

Co-op Member Owner's Manual



FOOD CO-OP

Bellingham, Washington

“

Nothing is more powerful than an individual acting out of his own conscience, thus helping to bring the collective to life.

”

—Norman Cousins

Community

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Source: Members of the Community Food Co-op volunteered to put this handbook together for your quick and easy use.

Congratulations— You Own It!

Remember buying your first pair of skates?...your first bicycle?... Didn't it feel great?

Now that you're a member of the Community Food Co-op, you might be experiencing that same giddy sense of ownership. Why? Because you haven't just purchased an opportunity to get great products at member prices, you've purchased the Co-op itself.

That's right, everything in it is yours—from pickles to shelving, from cash registers to light bulbs. You're not just a member—you're a member/owner.

You were probably the sole owner of that first bike—the only one responsible for its care and feeding, but now you are one of several thousand owners of the Community Food Co-op. And this sharing brings joy and pleasure as well as responsibility.

Joy comes in the form of being part of a community, and like all communities, there is a great variety as well as a sense of like-mindedness. Communities bring people together and you'll have ample opportunity as a part of this community to make it your own and to experience a sense of belonging.

You'll enjoy the rights of a member/owner—you can request products you like, suggest the Co-op provide a service you feel would be of benefit or suggest a Healthy Connections class you'd like to take. Pleasure can also come in the form of "being your own boss." Members have a variety of options for involving themselves further in their Co-op. The sense of setting direction for our store gives many member/owners real pleasure and satisfaction. Since the Community Food Co-op is yours, ask for what you want, make your voice heard—member/owners can and should define their own community.

Ownership does bring with it responsibilities. At the Co-op you're in control of how much you take on. Options for participation range from paying your annual dues, buying your member shares, and shopping at the Co-op, to participating on committees or running in the election of the Board of Directors.

Membership is attractive to people for many reasons. Some are simply looking for good prices on our great selection of products, while others are deeply committed to the principles of cooperatives. Whatever your reason, welcome to our community of members/owners.





Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

A just and livable world with cooperatively owned enterprise as a cornerstone of a sustainable economy.

Our Mission

A consumer-owned grocery store serving our community with quality products and honest information.

Our Values

We seek to.

- Promote cooperative ownership by fostering member involvement and responding to member needs.
- Build community by respecting diversity and cultivating connections within the Co-op and Whatcom County.
- Encourage informed choices by educating ourselves and our community around issues of food, healthy lifestyles, the environment and human rights.
- Model ethical business and employment practices by acting with honesty, integrity and respect in the workplace and marketplace.
- Promote a sustainable economy by supporting organic and sustainable food production and other environmentally and socially responsible businesses locally, regionally and nationally.

Our primary goal

is that the Co-op work for you. We pride ourselves on the friendliness and helpfulness of our staff and on our responsiveness to customers. If you have any questions about anything, ask anyone on our staff; they will be happy to help.

Our philosophy

is to offer a wide variety of high-quality, healthful products in a friendly, informative environment. Check out what we have to offer:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| • Grocery | • Deli | • Dairy & Refrigerated Products |
| • Produce | • Juice Bar | • Frozen Foods |
| • Meat & Seafood | • Espresso | • Housewares & Mercantile |
| • Wine and Beer | • Cheese | • Household & Paper Products |
| • Vitamins, Supplements & Bodycare | • Bulk Foods | • Pet Food |

Cooperative History

A cooperative is run and owned by its members who benefit from the goods and services provided. The first consumer co-op was founded in 1844 in Rochdale, England by 28 trades people who wanted to provide basic food needs for themselves. The cooperative business structure allowed them to support and better themselves instead of an individual or small group of owners.

Co-ops around the world, including ours, are founded on the six principles created by the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society. A seventh principle was adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance in 1995.

- ❖ ***Voluntary and open membership***—everyone is welcome to become a member.
- ❖ ***Democratic member control***—one member, one vote.
- ❖ ***Member economic participation***—your shares are an investment in the Co-op.
- ❖ ***Autonomy and independence***—we are owned by members and operate for member benefit.
- ❖ ***Education, training and information***—education opportunities for staff and members.
- ❖ ***Cooperation among cooperatives***—open communication with other co-ops.
- ❖ ***Concern for the community***—donations, shared information, and sponsorship of community events.



Community Food Co-op History

The Food Co-op started in 1970 on the south side of Bellingham, in the Good Earth Building, with a store size of 800 square feet. The Co-op began as a volunteer operation. It eventually evolved into having a small paid staff, which functioned as a collective. In addition to paid staff there was a “discount worker” system in which a member received a discount on purchases for working hours in the store. As more people shopped at the Co-op and more product was needed, the store moved to a new location on State Street. This move in 1982 increased the retail space to 3,840 square feet.

Many changes occurred after the move to State St., including the first Co-op Board of Directors elected by the membership in 1983. By the summer of 1984 the Board had decided to institute an all-paid, collectively managed, staff and to end, for liability and legal reasons, the use of discount workers.

In 1985 a general manager was hired by the Board of Directors to manage the day-to-day operations of the store.

The Co-op moved to its current 15,000-sq.-ft. location on North Forest Street in 1994, experiencing a whole new growth period with more staff, products, and the addition of the Swan Café Deli.

The Co-op continues to grow and expand in our product selection, membership, and community outreach, ever renewing our vision, mission and philosophy.

Member Opportunities

Become a Member of the Co-op

Everyone is welcome to join the Food Co-op. By joining the Co-op, you enjoy the benefit of member pricing on all purchases in the store. You are welcome to shop at the Co-op without becoming a member, but you will be charged a 6.5% surcharge on your purchases. Members are also eligible to place special orders at a discount, receive a free monthly newsletter, vote in elections, and serve on the Board or on committees.



Member Shares—\$90. When you join, you invest ownership shares in the Co-op and purchase a part of the store. You can pay for member shares in full, or pay in monthly or quarterly increments with a minimum of \$3 per month. Share investments make it possible for the Co-op to purchase new equipment, to publish the monthly newsletter, and to purchase other capital improvements needed to better serve our members.

Member Dues—\$4 per year. Each member pays non-refundable annual dues of \$4, which is used for supplies and to fund events such as the annual membership meeting.

Shares and dues are waived for seniors—those 62 years of age and older.

How to Join. You can activate your membership anytime with a simple membership form at any check stand or by stopping by the service desk. Members can also obtain an additional membership card for another member of their household.

Member Rights and Responsibilities

- ◆ You can make special orders on case lots at a discount off retail.
- ◆ You will receive the Co-op's monthly newsletter, the *Co-op Community News*, by mail.
- ◆ You will receive a member card with your membership, which you should hand to the cashier each time you check out.
- ◆ You are welcome and encouraged to attend the Co-op's annual meeting and party in March, which kicks off the Board election process.
- ◆ Become involved in the Co-op through volunteer opportunities, committees, or the Board of Directors.
- ◆ Vote in the annual election of the Board of Directors and on any other ballot items, such as by-law changes.
- ◆ You are entitled to voice your opinion and needs in the following ways:

- Talking directly to staff or Board members.
- Writing in the member input book at the member service desk.
- Filling out a Questions, Product Requests, and Comments form at the member service desk.

Note: Replies to these forms are posted at the member info kiosk.

- Post a comment or request through the website, communityfoodcoop.com. All questions and responses are online.
- Writing a letter to the editor of the *Co-op Community News* newsletter.
- Attending a Board meeting and speaking during the ten-minute member forum at the beginning of each meeting.
- Send email to: servicedesk@thefoodcoop.com or join our E-Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Co-opMemberAffairs>.
- ◆ Take advantage of our Healthy Connections educational opportunities held at the adjacent Co-op Connection building and our in-store Natural Foods Shopping Tours.
- ◆ Your Co-op card is honored by other co-ops around the country.

“All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of inter-dependent parts.”

—Aldo Leopold

Community

Member Involvement

- **Volunteer**—notice of opportunities are posted in the *Co-op Community News* and in the store.
- **Committee and Board involvement**—all members are welcome to attend committee and Board meetings and become active in the governance of the Co-op by becoming a committee or Board member.
- **Member Affairs Committee (MAC)**—works year round on member-related issues; offering a linkage between members and the staff and Board.
- **Board Development Committee**—works on nominating new qualified Board members each year and developing Board training and education.
- **Finance Committee**—keeps an overview on the finances of the Co-op and proposes annual projections and the General Manager salary for Board approval.
- **Dining with the Directors**—two or three times a year the Board of Directors hosts a gathering for members. Members have a chance to meet other members and share their thoughts on a focused topic about the Co-op with Board and staff members while enjoying a catered dinner.
- **Board of Directors**—elected by members and legally responsible for running the Food Co-op. The Board hires and evaluates the General Manager, sets policies for the store, and keeps an eye on the finances. Board members are voted in during the annual member election in March. All members are welcome to run for the Board of Directors.



All Board meeting minutes and agendas, along with lists of Board members, committee members, and all meeting times and locations are posted in the store.

Shopper Opportunities

The Community Food Co-op offers shoppers a large selection of natural, whole, and organic products at reasonable prices. We are a unique store offering you a different sort of shopping experience. We think you will enjoy the services we provide shoppers here at the Co-op.

- Our **produce department**, Whatcom County's only certified organic produce department, offers a wide variety of fresh, organic fruits and vegetables, provided by local farmers when possible.
- Our extensive **health and beauty aids department** offers a variety of natural products including: homeopathic and herbal remedies, nutritional supplements, hair and body care products, aromatherapy products, and much more.

- Our diverse supply of **bulk products** (more than 600 items) makes it possible for you to purchase everything you need—from sweeteners, nut butters, eggs, grains, and herbs to dish soap, shampoo, and body oils—all without having to buy an ounce of new packaging.
- Shoppers with **special dietary requirements** will find a large selection of alternatives—such as products that are wheat-free and dairy-free—to meet their needs.
- Our **deli, baked goods, soups, and to-go items** are great for a quick nutritious meal to take with you or to sit and enjoy in our Swan Café Deli.

Other Services

- Our unsupervised children's play area is thoughtfully equipped to make shopping at the Co-op a joy for your little ones, too. Enjoy storytime once a week.
- Relax and help yourself to a cup of water or hot tea while you shop.
- We encourage all shoppers to recycle by bringing in your clean unwanted plastic containers, jars, egg cartons, and paper bags for reuse by others. You may choose to have your own containers filled at the Deli as well.
- At the main entrance, shoppers can browse or advertise on the community bulletin board for desired goods, services, and opportunities.
- A courtesy phone is available for your use at the member kiosk.
- An ATM machine is located on the Forest Street side of the Co-op for your convenience. You can also use your debit and credit cards at the cash registers.
- Reference books and a reference computer for information and education are available in the Health and Beauty department and at the service desk. As well, our info kiosk at the front of the store contains many pamphlets and brochures describing organizations in our community and nutritional and Co-op information.
- You can make contributions to the Bellingham Food Bank bin at the front of the store or monetary donations through any cashier.
- Members can check out books from our cooperative library located at the Service Desk.
- The Member Seed Fund gives those who feel they cannot afford to start a Co-op membership a boost by providing dues for the first year and share payments for the first three months of Co-op membership. The fund is available on a first-come first-served basis, since monies are donated by other Co-op members.
- Community Shopping Days—on the third Saturday of every month 2% of the day's sales are donated to a local non-profit organization.

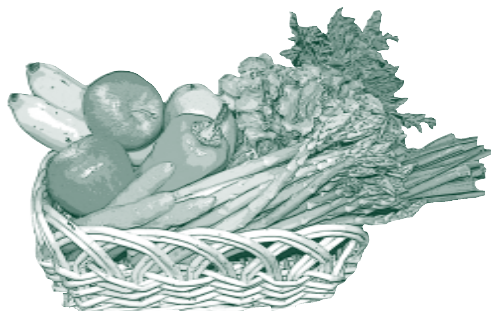


Making the Most of Co-op Shopping

The Co-op's philosophy is to offer a wide variety of high-quality, healthful products. Whether you are looking to economize by buying in bulk or plan to have a gourmet experience, whether you want a good ol' banana or something more exotic, you will find the gamut in the Co-op's food aisles. Don't be afraid to ask if you can't find what you're looking for—the Co-op staff is friendly and informed and wants to help you have the best experience possible while shopping at the Community Food Co-op.

Produce

As Whatcom County's only certified organic produce department—with more than 90% of our fresh produce organically grown—the co-op's commitment to organics is most easily seen in this department. In addition, our produce buyers are committed to buying local produce as it is seasonally available. Whatcom Fresh is a program devoted to bringing you closer to those in the community who grow your food (look for the Whatcom Fresh brochure to learn more), and local produce is called out on all signs when produce is grown locally, whether organic or conventionally grown.



Signs in our produce department are coded for ease of identification.

- ◆ **Green signs**—All of our organic produce is either certified by a state program or other certifying agency.
- ◆ **Orange signs**—Conventionally grown produce.
- ◆ **Chalkboard**—Watch our chalkboard for specials on produce items, whether organic or conventionally grown. Posted signs will also indicate sale prices.



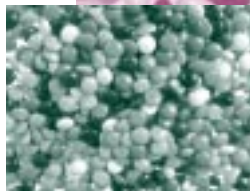
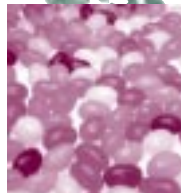
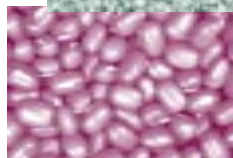
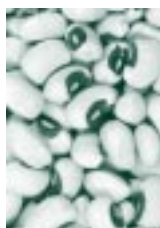
Bulk Items

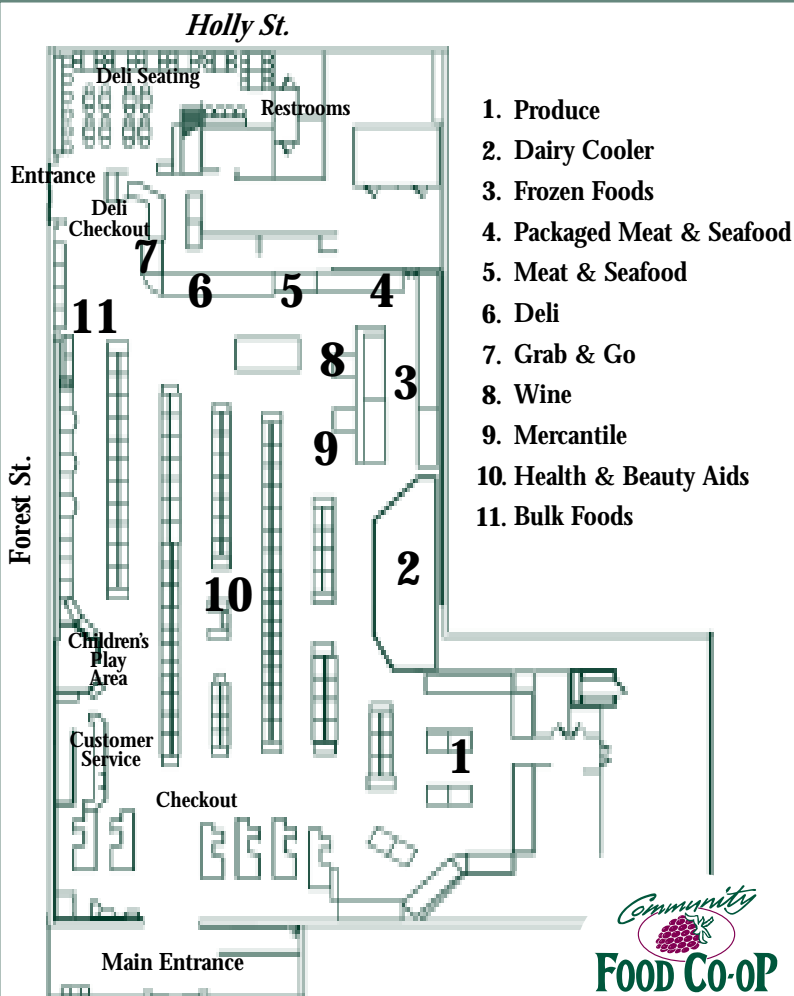
Our diverse selection of bulk items—more than 600 products—enables you to choose the exact quantity you need without paying for new packaging.

- ◆ There are shelves in the bulk unit for any clean containers you wish to recycle or use to package your bulk items.
- ◆ New paper and plastic bags are available, although we encourage you to recycle and reuse your old ones.
- ◆ There are plastic squeeze bottles and canning jars with lids for sale in the bulk liquid area, but we encourage you to bring your own.

Please remember to do the following when buying items in bulk:

- ◆ Weigh your container before filling it. Mark the container with this “tare” weight, or write it on your grocery list, and tell it to the cashier so you will not be charged for the weight of the container. There is a scale by the bulk liquids.
- ◆ Bin numbers—every bulk product has a four-digit bin number. Please write the bin number on your tag, bag, or bottle. Pencils and tags are placed conveniently throughout the bulk foods section.





Community Food Co-op
1220 N. Forest
(corner of Forest and Holly)
Bellingham, WA 98225
360-734-8158

Open 7 days a week
8 am to 9 pm

Swan Deli
Open 7 days a week
8 a to 8 pm

Also visit us on the web at
www.communityfoodcoop.com

Printed on recycled paper with soy inks.

