source may be new to some of you. What is Tofu? Tofu is simply soy milk which has been curded to produce a cheese-like substance. Well, curded may sound like something you find in a two-month old milk carton in the back of a refrigerator, but that's not how tofu is made! Instead, the curding process occurs when nigari, vinegar or lemon is added to fresh, heated soy milk.

Soybeans and soy products are high in protein and contain all eight amino acids. A pound of tofu provides approximately 28 grams of protein and has one of the lowest ratios of calories to protein found in any food. Other attributes include a low fat content, absolutely no cholesterol, and a high concentration of B vitamins, iron, phosphorus, and calcium.

Tofu comes in two styles, firm and soft. I prefer the firm variety, because it doesn't fall apart as easily during cooking. The Moscow Food Co-op sells both packaged and bulk tofu for about \$1.00 per pound. Bulk tofu may be transported home in a plastic bag. The tofu should be stored in the refrigerator and submerged in water, which ideally is changed on a daily basis. Packaged tofu should also be treated the same way.

Tofu is easy to prepare and is quite versatile. It may be crumbled uncooked in salads, cut into cubes for soups, fried or baked for main dishes, and may even be used in desserts such as tofu cheesecake. As an introduction to tofu, try the following simple and tasty recipes.

## Fried Tofu Cutlets (tastes like fried chicken!)

Cut tofu into slices and bread in nutritional yeast. Fry in oil until golden brown. After frying, season with tamari. Serve in sandwiches or as a main dish. One pound of tofu feeds 3-4 people.

For a variation: Cut tofu into cubes and add to sauteed vegetables.

## Creamy Tofu Dip (a party favorite!)

Crumble one pound of tofu in a bowl. Add 1 cup of yogurt. If the mixture is too thick, thin with milk. Season with brewers yeast and tamari. Serve with chips and raw vegetables. Feeds 4-6 people.

For a richer dip: Substitute mayonaise for some of yogurt.

For a Mexican dip: Add dehydrated onions and season with dried chile peppers.

For a garden dip: Add chopped green onions and season with dill weed and celery seeds.



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# MEMBER/SHOPPER SURVEY: RESULTS

By: Phil Lettieri

Have you ever wondered about who you are, or how much money you make, or why you shop at the Co-op? Well, I'm here to tell you. The results of your Member/Shopper Survey are in, and if you filled one out, you contributed to the profile of the average Co-op patronizer.

You are a non-working member and a permanent resident of the area, who shops at the Co-op because: you feel it sells healthful products, you believe in the cooperative alternative, you like the store's friendly atmosphere, you enjoy being able to buy only the amount you need from our variety of bulk items, and you like the specialty products we offer.

You earn approximately \$10,000/year, and spend about 1/5 of your monthly food budget with us. You are predominantly interested in seeing us expand our produce section, along with increasing the variety of cheeses and bulk items we carry, and would also like to see more frozen food and housewares.

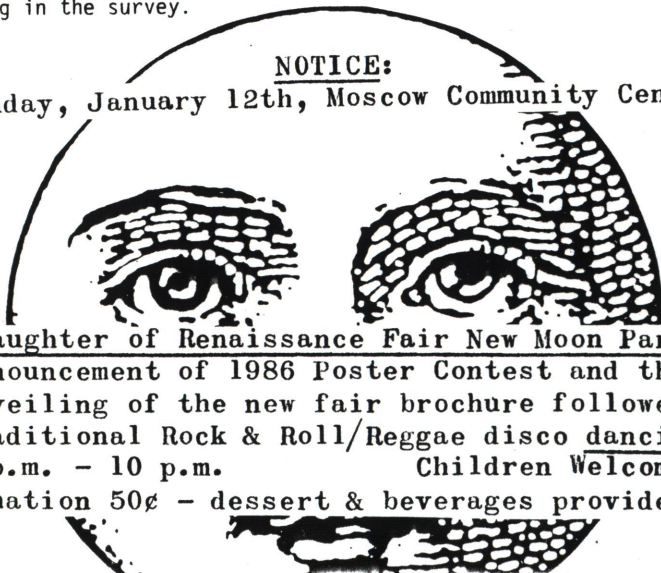
As for new products you would like us to carry, meat and fish top the list, with the emphasis being on fish and organic meat; beer and wine are equally preferred along with prepared foods, followed closely by clothing, and finally, gardening supplies.

You are well-informed as to how the store, members and the Board of Directors function and interact, and you feel that the three most important goals for the Co-op over the next five years are: to maintain our product quality, followed closely by equal concern about maintaining our friendly atmosphere, and offering higher wages to the staff. Suggestions/Comments included praise, mild castigations, and warnings, but all were supportive and well-intentioned.

The response was a bit disappointing, with only 112 surveys being returned. But 100 seems to be a reasonable number to go by in order to get a representative view of opinions. The results are posted in the front of the store, if you're interested in seeing how the percentages broke down. Thank you for participating in the survey.

## NOTICE:

Sunday, January 12th, Moscow Community Center



Daughter of Renaissance Fair New Moon Party!  
Announcement of 1986 Poster Contest and the  
unveiling of the new fair brochure followed by  
traditional Rock & Roll/Reggae disco dancing!  
6 p.m. - 10 p.m. Children Welcome  
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By: Phil Lettieri

The Board meeting for December was held on the 9th at Betsy Snyder's house. All Board members were present, as was an alternate, and three volunteers. A good turn-out.

The most important item on the agenda was a review of Ginger's first month on the job as general manager. She was grilled pretty thoroughly, and met all questions head-on. She did not evade addressing any criticisms, and everyone seemed satisfied with her responses. Her next review will be in February, after three months.

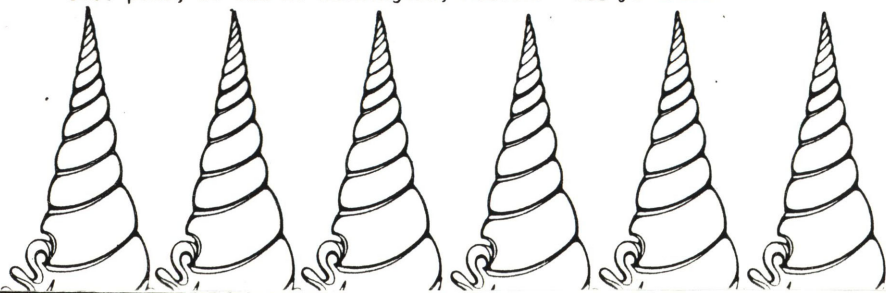
The other main topic of discussion involved the announcement that Sharon would also be resigning her purchaser's position in mid-January. David wondered if the Hiring Committee couldn't just go ahead and hire for Sharon's position at the same time that Pam's position was being filled. There was a consensus that, yes, the Hiring Committee should choose two.

The announcement of Sharon's decision came during the Manager's Report, which, when it continued, touched on projected staffing, which would go into effect in mid-January, when the two new people would assume their positions full-time, and Pam and Sharon's resignations would take effect. Ginger and David figured that with the three, essentially full-time paid staff members, plus volunteers, there would only be a need to have a cashier on the payroll approximately 10 hours per week.

This led to concern over Pam's desire to continue as paid cashier, which was originally 15-20 hours per week. There were those who thought that she was getting a raw deal, and that if she had known the hours available to her upon resignation would only be 10 hours or less, she may have made a different decision. Well, a big discussion ensued, and went back and forth, and all around, and it was really getting nowhere, since without Pam being there, we could only go on hearsay and supposition. Despite the earlier consensus on the matter of hiring for two, approximately 35 hours/week jobs, we had to take it to a vote in order to get the whole business settled, once and for all.

Six Board members voted to hire two people now, recognizing that we did feel an obligation to provide Pam with as many hours as was possible; and two Board members voted to hire one person, and let Pam and Sharon split the hours available from the other position. So, by a simple majority vote of 6-2, it was decided that two people would be hired now.

If you are interested in details of the meeting, check out the minutes which are posted on the board in the front of the store, near the counter. The next meeting will be January 20, 6:30 p.m., at 328 N. Washington, Moscow. See ya there.





## CHANGE AT THE MOSCOW FOOD CO-OP

By: Terry Lawhead

Change is tough.

I think there is some truth in the idea that people involved in cooperatives throughout America are the kinds of people who have initiated and even provoked institutional and social change. We have been consistently willing to take a risk when potential benefits were better systems of service for people and a more efficient utilization of food.

Right now at our Co-op there is a change occurring which has some members reeling. We never figured we would be the victims of culture shock because we were always the ones forcing the difficult decisions. But some of us are experiencing the feeling that the Co-op is moving away from the image we have always had of it.

It is. But, if you are one of those people, as I am, consider your image. The food handling and food retailing industry has developed some savvy in regards to moving in on the market of whole grain, organic and nutritious foods. The competition is intense, and people can get a variety of items in large supermarkets which only two years could have only been found in cooperatives.

I don't like this trend because there is no value structure built into buying organic sunflower seeds at Safeway. There is no vision which attempts to understand and change the manner in which food is distributed in America.

But there it is. The current dilemma.

The Co-op board is confronting this difficult situation without a great deal of membership consultation and support. Over the years, the amount of volunteer assistance at the store has continued to erode, and the board and staff operate pretty much on their own. They remain completely open to comment and enthusiasm, but in absence of it must make daily and quarterly decisions.

The decision of the board to hire Ginger Clemm as a new manager, and to implement a new managerial system which attempts to make daily operations more efficient and successful, is a wise one and one I support. This support has to deal with my misgivings, but nobody told me life was pure or simple.

I attended the recent board meeting which reviewed Ginger's performance after one month at the job. Everybody had comments, and a number of rumors were aired so Ginger could respond to them. A rumor is an interesting beast, and often results in a jamming up of communication channels. I had heard them myself, and was attentive to how Ginger explained her case.

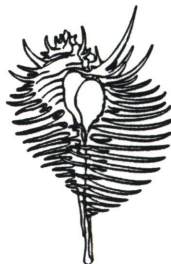
What was most appealing to me about her responses was that she admitted she was groping with the infrastructure of the Co-op. Who hasn't. She has a healthy skepticism to rules, and was learning what older members have regarded as inviolate customs with a fresh perspective.

The balance she is attempting to bring to the Co-op in order to deal with the new conditions of retail life in Moscow and America in the 1980s will prove to be beneficial to all of us and to those new people who will be coming through the door because of Ginger's ideas.

Those of you experiencing resentment or concern should remember everything you once knew about social change. Introduce yourself to Ginger - she's the new kid on the block and she is working hard for the survival of our store.



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## THE HIRING DECISION

By: Rich DeLong

Both Sharon Lyons and Pam Palmer are leaving their positions at the Co-op, for academic and maternal reasons. This led to the creation of the hiring committee and the hiring of two new employees. As a member of the hiring committee, I think it is important that we discuss the process involved in the hiring of Bill Beck and Henry McCray as our new purchasing Coordinator and Store Coordinator. This process was difficult and laborious. The entire process took six weeks and culminated in a seven hour interview and decision session.

The hiring committee was created by the Co-op Board when Pam Palmer gave notice of her intent to leave her position at the Co-op. The committee was created as a temporary body, authorized to advertise and interview for the positions and hire the appropriate person. During this hiring process the committee was composed of two staff (Ginger Clemm and Sharon Lyons), David Cook, Rich DeLong, and Carolyn Young. Pam Palmer, another of our paid staff, was in Ohio, and was only able to participate in the application review.

Certain criteria were used to evaluate the applicants. These criteria were created by the Board and previous hiring committees. The Board, at their December meeting, decided to hire for two full-time positions because of their concerns about past scheduling and management problems with six part-time employees. The Co-op has had six employees because those employees were not able to make the Co-op their primary work commitment for 12 months out of the year. From the Board's discussions, two primary criteria were expressed. First, the person hired needs to be available to work at the Co-op 12 months out of the year. Second, that person has to have very, very few (or better yet, no) time conflicts during the work day.

The initial stage of the hiring process involved advertising for the positions. Three weeks were allowed for applications to be accepted. At the end of this period, eight applications were received. These applications were reviewed by the hiring committee and other interested members of the Co-op. From these comments, five of the applications were accepted for interviews by the hiring committee. Of these five, one applicant withdrew her application. The remaining applicants were interviewed on December 18th. Each interviewee was asked a set of standard questions, as well as appropriate follow-up questions for each interviewee. The interviewee's comments were finally evaluated in light of the criteria established by the Board and hiring committee. Bill Beck and Henry McCray were the applicants that best fit the established criteria.

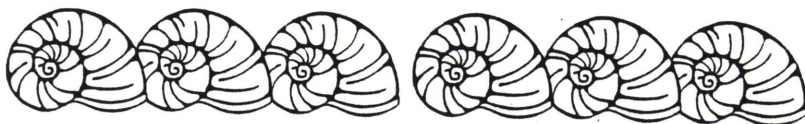
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Both Bill and Henry have many strong points. Both are able to make the time commitment to the Co-op. Bill also has a significant background in retail sales, purchasing, and natural foods. Henry has experience in volunteer management and financial management. I feel, as does the rest of the hiring committee, that Bill and Henry are strong additions to the Co-op and will help to stabilize the Co-op financially and spur its growth process.



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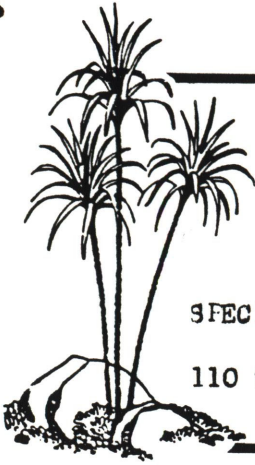
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SO WHERE SHOULD WE PUT THE BEER?

By: Sara Donart

Results from the most recent co-op shopper survey show that many people favor the sale of beer and wine at the Co-op. Another survey, taken two years ago, showed the same thing, but since that time no action has been taken to put beer and wine on the shelves. Why?

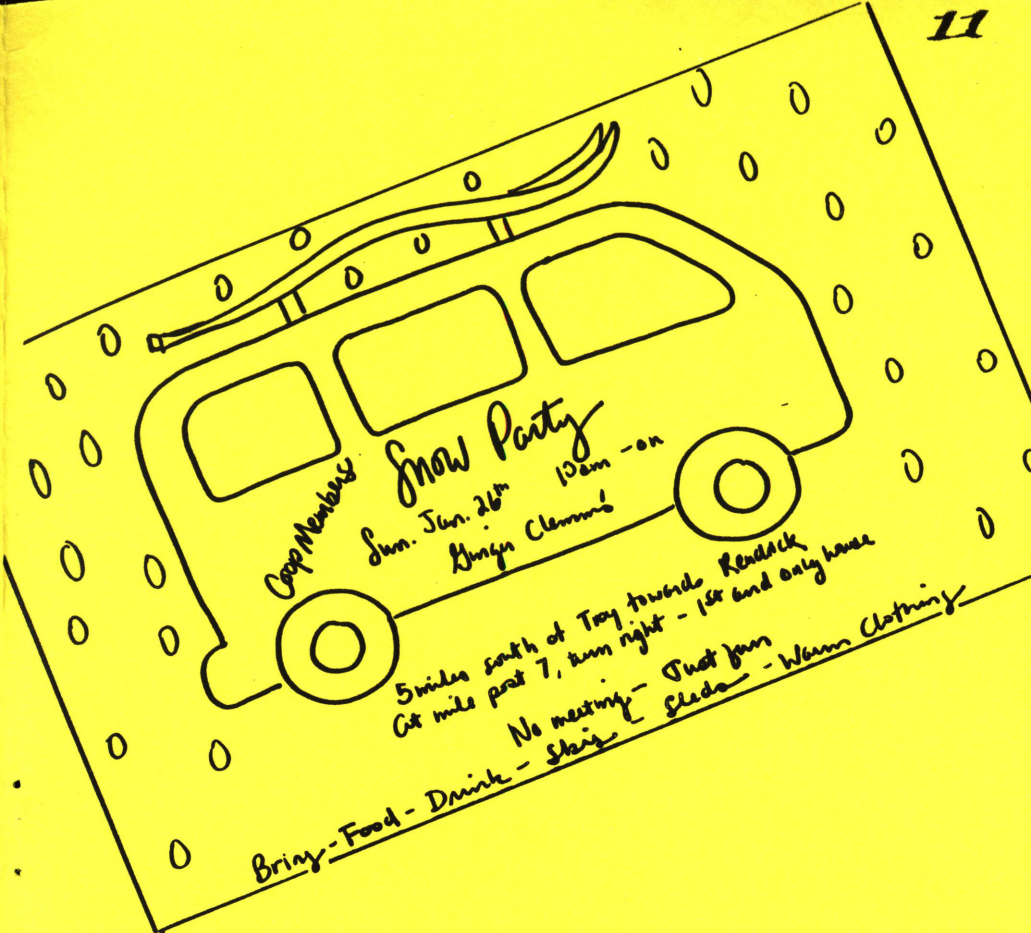
Primarily, it's that old bugaboo, lack of shelf and refrigeration space. Some beer would have to be available cold, which would mean displacing something from the Co-op's already crowded coolers. All corked wine would have to be stored on its side, which would require special shelving.

Extra space being all but non-existent at the Co-op, adding beer and wine to the inventory would mean eliminating some of the food items offered. Kenna Street Eaton, a former staff worker who investigated the beer and wine issue after the first survey, said, "We had to ask ourselves, 'what are we here for?' We're here to sell food."

Initial capital investment in a beer and wine inventory was another factor considered at the time, and former manager David Cook pointed out that "adding variety in anything is going to cost."

Kenna said that since the Co-op already had intermittent cash flow problems, the staff decided at the time that it was more important for the Co-op to focus its buying power on food. The staff calculated that the cost of a county liquor license, \$75 annually, could be absorbed by any beer and wine sales, but David said the license application required that someone be fingerprinted. Kenna also pointed out that selling liquor would mean cashiers would have to start checking I.D.

"It would make the Co-op a more complete shopping spot," Kenna said, but until shelf space and cash become more abundant it looks like Co-op shoppers may have to buy their bubbles elsewhere.



### FOOD ALLERGY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

By: Carolyn Young

Not everyone who has a food allergy is aware of it, and not everyone who is aware of their allergic condition knows what to do about it. To fill that information gap is the purpose of the newly-organized Food Allergy Information Exchange (FAIE).

The group was formed in late 1985 by those who included their names on a list of interested local residents. The invitational sign-up was placed by the Co-op staff on the bulletin board at the Moscow Food Co-op. Now there are about 30 FAIE members.

As their name implies, the group is organized to share information about food allergies: diets and approaches that have worked, hidden ingredients in food, sources of allergy-free products, recipes, and restaurants. At their December meeting, the FAIE members present focused on establishing an information file on local doctors (their specialties, interest, and approaches to food allergies).

The group meets regularly and welcomes anyone interested in food allergies. Contact Mary Ann Green (in Moscow, 882-6650) or Keith Wollen (in Pullman, 334-2149).

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