FIRST FRIDAY
SUMMER SALES

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From the Back of the Editor’s Mind:

Kelly Watters, Conspiracy News Editor

We are off to press a bit later this season as we wanted to report to you on voting results as well as release a time-sensitive article originally published by the National Co-op Grocers (NCG) who wrote a case study about our farmer loan program to share with all co-ops gathered at this year’s Spring Meeting. Growing sales from local vendors and supporting local is a measure we track both individually and with all participating NCG food co-ops nationally. In fact, growing local from 21% to 25% is one of our 2020 impact goals. These collective goals represent system-wide improvement targets among all NCG co-ops. One impressive collective measure I have heard used is that 1 out of every 3 products sold by co-ops is USDA organic. Other 2020 goals are to increase healthy food access, increase charitable donations, increase percentage of staff identifying as ethnic minorities, reduce electricity use per square foot, achieve reduction in annual fuel use per square foot, and reduction in annual refrigerant leaks. Is not always possible for co-ops individually to achieve these goals, but we can make great progress by working on issues together.

Spring is the most fleeting month in the desert and we must relish cool nights and gorgeous spring days while we can before the summer months arrive. Local produce in spring is fleeting too from our local daffodils, fresh peas, and green garlic scapes from Forever Yong Farm. Summer brings First Friday Summer sales June through August with fresh food demos, discounts for owners and live music each month. In this issue, we highlight the work of the TUSD Transition from School to Work Program in Conspiracy Garden, our very fun and festive annual meeting event, stamp camp and design contest with the Postal History Museum, growing and saving sunflowers seeds and sensational smoothie recipes. Summer will be here before you know it so enjoy our ephemeral spring!
**Conspiracy Classes & Events**

*GOING GLUTEN-FREE!*
with Sharon Greenspan
**Thursday, April 19 6 - 7:30pm**
What will you eat? How will you survive social situations is the big question! Restaurants? Happy Hour? Dating? Graduation, retirement, wedding parties...yikes! Having strategies in place BEFORE events empowers you and puts everyone at ease. Cross-contamination is the number one reason GF folks get sick at social events. Embarrassment, shame and guilt lead to eating foods you know will make you sick. Learn strategies, how to uncover your true motivation and taste some fun recipes. If there is time, we can explore how to modify your favorite recipes, to bring them along! **Cost: $10**

**JUICING VS. SMOOTHIES**
with Sharon Greenspan
**Wednesday, May 16 6-7:30pm**
Is one better than another? What should you put into a smoothie or juice? What equipment do you need? Do you have to do a cleanse? For how long? Learn everything you need to know about smoothies and juices. The truth is that neither is better they have different functions on the road to health. Learn from an expert health coach who has had smoothies nearly daily for more than a decade and also completed numerous juice fasts including a 90-day green juice fast one summer. **Cost: $10**

**GOING VEGETARIAN/VEGAN WITHOUT RUINING YOUR HEALTH**
with Sharon Greenspan
**Wednesday, June 20 6-7:30pm**
Do you need B12? What about Vitamin D? How safe are fake cheeses and meat substitutes? 35% of people who’ve been vegetarian for 9 years go back to eating meat. We now have scientific proof that a vegetarian diet will prevent chronic disease and the leading causes of death. Learn how to thrive on a vegetarian or vegan diet, not just survive. We’ll cover nutrition, social situations and vegetarianism/veganism as a lifestyle. Learn from someone who has been vegetarian since about 1982 and vegan since 1991. Oh, and she’s now over 50, weighs less than she did in high school and is a lot healthier! Taste some fun, easy recipes and bring lots of questions. **Cost: $10**

**RAW FOOD: DANGERS & DOING IT RIGHT!**
with Sharon Greenspan
**Saturday, July 28 9-10am**
Are you worried about getting your nutritional needs met on a raw diet? Have you ventured down this path and found that you didn’t lose weight or lost too much? Did you have less energy? Did your skin erupt? Learn the mistakes most people make! Different approaches leading raw chefs, doctors and advocates take will be discussed. Strategies for implementing changes and telltale signs for when to consult a professional will be described. Information about necessary kitchen appliances and food preparation will be discussed. Taste some fun, easy recipes and bring lots of questions. **Cost: $10**

Registration requires that tickets be purchased 24 hours prior to the start of the class. Registration can be made in the store at the register or online at www.foodconspiracy.coop/events

*Indicates the class or event will be held in the Hoff Building, 425 E. 7th St.*
The Results are in!
by Michael DeSantis, Board President

The Food Conspiracy Board of Directors set ambitious goals for this election cycle: celebrate more, include staff and empower members. We also made innovative changes to improve the process, collaborated closely with management and created a system to better plan, budget and implement next year’s election cycle. We reached out to our members and you responded – loud and clear. I’ll share some statistics with you in a moment, but since the annual meeting, I’ve asked staff, members and board members what they most enjoyed, personally. A pattern emerged: It was the celebration of everything we stand for and have worked toward for all these years, and the way we included our hard working staff in that celebration.

Of course, when you try new things, not all of them work out and we have quite a list of “lessons learned” to incorporate into next year’s event planning. I would like to share just one example here. Having never paid close attention to how many kids come to the Annual General Meeting, we were unsure if it would be worth making arrangements with “Playformance” (next door to Borderlands) for special fun for the kids. This year we did pay attention, and 17 kids showed up. So, some kind of special activities for the kids will be part of our future Annual General Meeting planning!

Personally, the most meaningful statistic here is that while two propositions received strong 2 to 1 support, one stood out with 3.5 to 1 support. It was the proposition addressing a potential barrier to running for a seat on the FC Board of Directors. I deeply want to be part of a functioning democracy, where all voices are heard, and our owner controlled co-op has always been a beacon of light for me, even when I’m disheartened by world events. This one statistic, along with the renewed strength and collaboration within our Co-op, gives me what I need to carry on with the good work of building democracy, right here in my own community.

Thanks for making your voice heard!

The following is a summary. Full election results can be viewed on our website, and thank you again for participating in the governance of your Food Conspiracy Co-op.

Total votes and attendance
194 total votes were cast during the month of March and 184 people attended our Annual General Meeting. (Looking at our 5 year average, the 2018 election cycle and annual meeting was a great success! It was #1 in votes cast and #2 in attendance.)

Board Candidate Results
All three candidates for Board of Directors received very strong support, with each receiving approximately 90% of all votes cast for candidates.

Proposition Results
- Bylaw 8.4: Require approval to defer owner patronage rebates – Passes 2 to 1
- Bylaw 4.3: Reduce Board candidate application submittal requirement – Passes 3.5 to 1
- Bylaw 2.4: Maintain full ownership rights – Passes 2 to 1

Cooperative Community Fund Results
These are the top three organizations, starting with the highest vote count:
1. Bicas
2. Northern Jaguar Project
3. Local First Arizona

Round Up Results
These are the top three organizations, starting with the highest vote count:
1. Humane Borders
2. Native Seeds/SEARCH
3. Mariposas Sin Fronteras
March 4th With Us--It’s a Celebration!
Moments from our Annual Board Meeting at Borderlands Brewery
photos by Groundwork Promotions
THANK YOU!! Gratitude is the most significant expression I can share as I reflect on our year at Food Conspiracy so far. We just put a bow on one of our Co-op’s best Annual Meetings ever, and our store is operating at an extremely high level thanks to your continuous support and the hard work of our dedicated staff. I am still relatively new to Food Conspiracy, but what I have experienced here so far indicates that we are a strong, resilient Co-op community with a rich past and an exciting future.

In case I haven’t had the opportunity to introduce myself yet, my name is John Glennon. In December, I was honored to accept the Interim General Manager (GM) position for Food Conspiracy. I am a Southern Arizona native and I have dedicated my professional career to the food cooperative model and local food systems. In 2011, I earned my B.A. in cultural anthropology from the U of A, where I first became interested in food co-ops by conducting a project at the Food Conspiracy. I then went on to earn my M.A. in applied cultural anthropology from NAU. My co-op experience spans 5 years, where I most recently was the GM of the Sierra Vista Food Co-op in Sierra Vista, Arizona.

As Interim GM, my leadership focus is to provide stability and continued forward momentum for our Co-op as our Board of Directors conducts a search and hiring process for a permanent GM. Along with this focus, I am working closely with our Board and Management Team to strategize plans to facilitate our organizational and operational capacity and development. The Board and I are continuing to progress with the Board Work Plan by methodically bringing our work back to our Co-op’s bylaws, mission, and values while also reestablishing our systems of open and direct communication and Board and GM accountability. The Management Team and I are working to facilitate the same systems of open and direct communication and accountability by establishing a goal oriented culture where we are making positive changes, trying new things, and tracking our successes. Overall, I am tremendously impressed by the talent, experience, and leadership we have on our Board and Management Team and I am excited to see all we can accomplish for our Co-op together.

We have some exciting offerings coming to your Co-op this summer and in the near future. First, we are revamping our First Friday Sales for member-owners throughout the summer! The plan is to make each First Friday Sale as festive as possible with special demos, samples, music, and of course a great discount. Member-owners will receive 10% off their total purchase (over $25) on June 1st, July 6th, and August 3rd. We are also planning to unveil a juicing and cut produce program, where we will be offering amazing fresh juice and pre-cut produce meal solutions every day. This program is the result of our commitment to grow our amazing fresh options to make your pursuit of quick and healthy meals more convenient morning or night. Look for our juice and cut program to be fully underway by mid-summer.

I want to take this opportunity to offer my sincere appreciation of the entire Food Conspiracy staff for their resiliency, commitment, and hard work as they have navigated multiple GM transitions in the last two years all while providing the best service to you our member-owners and customers. The Food Conspiracy staff has expressed a tremendous amount of support for me personally as I have transitioned into the Interim GM role, for which I am truly humbled and grateful. To keep the theme of gratitude rolling… Thank you to all the members of the Food Conspiracy staff!
Bajo Tierra Kitchen’s Ferments Grow Slow and Seasonal with Support from the Community

Q&A with Cynthia Smith and Elianna Madril, owners of Bajo Tierra Kitchen

by Kelly Watters, Outreach + Education Manager

Bajo Tierra Kitchen is a relatively young local Tucson business owned by Cynthia Smith and Elianna Madril making a Sonoran-inspired kimchi and traditional sauerkraut. These products have been available at the Co-op since the business’s inception in 2014. The first year in production, Bajo Tierra Kitchen was unable to procure organic cabbage out of season, and ran out of their kimchi and sauerkraut mid-summer. In planning for the next year, they approached Food Conspiracy to apply for a loan to purchase local cabbage when it was in season and make their biggest batch yet. The interest-free loan to Bajo Tierra Kitchen is the first small loan of its kind to a food business beyond a farm. The two-year $2,000 loan initiated this February purchased locally grown Napa cabbage for the largest-ever production run of Bajo Tierra Kitchen’s popular kimchi.

Kelly: How did Bajo Tierra Kitchen start?
Cynthia: Elianna and I both worked on farms in the area at the time we met. I worked for the Sleeping Frog Farm as an intern while in college, and Elianna was an AmeriCorps volunteer at Tucson Village Farm for two terms. Farm to market experiences led us to discover that lots of fresh veggies that didn’t sell at the market came home with us and needed to be processed—and quickly! We got into canning and preserving fresh food to be able to use this valuable resource. After a while we started experimenting with fermentation as a way to preserve the local harvest. This is where the idea really came from. We also worked together at a Café Passé, this is where I witnessed Elianna’s hardworking nature and approached her about starting a business together.

Kelly: What are your backgrounds and did you know about fermentation and food preservation before starting this venture?
Cynthia: I grew up in Louisiana and spent a lot of time on my grand-parents’ farm. My grandmother canned everything.

Elianna: My dad owned a pizza restaurant in Nogales when he met my mom. Later he opened a restaurant in Amado, the Long Horn Grill, and I hung out there a lot, especially during the summer. My mom was an avid gardener. After I did two terms of AmeriCorps, I wanted to do more food work.

Cynthia: Neither of us knew how to make kimchi. We learned from scratch. We started our first batch in 2013 and did lots of research. We had at least six different recipes and eventually settled on one. It has lots of extra ginger, we use fresh chilies not chile powder, and we add cilantro it making what in Korea is referred to as a white kimchi. The fresh peppers or chilies are not bitter. When you use more dried chilies you get more of a bitter flavor. We also use kombu and kelp flakes because they are a healthy source of magnesium.

Kelly: Why kimchi?
Cynthia: We found that the ingredients that were available -the Napa cabbage, carrot, daikon radish were all available at the same time in the late winter and early spring. When we started, we did a lot of recipe testing on our friends. I was working at the Co-op at the time and I would bring samples in for people to try. Everyone always wanted more kimchi.

Kelly: What’s the most creative use you’ve seen for Bajo Tierra kraut and kimchi?
Cynthia: You can put kimchi on anything! (laughs)
Elianna: I eat it on a bowl of savory breakfast cereal like cream of wheat. I put garlic, green onions and sauté with greens. I make an egg over easy and add fresh kimchi on top.

Cynthia: Kimchi and kraut help digest fatty foods. It goes well with macaroni and cheese.
Elianna: Someone we met at the farmers market told us they like to make a hummus taco and put kimchi on it.

Kelly: Besides selling packaged kimchi and kraut at the Co-op and at the farmers’ markets, restaurants are customers of yours correct?
Cynthia: Yes, we know a lot of people working in the restaurant industry and some of them have tried it out on their menu. Exo Kitchen was the first restaurant to come on with us. They make a kimchi bowl that features our kimchi. It is a similar concept to the breakfast cereal bowl only they use rice as a grain, top with an egg and the kimchi. They also have a kimchi egg sandwich. It is really popular at Exo Kitchen.

Elianna: My brother’s food truck Geronimo’s Revenge uses kimchi. He uses the brine to marinate the taco meat. He sautés the taco meat with the brine and tops the tacos with a little of the kimchi. It’s not always on the menu since he changes it up often but it’s called the Bajo Tierra Taco.

Kelly: Why did you need a loan to move to the next step in your business and how did you determine what you needed?
Cynthia: In our first year in business, we realized mid-summer that we ran out of the finished product. We couldn’t find local or organic ingredients that we could afford in the middle of the summer. We decided to change the production system to better utilize local produce when it is available, and double the amount of kimchi we would normally make in one whole year to one season. That way we can focus our efforts on the production season during the peak produce season and then get away from the kitchen to focus on sales and marketing once the product is produced.

Kelly: What did the loan from Food Conspiracy enable Bajo Tierra Kitchen to do?

continued on page 11
Food Conspiracy is happy to announce a new collaboration with Covilli Brand Organics, a produce farm in Sonora, Mexico that is both 100% organic AND 100% Fair Trade Certified. We are currently carrying Covilli heirloom tomatoes, green beans, and Brussel sprouts in our produce section and plan to provide additional Covilli products in the future.

What is Fair Trade and why is it important that our Co-op carry Fair Trade products? As Covilli President, Alex Madrigal, explains in his informative YouTube presentation, Fair Trade is a system with its focus on the employee. He goes on to explain that Fair Trade has two main tenants:

1. Safety. Fair Trade USA certifies that workers receive proper training and that the company fosters an atmosphere and culture of safety. It also guarantees workers’ rights so everyone in the operation understands that they are working fair hours and being paid a fair wage. Fair Trade USA also verifies that there are no child labor laws being compromised.

2. Empowerment. Information, resources, and decision making authority. We all know that the products we buy are connected to the livelihoods of others. Fair Trade provides us a way to support responsible companies and empower farmers and workers via the Fair Trade Premium, money earned that goes into a communal fund for workers and farmers to use – as they see fit – to improve their social, economic, and environmental conditions.

Many produce shippers offer both Fair Trade and non-Fair Trade products. The consumer then decides where to spend the money and which to support. But Covilli workers decided that it was in their best interest as a group to certify their entire line of products. Why? Madrigal explained, “It’s the right thing to do. There is no reason to apply Fair Trade to some of our products and not to others when we can bring more benefits, faster, to our workers and bring awareness to consumers on how we are all key players in creating a more fair food system. We vote with our dollar.” Covilli took a chance, having faith that the consumer would not “opt out” in favor of non-Fair Trade products. And it’s paid off. In the first 20 months after becoming Fair Trade Certified, Covilli received over half a million dollars in Premiums, now being invested in four projects for its workforce: a medical transportation unit, health center, meal service and dining facility, and day care.

Covilli worker empowerment is guided by its Fair Trade Committee, called Nuchi Sansekan or “All Together” in Nahuatl indigenous language. It’s a democratic system allowing the workers themselves to elect their representatives and have a direct say in how its Premiums are invested. The workers have control of the bank account containing the Premiums, not the company. It is the workers, after all, who know best what is needed in their community.

When we think of Fair Trade, we might think of coffee, tea, chocolate, or bananas, products that come to us via a long distribution line. In this case, we have an opportunity to impact the global food economy by buying food grown by a community in neighboring Sonora, Mexico with certified organic distribution warehouses in Southern Arizona.

More information on Covilli, its products, and initiatives can be found at its website www.covilli.com. You can also follow them on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Their YouTube page has some great videos and their website lists suggested recipes that use their produce!

Learn more about Fair Trade Certification at www.fairtradecertified.org or Covilli Brand Organics at www.covilli.com.
Tucson Gems: Tiny Teaching Tools

Stamp Collecting Promotes World Awareness and Creativity

by Richard Bergsma, Co-op Owner

Our Tucson community abounds with interesting business and organizational resources that you might not be aware of. The Postal History Foundation (PHF), tucked away in the West University Neighborhood at 920 North First Avenue, is unknown even to many who are nearby, but it is a unique resource used nationwide and internationally. You might not think that such an organization has much in common with our Co-op but we share a very important mission: education. Both organizations partner with schools to enhance children’s educational experience; the Co-op through food knowledge, cooking, and garden cultivation, the Postal History Foundation through the use of stamps as teaching tools.

If you collected stamps as a kid, you remember learning geography, art, history, and politics as you picked through piles of colorful stamps from all over the world and dutifully filled the spaces in your album. You wondered about the faces and images depicted. Who were they? What did they mean? It was the wonder and excitement of holding something in your hand that came from another place that kept you intrigued. Your curiosity often led you to a globe, an encyclopedia, or a family member to seek answers. It is this excitement for learning that the Postal History Foundation fosters through its many educational programs.

The PHF was founded in 1960, originally focused on the postal history of Arizona and the Western United States. The organization’s objectives were to organize a youth educational program, foster the study and research of postal history, and gather a collection of historical objects related to the transportation and distribution of the mail. The Western PHF developed a youth philately program that became the basis of the organization’s educational outreach activities, including regular involvement with several public schools in Tucson. As the organization’s efforts expanded, the Western Postal History Museum was renamed the Postal History Foundation to reflect its broader reach and allow for future growth.

Today, the Foundation reaches out internationally and has an extensive array of artifacts on permanent display at its museum, including the original turn-of-the-century Naco, Arizona post office. The Foundation’s Youth Education through Stamps (YES) program supports kids, parents, and teachers through several free or nominally-priced services and resources. Resources are extensive and include lesson plans, presentations, stamp albums, a library, and field trip options. Millions of U.S. and foreign stamps are collected to accommodate learning activities for all grade levels and centered on any preferred topic including language arts, sports, math, history, geography, fine arts, and science. You can even arrange a merit badge workshop for your scout troop.

One of the Foundation’s most popular activities is the annual Tucson Birthday Stamp Design Contest held each summer. The contest is open to children ages 5-17 and winning designs are featured on the Postal History Foundation web site and by local media. Many prizes are awarded and one grand winning design is used to print stamps that are legal for postage! Another favorite activity is the Foundation’s annual Stamp Camp, a week-long event held in June for kids aged 8-14, designed to combat the summer doldrums. The camp covers stamp collecting history, hobby basics, and teaches kids how to start a stamp collection of their own.

Not only does the PHF center its work on education and outreach for people of all ages, philatelic sales and stamp collecting remain the basis for the foundation’s work and effort to keep the pastime alive. They also operate a contract post office and run a philatelic library which is open to the public. Check it out the next time you’re in the neighborhood and if you are a teacher, consider using the Foundation’s resources in your classroom!

A calendar of events, contest information, downloadable activity sheets, contacts, and a news blog are found at www.postalhistory-foundation.org

Post Office Hours:
Monday – Friday 8am – 2:30 920 N. 1st Avenue
The Foundation runs the only postal outlet in the states that receives almost all new stamp issues. Mail both domestic and international letters and parcels at our facility. However, the Foundation runs a contract post office, they do not offer money orders, post office boxes, or passport services, and cannot accept money orders or credit/debit cards. Free parking behind the building.

Slusser Library houses rotating shows. Currently the show is Prospectors and Postman – Mail Delivery in the Boom Days of Mining, through May 2018. The following show scheduled is Wickenburg Massacre. The Mini Museum (the Naco Post office) is housed in the main Foundation Building.

Tanvi Narendran, Winner of the 2017 Annual Tucson Birthday Stamp Design Contest
Investing in the Future: Investing in our Farmers
Kristen Rainey, National Co-op Grocers edited by Kelly Watters

Fresh, local produce is in high demand at Food Conspiracy, but the number of nearby farms is limited and growing conditions can be especially difficult. The Co-op is investing in the local food system — and the future success of farmers and the Co-op — by making interest-free loans to producers in the form of a “Super CSA.”

Food Conspiracy Co-op prides itself on high quality local produce and we know our owners and customers love it. You bought 3,870 packages of locally made tamales, nearly 11,000 packages of tortillas, and $56,000 of local produce was purchased in FY2015/16! All told, our small Co-op with 110 local vendors sold $463,412 in 2017.

Tucson is a region with few farmers. It is difficult to grow food in the desert and investment in all aspects of farming is needed—including only financial capital. However, providing financial capital is a need that Food Conspiracy has been able provide. Through interest-free loans to producers in the form of a “Super CSA,” we are working to strengthen relationships and build capacity with the growers we already do business with to expand the local food supply for Co-op shoppers over the long term.

The Co-op’s Conspiracy CSA Farmer Loan Program is community supported agriculture for a retail environment. It follows the CSA model of investing in a farm up front in exchange for receiving a share of the food that the farm grows. Similarly, Food Conspiracy invests in a farmer by providing a no-interest cash loan; the farmer repays Food Conspiracy with goods that will be sold by the Co-op.

“Conspiracy CSA is an extension of what’s in our DNA as cooperators — to take our relationship with farmers and provide financial support.”
Kelly Watters, Education + Outreach Manager

Food Conspiracy takes pride in supporting local producers and offering a predictable market and steady sales. “The farmers market is a great outlet, but it’s not for everybody,” says Kelly Watters, Outreach and Education Manager. “The Co-op is more consistent. We can take almost everything farmers can give us and there’s still not enough. The demand for locally grown fresh food has outgrown the supply here.”

Process
The idea for the Conspiracy CSA program formed after Sleeping Frog Farm approached the Co-op for a loan to aid the farm’s vegetable growing operations. In considering that proposal, Food Conspiracy developed basic criteria for choosing whom it would work with: established farms that have an existing vendor relationship with our Co-op; farms that have a specific need (especially for infrastructure or labor) and can identify how they will use the loan funds; and farms with products that the Co-op could readily sell.

With approval from the Board of Directors, Food Conspiracy made two zero-interest loans of $25,000 to Sleeping Frog Farms, in 2011 and again in 2013, to be repaid within two years via produce sales. The farm used the funds to invest in infrastructure like seeds, labor and equipment. Having strong cash reserves made it possible for the Co-op to issue such large upfront loans. We believed that investing in the farm’s infrastructure and operational needs would ultimately make even more fresh, locally grown food available to Co-op customers.

In less than two years, Sleeping Frog Farms had repaid the Conspiracy CSA. Another loan to a local farm soon followed. ReZoNation Farm was looking to upgrade its egg production. Eggs are one of the most popular local products at the Co-op — more than 37,000 eggs were sold in FY2016 alone! The Co-op invested $19,500 to help ReZoNation purchase equipment to process chicken feed onsite instead of having it delivered from another farm more than two hours away.

“The Co-op encouraged us to come up with a business plan that works for our farm,” said Kara Schneider de Zubeldia of ReZoNation Farm. “It’s rewarding to see the community is making an effort to understand our process for the food we are producing and what it takes to get it to market.”
ABOUT NATIONAL CO+OP GROCERS

National Co+op Grocers (NCG) is a business services cooperative serving member retail food co-ops throughout the United States. NCG represents 147 food co-ops operating over 200 stores in 38 states with combined annual sales over $2 billion and over 1.3 million consumer-owners. NCG helps unify natural food co-ops in order to optimize operational and marketing resources, strengthen purchasing power, and ultimately offer more value to natural food co-op owners and shoppers everywhere.

Check them out at: www.StrongerTogether.Coop

To date, Food Conspiracy has invested $76,500 in Tucson’s local food economy through its Conspiracy CSA program. The loans to Sleeping Frog Farms were a clear-cut success. ReZoNation’s loan, while also productive, led to an unexpected outcome. Their efforts revealed it would make sense to centralize operations at one farm — just not at their farm. Instead, ReZoNation transitioned their egg business to the farm supplying their seed (also located in a slightly cooler area of Arizona more conducive to raising chickens). Although not the result the farm or the Co-op anticipated, the decision was positive for all parties. The Co-op now purchases local eggs from this farm and continues to source honey from ReZoNation Farm.

“Our goal is to support our local food system,” says Kelly Watters. Further, Food Conspiracy is working toward achieving its ends. In the first quarter of FY2018, locally produced goods grew to 10.9% of sales. Through its Conspiracy CSA, our support for local growers demonstrates that efforts at the Co-op make a difference in meeting our goal to increase local offerings.

Coast-to-Coast Co+ops!

Visit a local food co-op during your summer travels. Visit www.strongertogether.coop to see the full map & listing continued from page7

Cynthia: The Co-op has been part of our business from the start from testing the product, to selling it to now growing our business. Getting extra help from the Co-op is invaluable to our business. We had an initial loan from the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona that helped us get started and this Food Conspiracy loan is helping us move to a whole new level. Thank you to the Co-op!

Making Microloans

In February 2018, Food Conspiracy made its first microloan to a small food business beyond the farm. Bajo Tierra Kitchen, a fermentation company with a strong local following, is using its two-year, $2,000 loan to purchase locally grown cabbage for the largest-ever production run of its popular kimchi. The loan terms stipulate that Bajo Tierra will do a monthly in-store demo. The Co-op is also working with them on ways to improve packaging and reduce pricing. This loan will be repaid by a combination of product sales and cash.

Coast-to-Coast Co+ops!

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Check them out at: www.StrongerTogether.Coop
Wild sunflowers (Helianthus annus) have been setting seeds for thousands of years in northern America. Not surprisingly, helia means sun and anthus, flower. Sunflower fossils have been found along the Mississippi River watershed dating back 9,000 years and by 4000 BC these oily seeds were intentionally cultivated throughout the lower Midwest.

Mammoth Sunflowers are giant annuals and one of the fastest growing plants in the world. The stocks can reach up to 12 feet in height. The large head, which can grow to the size of a dinner plate, resides on the end of a thick stock and is surrounded by yellow petals. Sunflower plants and their seeds have increased over time as humans selected seeds from the strongest plants each growing season. The tallest sunflower was grown in the Netherlands in 1986 and reached a height of 25 feet and the flower head grew to 2.5 feet in diameter!

Sunflower cultivation dates back farther than even corn, squash or beans - the three sisters. Historically, the entire sunflower had been used by Native Americans. The stalks were peeled into thin sheets and used like paper. The flower petals and roots were cooked as vegetables and sometimes the empty seed compartments could be repurposed as dye or paint containers. Archaeologists have found the remains of sunflower seeds in Indian dwellings going back to the year 800 and it appears that sunflower meal was used to make bread. Today, striped seeds can be consumed by humans and animals and the black seeds pressed for oil. This fatty, yet healthy, snack has high amounts of vitamin E, lots of calcium and other important minerals.

Many varieties of sunflowers are heat and drought-tolerant and they’re great at bringing insects and butterflies to your garden. While sunflowers look like one big flower, the head is actually made up of 1,000 to 4,000 florets, which open for just two days for fertilization. They have perfect flowers, meaning they consist of male (stamens that produce pollen) and female reproductive structures called pistils. However, they can’t be pollinated by their own pollen. They need the pollen from neighboring sunflowers (ideally, of the same variety) and they often rely on insects or human manipulation to transfer pollen for seed-saving purposes. Since sunflowers can be cross-pollinated, if you intend to save seeds from your plants, make sure you’re growing only one variety at a time.

The spiral design of the seed head is mesmerizingly efficient. The National Museum of Mathematics tells us that if you count the spirals on a sunflower, you’ll come up with one of these Fibonacci numbers (each number is the sum of the two preceding numbers: 0,1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89, etc.). Nature is never short on nerdy revelations. Artists, writers, and botanical enthusiasts have always been entranced by sunflowers because they seem to be moving their heads to follow passers-by. Sunflowers are heliotropic, meaning they move so the flower head faces and follows the sun east to west throughout the day and then back to east in the night, ready for the morning light. However, by the time stocks thicken and the tiny flowers begin

Why save seeds?
The reasons for saving seeds is as diverse as the seeds themselves. Seed saving is food security; helping to preserve the genetic biodiversity of our food crops by encouraging the planting of varieties (often heirlooms) that are not favored by commercial growers. Seed saving is culture; helping us preserve and share the foodways & stories of the communities who have passed down the seeds. Seed saving is community; encouraging us to share its bounty. Seed saving is resiliency; helping us create seed stock that is better adapted to our unique climate.
to form seeds, their position is secure and they no longer follows the sun. Nevertheless, these giant beauties trick us into thinking they’re watching us.

Library cardholders can check out up to 10 packets of seeds per month at the Pima County Public Library. If your local branch doesn’t have sunflower seeds on hand, you’re welcome to ask at the desk or place a hold on seeds through the library’s online catalog!

Native to the Americas, sunflowers are best sowed in the desert Southwest between March 15 and June 1 and they’ll germinate within five to ten days. If you prefer to start your seeds early indoors, use peat pots in order to avoid disturbing the roots. Transplant outdoors after the last frost and make sure to place the top edge of the peat pots down a bit below the top level of the soil. Alternatively, you can simply sow the seeds directly into the soil in a sunny area · to one inch deep after the threat of frost has cleared. Sunflowers don’t like the cold! You want to make sure the seeds are a foot or two apart to give them ample space to grow. Their roots are long and need to stretch, so they prefer loose, well-draining soil. You may need to augment with some sand and compost because they’re heavy feed-ers and need lots of nutritious organic matter. During the monsoon season, the stocks may need to be staked to avoid damage. Another good strategy is to place the seeds near a fence or the side of a building to shelter the plants from strong winds.

Sunflowers need average watering and will mature in about 90 days. Water three to four inches out from the plant at the roots when the plant is small. Once established, you can water more deeply to encourage deep rooting. When you’re ready to harvest for decorating, cut the stems early in the morning before the flower buds have had a chance to open. Tall containers are best to support the heavy heads, which will bloom for about a week if you change the water daily.

For those of you who want to save the seeds, let the sunflower dry on the plant until you see the back turning yellow and the bracts turn brown. Bracts are those little leafy things that live near the stem. Some folks put seed head netting covers or pillow cases over the flower to prevent birds from stealing your precious seeds. Wait a few more weeks and then cut off the head. Alternatively, you can hang it up indoors in a well-ventilated place for a few weeks. The seeds will be dark and rub off easily when they’re ready. Spread the seed head face down on a cookie sheet to bake for 25 to 30 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove when the seeds are slightly brown. Enjoy!

Seed to Seed: Seed Saving and Growing Techniques for Vegetable Gardeners, Suzanne Ashworth, 2002.


Seven Flowers and How They Shaped Our World, Jennifer Potter, 2014.


To prevent many health diseases and conditions.

Why Soak Nuts, Grains, And Seeds?

• To remove or reduce phytic acid.
• To remove or reduce tannins.
• To neutralize the enzyme inhibitors.
• To encourage the production of beneficial enzymes.
• To increase the amounts of vitamins, especially B vitamins.
• To break down gluten and make digestion easier.
• To make the proteins more readily available for absorption.
• To prevent mineral deficiencies and bone loss.
• To help neutralize toxins in the colon and keep the colon clean.
• To prevent many health diseases and conditions.

Sources:
Suzanne Ashworth, Seed to Seed: Seed Saving and Growing Techniques for Vegetable Gardeners, 2002.
Jennifer Potter, Seven Flowers and How They Shaped Our World, 2014.

https://www.almanac.com/plant/sunflowers
School Gardens Grow More than Greens by Kelly Watters, Education + Outreach Manager

According to a recent State of Tucson’s Food System report by the UA’s Center for Regional Food Studies, there are currently 57 school gardens across the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) out of 86 TUSD school sites. These gardens have far-reaching impacts on the educational experiences of the thousands of TUSD school children. One student from the Tucson High School club says “for me, Garden Club is the safest place in the whole school, as well as my favorite place to be. High school is extremely stressful. The garden allows me to escape, I can’t stress about how much homework I have when I’m outside digging, chasing chickens and eating carrots with my friends.”

Across 24 low-income schools and 3 community gardens in Tucson, the University of Arizona Community School and Garden Program (CSGP). CSGP harnesses the teaching potential of a garden by placing undergraduate and graduate students training in the basics of sustainable agriculture as interns. The interns support the installation, maintenance, and enhancement of these public gardens, and assist site coordinators, teachers, and K-12 students in the use of these outdoor spaces as an extension of the classroom.

In March, Food Conspiracy partnered with the CSGP hosting a school garden tour. Students invited their families to an open house at 12 different gardens across the city including Conspiracy Garden, the Garden at the Co-op. It was also open to the public as a self-guided ticketed event much like the previous Chicken Coop Tours. We’re planning a second a second school garden tour next spring with all proceeds going to the CSGP.

Conspiracy Garden at the Co-op is newly activated outdoor space in partnership with TUSD’s Community Transition Program and neighboring exceptional education students from Tucson High School. Mark Reynolds, a teacher on staff says, “Community Transition Programs is grateful to have been invited to work with the Conspiracy Garden to help teach our students employability skills through gardening and an appreciation for ecology.”

The garden has 24, 75 square foot beds that are watered using drip irrigation. Sustainable features include a water harvesting cistern, sunken beds and passive rainwater harvesting basins for fig and citrus trees as well as native trees. There is also on site composting utilizing food scraps from the Co-op’s onsite Conspiracy Kitchen.

At present, students from TUSD’s Community Transition Programs and Tucson High School maintain the garden. The students are all enrolled in the Transition from School to Work program that is designed to provide vocational training for students with intellectual disabilities. Students are learning valuable employability skills in the field of gardening, irrigation installation and general landscaping. The garden tours provide them with the opportunity to interact with the public and show off what they have achieved. The food grown at the garden will be donated to Casa Maria along with other food donations from the Food Conspiracy.

2018 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

New date! The Board of Directors will meet the fourth Wednesday of the month from 6:30 - 8:30pm a light fare is served at 6pm.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25
WEDNESDAY, MAY 23
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27
NO MEETING IN JULY
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26
An Antigone Books Review: Tucson Blossoms with Poetry

The Real Horse by Farid Matuk
a review by Kate Stern

As a reader of little poetry, I approached this collection timidly. I assumed I would be overwhelmed by the abstract messages and experimental beat of Matuk’s words. At first, I was trying too hard to understand what felt esoteric, personal, and cerebral. I decided I had to forge my own path through the lines and stanzas to interpret their meaning.

I had begun by reading a few poems in my head - page by page, left to right, line by line, beginning to end. I stopped to do some research and discuss the reading of poetry with other folks and other readers. I asked my neighbor, my sister, booksellers, and friends: How are we supposed approach poetry? How do we get at the heart and soul abstract work? Conclusions to these discussions were speculative.

At this point, I resolved to be shamelessly avant-garde in my approach to The Real Horse – I read out of order, I read passages and some words aloud, creating my own rhythm. By making a collage with fragments of Matuk’s poems, I learned to engage in a way that helped me to perceive the messages addressed to his daughter.

This book is about dissent: “everyone came to see the rebel,” “a thing she mastered on stage,” “a real outlaw daughter.” This book is about migration and immigration across cultures and land: “ocean salt on desert air ghosts the cool,” “we were supposed to fold edges/to look full on into an expanse of edges” “fleshed edge,” “the trail winding up between jagged rocks.” This book is about the West and the East. It is about the intertwining of history and categorization that leads to the formation of identity. Yet, above all, this book is about freedom: “sending you/ this far into this wanting to be about freedom.” The use of the horse and the bird served as an allegorical visual for me that unified the themes of The Real Horse.

In June the Labyrinth by Cynthia Hogue
a review by Morgan Miller

As we enter the Spring and Summer seasons, I recommend you step into Cynthia Hogue’s singular Labyrinth. Hogue received a PhD from the University of Arizona, and her recent return to Tucson beautifully enriches our considerable literary community here. The labyrinth she has shaped for her reader in her latest collection is at once:

cerebral:

“When you aren’t here / and I call you to mind / can you hear me?”

and sensual:

“F’s gift from the rose garden and the rosette in the labyrinth’s center like a premise. A promise: the real rose closed tight, stuck as an afterthought in a glass of water, which overnight, opened. As if the window’s sash were up. Everything perfumed.”

It is intellectually rigorous:

“How had I known / (how does one know / the meaning of a symbol)? / Ethical Elle, you always questioned / facile claims to knowing / without proof, to keep / your thinking free.” and heartrendingly straightforward:

“I had a dream in which / someone died and when I woke I thought, Someone has died. / I hardly knew death was so sudden.”

In June the Labyrinth is an elegy honoring the death of a loved one, a meditation on love, guilt, and forgiveness. There are many, essentially human, ways of connecting with this collection. And who doesn’t want a little poetry in the springtime?
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**SUMMER PASTABILITIES**
Pineapple Green Smoothie

Serves: 2  Prep. Time: 10 minutes

1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
4 cups spinach leaves, washed
1 cup pineapple chunks, drained
1 medium frozen banana, sliced

Preparation
Place ingredients in a blender in the following order: milk, yogurt, spinach, pineapple and banana, and secure the lid. Blend on high until smooth. Pour into glasses and serve immediately.

Serving Suggestion
For a thicker smoothie, use frozen pineapple chunks as well as the sliced, frozen banana. Make your own frozen fruit for smoothies by cutting up fresh pineapple and bananas and freezing the pieces on a baking sheet; then transfer to a zip-close bag for storage. Drained canned pineapple freezes just as well as fresh.

Nutritional Information
260 calories, 4 g. fat, 10 mg. cholesterol, 135 mg. sodium, 49 g. carbohydrate, 5 g. fiber, 12 g. protein

Plum Smoothie

Servings: 2  Prep. Time: 5 minutes

When plums are in season, throw a freshly-pitted ripe ones couple in the blender, just to savor their purple wonder. A few tablespoons of oats adds body and keeps you full longer than the usual smoothie.

2 large ripe plums
2 cups vanilla yogurt
6 tablespoons rolled oats
2 tablespoons ground flaxseed

Preparation
Combine all the ingredients in the blender and process. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information
292 calories, 11 g. fat, 30 mg. cholesterol, 132 mg. sodium, 43 g. carbohydrate, 3 g. fiber, 10 g. protein

Hidden-Spinach Berry Smoothie

Serves: 2  Prep time: 10 minutes.

2 cups frozen or fresh raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, or a mix
3 cups spinach (packed)
1 cup yogurt, kefir, or a non-dairy alternative like almond milk
1 large banana, fresh or frozen

Put the berries and spinach in the blender first, and add the yogurt and banana. Process, scraping down as needed. Blend until smooth and serve. If the smoothie is too thick to blend, add milk or a non-dairy alternative as needed to blend.

Nutritional Information
247 calories, 2 g. fat, 5 mg. cholesterol, 157 mg. sodium, 52 g. carbohydrate, 8 g. fiber, 8 g. protein

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